

Cooperation with South Africa: a new step towards new initiatives and projects

In early December, a delegation from the Polytechnic University paid a working visit to the Republic of South Africa (RSA) and held a series of business meetings with relevant ministries, universities and research centers in the capital of South Africa, Pretoria. The visit was organized as part of efforts to develop partnerships with scientific and educational organizations in South Africa, including as part of the expansion of the Russian-African Network University (RAFU) on the African continent. SPbPU was represented by Maxim Zalyvsky, Head of the RAFU Project Office, and Nikita Golovin, Deputy Head of the International Cooperation Department.



On the first day of the visit, the Polytechnic delegation held talks with Cecil Masoka, Acting Director of the Department of International Bilateral Cooperation at the South African Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Maiola Fikiswa Lizeka Mpumalanga, his Deputy for Space Science and Technology, and Miranda Mmafehello, Mohapi's Assistant for Europe and the Middle East. During the meeting, issues of cooperation in the field of higher education and research in priority areas of development in South Africa were discussed: space technologies (including small satellites (cubesats)), artificial intelligence, digital

technologies, innovations in agriculture, biotechnology, and healthcare. South Africa proposed to step up cooperation within the framework of the Presidential Postgraduate Program being implemented in the country. The parties expressed their willingness to cooperate in the field of digitalization of the economy, information exchange within the framework of technological transfer, agricultural technologies, and food security. The issue of forming a comprehensive program in the field of space technology in South Africa, which would include student education, including scholarship support, internships, and joint projects, was also discussed.



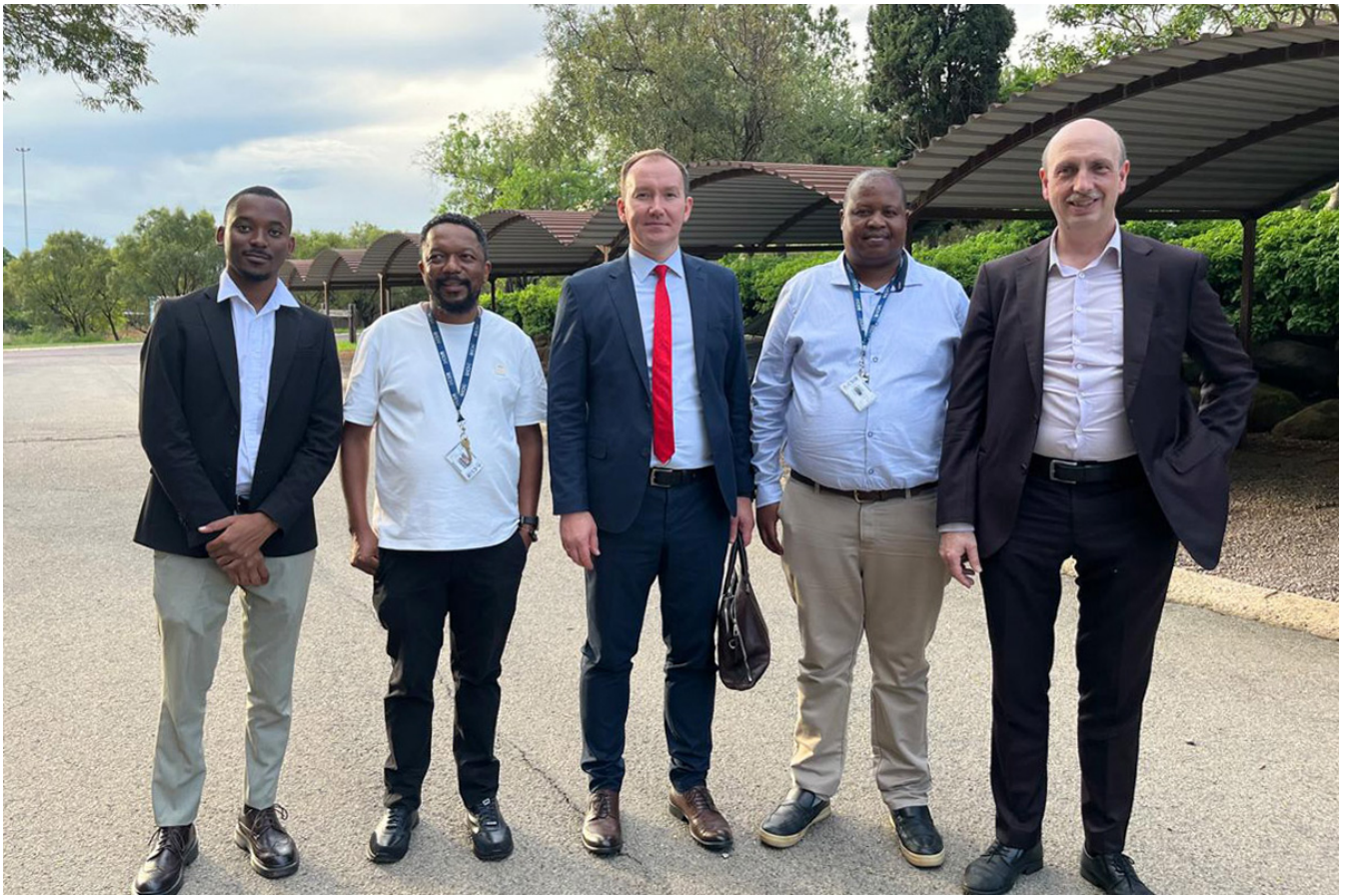
The second meeting at the ministerial level was a meeting at the Ministry of Higher Education and Vocational Training of South Africa, which was represented by Philip Tshabalala, Director of the Department of International Relations, Mokgadi Tena, Head of the Department for Global International Partnerships and Head of the Department for International Scholarship Programs Mtheto Temwa Moyo. During the meeting, the existing experience of implementing winter schools in Russia, in particular at SPbPU, with the participation of students from universities in South Africa, the possibilities of mutual academic mobility, attracting applicants from South Africa to study in Russia within the quotas of the Government of the Russian Federation, and the difficulties associated with applying for the use of quotas of the Russian Federation from the South African side were discussed.



