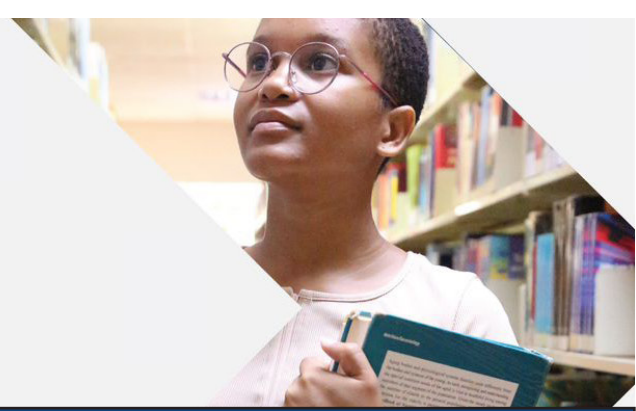




University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

UNIVEN Weekly e-Newsletter



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Herb Garden Launch Blooms at UNIVEN, Seeds for Sustainability takes Root on Campus!

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, together with the Turkish delegation, officially launched the Herb Garden, an initiative sponsored by the Turkish Ambassador to South Africa. This groundbreaking event marked a significant step toward promoting sustainability and holistic well-being on campus.

“The garden will function as an outdoor classroom, benefiting students studying botany, environmental science and nutrition, while also promoting eco-friendly practices, reducing carbon footprints, and fostering collaboration with the local community,” said Prof Nthambeleni.

Prof Nthambeleni also acknowledged the hard work of students, staff, and community members in bringing the project to life. He pointed out the therapeutic benefits of the herb garden, particularly for mental health, and praised the partnerships with local beekeepers and the Bee Academy, emphasising their vital role in pollination and biodiversity. He further expressed gratitude to the Turkish Ambassador, the Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Agriculture, and various University departments for their contributions. He concluded by inviting everyone to return six months later, after the final developing phase, further underscoring the University's commitment to sustainability and community engagement.



On Photo: Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni in his welcome address emphasised the significance of the UNIVEN Herb Garden as more than just a planting initiative—it symbolises the University's commitment to sustainability, education, and community partnerships. He highlighted the historical and cultural importance of herbs, both medicinally and symbolically, and how the garden will serve as a multi-purpose space for learning, research, and relaxation.



On Photo: Prof Natasha Potgieter, Executive Dean Faculty Science, Engineering and Agriculture

As she gave the purpose of the gathering, Prof Natasha Potgieter Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science Engineering and Agriculture together with students, staff in the Faculty celebrated the official launch of the new Herb Garden, said the launch of the Herb Garden at the University of Venda is a crucial initiative which is focused on rural Agro processing of medicinal plants, with the aim of fostering socio-economic development in historically disadvantaged communities. She said by partnering with local communities, the project seeks to support research, entrepreneurship, and biodiversity conservation, ultimately promoting job creation and income regeneration. Prof Potgieter highlighted that the Vhembe region, known for its rich biodiversity, is a focal point for the garden's efforts to preserve and protect the natural environment, while the faculty's involvement highlights the importance of education and research in achieving these goals.

She further alluded that the Herb Garden will serve as an outdoor laboratory, giving students from various departments, such as botany, entomology, and plant sciences, hands-on learning opportunities.

"This will also allow for the exploration of indigenous medicinal plants and pollinator diversity. Moreover, the garden will be a community space promoting sustainability, relaxation, and mental well-being, offering both educational and practical benefits to students, faculty, and the broader university community. With plans for expansion, including additional amenities and community engagement activities, the garden stands as a symbol of environmental stewardship and academic excellence." said Prof Potgieter.



On Photo: Prof Netshandama, Director of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation, and Commercialisation

Prof Vhonani Netshandama, Director of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation, and Commercialisation expressed her gratitude to the Executive Dean and the Vice-Chancellor for facilitating this valuable experience. She said the delegation comprising students from various faculties, such as Sciences, Commerce, and Law, shows a diverse interest in applying their knowledge to sustainable village projects. Prof Netshandama closed off by emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts and mutual goals between institutions, aiming to promote intergenerational and global learning.



Mr Abdulkadir Abukan, TIKA Regional Coordinator, introduced the Turkish International Development Cooperation Agency (TIKA) and said TIKA implements global development projects, focusing on education. Mr Abukan said over the past seven years, TIKA has completed over 100 projects in Southern Africa, with more than 40% dedicated to education. He said TIKA has also partnered with universities, upgrading laboratories and fostering collaborations, specialising in apiculture and medicinal plants. He highlighted TIKA's commitment to strengthening ties with the University of Venda and acknowledged Turkey's Republic Day, emphasising the importance of education and science, as championed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.



