

From the VC's Desk

Highlights | Thought Leadership

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NEWS



Partnerships for sustainability

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University and Moses Kotane Municipality sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

An SMU delegation arrived at the platinum belt of South Africa, on the 04 October 2023. This is an area with over 80% of the world's known platinum reserves. The delegation was led by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbatlana, to the Moses Kotane Municipality to sign a Memorandum of Understanding involving the Municipality, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) and the North West University (NWU).

The air was ripe with expectation; and there was little doubt that this was an august and watershed moment. The solemnity of the occasion was the blessings of the Pastor over the proceedings. The meeting was held in the Mayoral Executive Chambers and was attended by the Mayor, Councilor, Nketu Nkotswe and members of the Municipality; representatives from SMU, representatives from the Provincial House of traditional leaders,



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NWU, public servants; representatives from the mining sector in the area and Sun City resort.

The participants were warmly welcomed by the Mayor, who emphasized the importance of collaboration. She further indicated that given that the municipality is rural in nature, such collaborations help to develop and provide opportunities to the learners in the area. She indicated that she can contest that this 'MOU will contribute to the sustainable development goals and overall local economic development'. As such, she emphasized that the Municipality remains committed to public private partnerships and is always willing to enter these partnerships in the interest of economic development in the area.

Underpinning the MOU was the commitment by the role-players to ensure its implementation. Leading this commitment was the SMU DVC: Academic and Research, Prof Matsha-Erasmus, who extended SMU's commitment to the MOU. She stated that SMU will work together with all role players in pursuit of the common goal of training of the future generations. She acknowledged the importance of celebrating this moment and extended her sincere gratitude to all who contributed to the MOU, further indicating that she looks forward to a continued relationship among all the role players. She concluded by giving the assurance that SMU commits to the MOU and that it will work towards ensuring its success. These

sentiments were supported by Prof. David Modise from NWU who pledged their commitment to the "tripartite alliance" spirit of the MOU.

This was followed by a presentation by Mr Segale Kotsedi from Moses Kotane Local Municipality on the purpose and objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding. He reminded the participants that the MOU had its origins back in 2021 with the career exhibitions; and now it has come to fruition. He indicated that in 2021, 44 secondary schools with 1250 Grade 11 learners participated in the exhibition where it was resolved that a Science Centre must be established in the Moses Kotane Local Municipality.

He further confirmed that education has been identified as a key pillar for sustainable development, and that investment in the Municipality's youth has become a priority for sustainable development. To this end, public private partnerships have become a backbone of this vision, given that the economy of the region is centred around mining, eco-tourism, manufacturing and agriculture. Several engagements have taken place with the respective universities, leading the MOU, and that 'this MOU expresses the convergence of the will of the parties and the intended common agenda to strengthen cooperation and partnership in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)'.



In broad terms, the purpose of the MOU is to:

- Provide a broad framework within which the Parties can develop and undertake collaborative activities and projects in areas of wide common interests. This might include exploring opportunities for generation of third-stream income to fund projects identified as part of the MoU.
- Establish a cooperative relationship between parties to facilitate collaboration; sharing of information to assist rural learners in 45 secondary schools, thereby increasing the number of learners in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in a sustainable and effective manner.
- Realize a long-term plan of establishing Science Centre and a Satellite Campus through resource mobilization which involves the mines and the business sector in the area.
- Place the traditional leadership together with government at the centre of the transformation agenda of building this region on a solid foundation.

While SMU and NWU have agreed to enter into a bilateral MOU while they prepare to enter into a multilateral MOU, the key stakeholders in the implementation of the resolutions are the following:

- Moses Kotane local municipality
- Department of Science and Innovation
- Department of Higher Education
- North West University
- Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
- Sun City resorts
- Siyanda Bakgatla Platinum Mines
- Northam Platinum mine
- Anglo Platinum mine
- Pilanesberg Platinum mine
- Impala Platinum mine
- Rasimone Platinum mine and the National Lottery

Notable movement has already begun with the Municipality having allocated 5 hectares of land for the establishment of a Science Center. The Municipality further indicated that it is prepared to expand the allocated land to accommodate a satellite SMU campus. Further movement was the signing of the bilateral partnership with SMU and NWU, signaling the intention to move with requisite speed, and hopefully with

private capital financing and technical expertise. Still envisaged is the setting up of a project office comprising of the Municipality, NWU, SMU, Sun City and the mining houses.

The signing of the agreement, which was signed by the Vice Chancellor on SMU's behalf was met with thunderous applause, indicating the huge expectation that is being placed on this MOU. This followed messages of support from other role-players in the province.

In his address, the Vice-Chancellor underpinned the significance of the occasion, emphasizing the need to put together a clear Business Model to understand the role of various role players and for the establishment of project steering committee to ensure effective management of the implementation process. "We are very committed to get the collaboration implemented and ensuring that it is successful. When something like this succeeds, we all get very proud and we need to create the next generation of academics and leaders", he said. Mbatlana also called for the full participation of mining companies in the area and stressed that other partners should also be encouraged to come on board.

At the end of the proceedings, the overall impression was that there was deep commitment and support for the MOU. Indeed, if this sentiment is carried forward, this development signals the start of something bigger than initially envisaged.

