



UNIVERSITIES SOUTH AFRICA

South African and Japanese universities re-launch a collaboration pact in Tokyo

A large delegation from South Africa's higher education sector will represent the country in the re-launch in Tokyo, of the South Africa-Japan Universities (SAJU) Forum. The event will comprise a series of meetings culminating in a two-day launch ceremony from 14-15 July 2017. The re-launch will be hosted at the Tokyo International Exchange Centre. This sealing of relationships is being called a re-launch because SAJU has been in low-key existence for years.

South Africa will be represented on this occasion by representatives of universities, government and research councils. Universities will be represented by Vice-Chancellors of most of the 26 public universities; senior executive directors responsible for international relations, research and innovation and chief executive officer of Universities SA (USAf). Government, as the custodian of the SA-Japan bilateral relations, will be represented by senior administrators from the Departments of Science and Technology (DST) and Higher Education and Training (DHET) as well as government's main research arm, the National Research Foundation (NRF).

Drawing from a central theme of *Cooperation between South African and Japanese universities toward achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, the main features of the re-launch event will be keynote speeches and lectures drawing from the following sub-themes:

- Prospects of cooperation between Japan and Africa for achievement of SDGs
- Good practice of research cooperation for solution of global issues (SATREPS)
- Expectation of business sector for academia-industry cooperation for social innovation and sustainable implementation.

Following the main launch event, universities of technology from both countries will remain for a series of meetings under the auspices (from the SA perspective) of the South African Technology Network (SATN).

The re-launch in Japan is being organised by the Organising Committee of the SAJU Forum in collaboration with the embassies of the Republic of South Africa in Japan and of Japan in South Africa. Also playing prominent co-ordinating roles in this regard are universities' associations of both South Africa and Japan and relevant government departments from both countries, such as South Africa's DHET and Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). University of Pretoria's Centre for Japanese Studies (CJS), which co-ordinates all initiatives undertaken in South Africa under the aegis of SAJU, is also deeply involved.

South Africa already celebrated its own version of this re-launch in December 2016 at the CSIR Convention Centre in Pretoria.

Of the envisaged collaboration with Japanese universities, Professor Cheryl de la Rey, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria and also Chairperson of USAf's Research and Innovation Strategy Group (RISG), said in December: "Japan is a top performer by any measure of scientific excellence. An opportunity to collaborate with them is something we must grasp with both hands."

She said she saw this relationship enabling the two countries to resolve the challenges confronting South Africa in biodiversity, climate change, energy and disasters of various types, to cite a few examples. “We can pool expertise, build mutual capacity and increase output of doctoral graduates across these areas while also giving our scholars exposure in international laboratories conducting research in these disciplines.” She therefore urged South Africans to ensure “that SAJU does not start on a high note only to collapse.”

For USAf, the SAJU Forum presents another platform for the advancement of internationalisation of higher education in South Africa. USAf has built collaborative relations in areas of research, student exchange and mobility with universities in Germany, India, Brazil, Russia and elsewhere.

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