In her heartfelt speech Ms. Berrak Kekeç, the Deputy Head of Mission expressed gratitude

for the collaboration between Turkey and South Africa, highlighting various joint projects aimed at improving lives through education, empowerment, and historical restoration. The Deputy Head also mentioned the cultural ties between the two nations, particularly through the Turkish Cultural Centre in Johannesburg and opportunities for scholarships and tourism facilitated by Turkish Airlines and concluding with a commitment to deepen bilateral relations, announcing the donation of 67 lavender mowers to support sustainable initiatives.

As the launch concluded, the campus community was excited, with many attendees looking forward to the herb garden becoming a vibrant part of the University's ecosystem. The partnership with the Turkish Embassy marks a key milestone for UNIVEN, underscoring the institution's commitment to sustainability, education, and international cooperation.

The launch of the UNIVEN Herb Garden is set to inspire a new wave of green initiatives across the campus, fostering an appreciation for the power of plants in academic research and daily life.



On Photo: Lethabo Phahlamohlaka, Final Year BSc Microbiology and Botany Student



Ms Lethabo Phahlamohlaka representing and conveying a message on behalf of Me Mems Ramaila, founder of BEE African, expressed gratitude to various dignitaries, including UNIVEN's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Ambassador Aysegul Kandas, and the Turkish Cooperation Agency. She emphasised a commitment to the herb garden project and its potential benefits to the UNIVEN community.



Department of Higher Education and Training Conducts the Earmarked Grants Oversight Visit to UNIVEN

On Tuesday, 05 November 2024, a delegation from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), led by Mr Zakhele Hlongwane, visited the University of Venda (UNIVEN) to conduct an oversight on the Sibusiso Bengu Development Grant (SB-DG) and the Clinical Training Grant (CTG).

Mr Botwe Kraziya, UNIVEN's Chief Financial Officer, warmly welcomed the DHET delegates on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni.



He encouraged all attendees to engage actively in the session, expressing appreciation

for the presence of the DHET team and UNIVEN staff members.



In his address, Mr Zakhele Hlongwane, the Acting Chief Director of University Planning and Institutional Planning at DHET, highlighted the importance of this visit to the eight universities benefiting from the Sibusiso Bengu Development Programme (SB-DP). The purpose of the oversight visits is to amongst others apprise the university on policy or other high-level developments in the Department, assess the implementation of projects and programmes supported by the Department's earmarked grants, physically inspect certain project sites to evaluate the extent of project implementation, address any challenges, and ensure that the projects are being carried out in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). These annual assessments are a key component of the DHET's monitoring strategy for participating institutions. He reaffirmed the DHET's dedication to supporting universities, particularly Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs) through the SB-DP, designed to address long-standing inequalities that have hindered the growth and sustainability of HDIs.

Mr Jabulane Ndhlovu, Deputy Director of institutional Funding responsible for SB-DP and Mr Tiyani Kubayi, Assistant Director of Institutional Funding responsible for the Clinical Training Grant, in their presentations both emphasised the Department's commitment to ensuring the grants are used efficiently and effectively. This approach, they said, would help avoid underperformance and maximise the impact of the grants. They highlighted the historical performance of the University on the two grants and set the context for the engagement.



At the meeting, Dr Phillia Vukea, Director of Grants Management at UNIVEN delivered a comprehensive presentation showcasing the University's achievements and progress in implementing the SB-DG funded projects and the Clinical Training Grant.



Mr. Sam Khoza, Director of ICT co-presented, focusing on the ICT Infrastructure Upgrade Project, one of the SB-DG funded projects for 2024/25. The presentation demonstrated how the grants have enhanced the infrastructure, student experience, and institutional capacity. It also highlighted UNIVEN's commitment to transparency, accountability and excellence.

The visit concluded with an emphasis on the collaborative effort between DHET and UNIVEN to ensure that the objectives of the Sibusiso Bengu Development Programme are met, ultimately advancing the broader goals of higher education transformation in South Africa.



A group photo of DHET delegates with UNIVEN staff members at Research Conference Centre



UNIVEN Green Technology Confucius Institute Shines at the China-Africa University Presidents Forum

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) made a notable impact at the 3rd China-Africa Technology Innovation and Transfer Cooperation Forum held from 6-8 November 2024 in Wuhan, China. Led by UNIVEN's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof. Bernard Nthambeleni, the delegation, which included senior university managers, attended the prestigious China-Africa University Presidents Forum on Innovation and Development.

The event, hosted by Hubei University of Technology, the China-Africa Innovation Cooperation Center, and the Chinese Secretariat for the China-Africa Consortium of Universities Exchange Mechanism, took place at the East Lake International Conference Centre. Prof. Nthambeleni delivered a keynote address alongside Vice-Chancellors from other African institutions, underscoring the significance of international collaboration in technological innovation and development.



