

Prospects for Russian-African cooperation in the field of education

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A panel discussion entitled «Russian-African Network University for Sustainable Development of African Countries» was held as part of the Third Congress of Young Scientists at Sirius. Training of qualified personnel has been and remains a traditional area for SPbPU. Polytechnic representatives — Alla Mazina, deputy head of the International Education Department, Maxim Zalyvsky, head of the RAFU Project Office, and Issa Togo, associate professor of the Higher School of Hydraulic and Power Engineering, have recently returned from Mali. [There they successfully held the «Week of Russian Education and Science»](#) and now share their experience.



Alla Mazina, the moderator of the meeting, highlighted two main agendas: sustainable development and international cooperation within RAFU.

Africa is a unique continent in terms of the age pyramid. Unlike aging Europe, where the majority of the population is pensioners, in African countries young people prevail, the expert emphasized. Therefore, the number of universities is growing every year, the faculty is increasing. Interest in higher education is quite special. And it does not happen without scientific research, without support from technology companies..



Tawanda Tinago, head of the Department at Chinhoyi University of Technology, Republic of Zimbabwe, noted how important human capital is in terms of sustainable development. And why there is a need to build capacity and train new professionals.

RAFU is our country's response to common challenges, to the ever-changing economic and political environment. More than once, our country's leadership has said that Africa will become the locomotive of the world's labor force in the near future. We realize that this is a growing and interesting market for investments, and such countries as China and India, for example, have long ago entered the continent and invest in projects, — Maxim Zalyvsky shared with the participants of the meeting.

RAFU is also an opportunity to develop business contacts. Many large Russian enterprises also need highly qualified personnel, and it is possible and necessary to train them locally. This is exactly the goal the consortium is pursuing.



Maksim Zalyvsky noted that in African countries, Russian education is primarily associated with medicine. Consortium members at meetings with representatives of African universities and enterprises try to debunk this myth. Russia is also IT, engineering and technical specialties, geological exploration, and agro-industry.

Issa Togo spoke about the hydropower potential of the Republic of Mali: *There can be no production and welfare of the population without electricity. The management of water resources in the Republic of Mali to generate electricity for the agricultural sector and flood control is a complex and comprehensive issue.*

Professor Togo highlighted objectives for its solution: creation of a digital model and analysis of water resources and existing energy systems of the Republic. With the help of joint Russian-African research it is possible to clearly build a plan of measures to achieve the set goals, which will have a favorable impact on the environmental, economic and social aspects of Mali's development.



One of the solutions to such issues we see is the opening of new institutes. This tool will allow us to train highly professional specialists. RAFU is already successfully engaged in this task, — Issa Togo summarized the discussion.

The universities of the «Russian-African Network University» consortium develop not only educational cooperation with African countries. They are implementing large infrastructure projects with the participation of industrial partners in various areas of sustainable development, for example, in the areas of nature management and environmental protection, new management systems and protection of natural resources, clean energy and preservation of cultural heritage.