

Polytechnic hosted the second RAFU international conference

19.12.2024

The Polytechnic University hosted the second RAFU International Scientific and Practical Conference "Contribution of Russian and African Universities to Sustainable Regional Development." This year the event was held in a hybrid format and brought together about 100 participants. 40 speakers represented 23 RAFU member organizations from Russia, ten African countries (Morocco, Algeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Mali, Ethiopia, Burundi, Guinea, Kenya, Cameroon), and Brazil. The conference was moderated by Maxim Zalyvsky, Head of the Project Office.

✖ Stepan Sokolov, Deputy Director of the Department of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, addressed the participants: *"Russian-African relations, based on a long history of humanitarian cooperation, continue to strengthen through education. Over the past 60 years, more than 310,000 African students have received diplomas from Russian universities while retaining warm feelings for our country. Visits by delegations of the Ministry of Education and Science to African countries emphasize our desire to develop inter-university cooperation and to train specialists necessary for the development of these countries. The creation of centers of Russian language and culture in Africa contributes not only to the study of the language but also to the strengthening of cultural ties between our people."*

The RAFU Summer Multidisciplinary University, which is the flagship event of the consortium's activities, has become an effective mechanism in the development of bilateral educational partnerships between Russia and Africa. In 2024, the number of participants almost doubled: 19 Russian RAFU universities organized summer schools. The concept of the Summer Multidisciplinary University was adjusted, with the main emphasis on conducting advanced training and retraining courses at the sites of universities that already have existing projects or are just starting to develop Russian-African initiatives.

✖ The RAFU website contains a structured catalog of online courses, which will become the basis for the creation of network educational programs. This will enable students from Africa to connect to the courses of leading Russian universities.

"Our goal is to cover as many countries in Africa as possible in order to be useful and support national higher education systems. We aim to develop joint projects and scientific research. It is also necessary to involve industrial partners more actively. This year's Summer Multidisciplinary University was supported by Roscosmos, the Sozvezvedie Association, Severalmaz, and Eco-Niva-AIC Holding, which emphasizes the importance of cooperation with industry. Of course, we should note the important role of the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, without whose support the realization of such large federal projects as RAFU would be a difficult task," emphasized Dmitry Arseniev.

✖ Among the participants who came to the conference were representatives of Russian universities—members of the RAFU consortium—Belgorod State University, St. Petersburg Kirov Forestry Engineering University, and others. The delegation of Hassan II University was headed by Omar Sabri, President of the SPbPU Alumni Association in Morocco; the delegation of the University of Science and Technology was headed by Houari Bouamediena (Algeria) and Professor of SPbPU Khaled Hamouda, from Mali, was the Honorary Consul of the country in St. Petersburg, Associate Professor of the Engineering and Construction Institute of SPbPU, Issa Togo.

✖ Experts from St. Petersburg, Samara, Chelyabinsk, Astrakhan, Moscow, Voronezh, Tambov, Irkutsk, Yakutsk, and Tomsk told about projects with African partners to train national personnel and develop inter-university cooperation and scientific ties. Specialists highlighted the difficulties in the regulatory

and legal field that they have to face in the course of their work. The speakers shared the best practices in the promotion of Russian education, joint educational programs, preparation of African applicants for admission to Russian universities, and advanced training programs for teachers of African universities. It is worth noting the applied nature of many reports. These are joint scientific projects in such important areas for African countries as geology, construction, meteorology, agriculture, alternative energy, medicine, construction, ecology, and economics.

✘ On the margins of the conference, two online signings of the memorandum of accession to RAFU took place with the Private University of Fez and the International University of Agadir. Polytechnic also signed cooperation agreements with the International University.

"The conference, which has already become a traditional annual event within the framework of RAFU activities, confirmed its importance as a discussion platform for discussing joint projects, scientific research, as well as the exchange of experience between Russian and African universities. Today we have not just summarized the results of the work done; we have outlined the directions of future cooperation," Maxim Zalyvsky summarized the work of the conference.