Prof Bernard Nthambeleni with Prof Peng Yuyuan during the China-Africa University Presidents Forum

On photo: Prof Bernard Nthambeleni (third from left) with Senior Managers-L-R: Aluwani Magadani, Eric Maluta, Takalani Dzaga, Tawanda Rhunare, Grace GE, Eric Nemukula

One of the major outcomes of the forum was the signing of a framework agreement between UNIVEN and Hubei University of Technology (HBUT), as well as Yingli, China, to establish a China-South Africa Solar Energy Research and Development Center and develop Grid-Connected Photovoltaic Power Stations. This partnership marks a significant step towards advancing renewable energy research and sustainable development in both nations.



Prof Bernard Nthambeleni presenting during the conference

During the forum, Prof Nthambeleni highlighted the success of the UNIVEN Green Technology Confucius Institute (GTCI), which is the world's first Confucius Institute dedicated to green technology. Established in December 2023, the GTCI has quickly become a beacon of innovation in the field of sustainable energy.

Prof Nthambeleni's presentation focused on several key topics, including: The South Africa-China Bi-National Commission and Joint Research Programme; The role of China-Africa technology innovation and cooperation in higher education; How higher education serves as a powerful driver for technological innovation and collaboration between China and Africa.; The UNIVEN-HBUT Green Technology Confucius Institute as a case study in skills development and research partnerships.

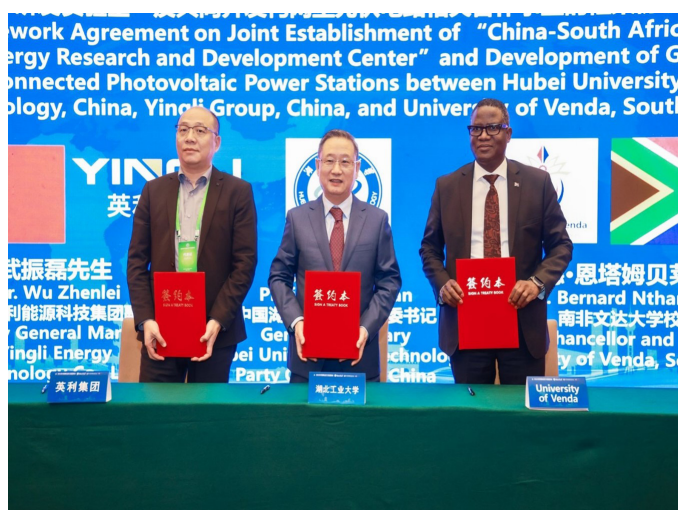
He emphasised the importance of fostering a balanced and mutually beneficial relationship between China and Africa, where both countries can thrive through technological innovation and knowledge exchange.



Prof Eric Maluta sharing sustainable energy solutions



Prof Bernard Nthambeleni (Far-right) signing framework agreement between UNIVEN and Hubei University of Technology (HBUT), as well as Yingli



On photo: Prof Bernard Nthambeleni (Far right) after signing framework agreement between UNIVEN and Hubei University of Technology (HBUT), as well as Yingli

The conference also featured speeches from prominent figures, including the Governor of Hubei Province, China's Vice-Minister of Science and Technology, and the Minister of Higher Education and Universities from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

At the conference, Prof Eric Maluta, Co-Director of the UNIVEN GTCI, presented the institute's innovative model for sustainable energy solutions. The GTCI focuses on many green technologies, including photovoltaics, waste-to-energy, hydrogen production, solar water heating, energy storage, biofuels, and carbon capture.

Prof Maluta highlighted how the GTCI's interdisciplinary approach contributes to global sustainability efforts. Participation in high-profile international forums such as this one is accelerating the university's scientific research and enhancing its global reputation as a hub for green technology innovation.



GTCI Inaugural Council meeting

The visit concluded with the inaugural meeting of the UNIVEN GTCI Council on 8 November 2024. The meeting was a significant milestone for the institute, with both Prof Nthambeleni, as co-Chair and HBUT Chair Prof Peng Yuyuan expressing satisfaction with the board's productive discussions and the GTCI's impressive achievements since its establishment.

Before attending the China-Africa University Presidents Forum, Prof Nthambeleni also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Beihang University in Hangzhou.

This new agreement focuses on collaborative research in the China-Africa joint Laboratory for the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System and Remote Sensing Applications. The MoU outlines plans for staff and student exchanges as well as joint degree programmes, further strengthening UNIVEN's ties with leading Chinese institutions.

As UNIVEN continues to build on its partnerships in China, it is positioning itself as a leader in green technology and sustainable development. The university's participation in these international forums reflects its commitment to advancing research, fostering innovation, and contributing to the global knowledge economy.



Advanced applicable technology projects for China-Africa Cooperation 2024 unveiling ceremony



Prof Bernard Nthambeleni among the delegates during the conference opening ceremony

If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus - contact the University Hotline by calling toll free number 0800 212 755 or email: univenhotline@tip-offs.com

Improper conduct includes the following...

- 1. Financial misconduct,**
- 2. Misuse or misappropriation of University assets,**
- 3. Health and safety risks,**
- 4. Plagiarism,**
- 5. Fraud and corruption.**