During the business program of the visit, a meeting was held with Luvuyo Mabhali, Executive Director of the Center for Manufacturing Technologies of the Future, part of the Center for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of South Africa. Mutual interest is expressed in cooperation in the development of innovative materials, robotics, additive technologies, photonics, and the treatment of diseases using advanced technologies.



Negotiations were held with the Chief Operating Officer of the USAf (**Association of Universities of South Africa**) Mahlubi Mabisela. During the meeting, the parties made presentations on the activities of the RAFU, USAf and SPbPU and indicated mutual interest in partnership. Among the priority areas of cooperation between the universities of the two countries were noted: biotechnology, artificial intelligence, machine learning, materials science, blockchain, space technology, as well as joint summer and winter schools in natural sciences.



At **the University of Pretoria**, one of the largest and leading universities in South Africa, the SPbPU delegation met with the Director of the Department of Internationalization and Strategic Partnership of the University of Pretoria, Dr. Rakeshni Ramootar-Precious, representatives of the University's international office, the Dean and leading professors of the Faculty of Engineering, Construction and Information Technology. During the meeting, presentations of both universities, their key educational and scientific areas, the main objectives of the development of international partnership and international academic mobility were presented. The parties agreed in January-February 2026 to continue the discussion and hold a series of online meetings between the scientific groups of the two universities. Based on the results of these meetings, 2-3 most interesting areas will be identified and joint activities will continue to be worked out on them.

After the end of the working meeting, the SPbPU delegation was given a tour of the scientific centers and laboratories of the Engineering School of the Faculty of Engineering, Construction and Information Technology.



The delegation of SPbPU visited the Research Center for Robotics and Future Manufacturing as part of its big visit to the educational and scientific centers of South Africa in Pretoria. At the meeting with the head of the center, Sanviir Matadini, projects of Polytechnic University in the field of robotics, artificial intelligence in industry, and intelligent transport systems were presented. The center presented projects on the development of industrial robots, including collaborative, autonomous transportation systems, as well as educational projects in the field of industrial automation. Following the meeting, the parties agreed to hold a series of online meetings/webinars between the scientific groups of the center and SPbPU in the second half of January to discuss specific joint tasks and projects.



At **the Tswana University of Technology**, the SPbPU delegation met with colleagues from the international office and the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Following the meeting, the parties agreed to begin in January the preparation of an agreement on cooperation between the two universities, which, among other things, concerns the principles of the implementation of academic mobility programs.



During the meeting at the South African Agency for Technological Innovation, Patrick Krappie, Acting Director General of the Agency, presented the Agency's key goals and objectives in the development of innovation and technology in South Africa. As a first step in building cooperation between the Agency and Russian universities, the parties discussed the possibility of supporting joint student research initiatives and the creation of laboratories led by young scientists with the involvement of undergraduates from universities in the two countries.



In the final part of the visit, the SPbPU delegation met at the Russian Embassy in South Africa with Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of South Africa Roman Ambarov. During the conversation, representatives of SPbPU outlined their goals and objectives in developing cooperation with educational and scientific organizations in South Africa, the key areas in which the university has an interest in implementing joint projects, and the main outcomes of past meetings in South African organizations. In his turn, Roman Ambarov stressed the importance of expanding academic contacts between Russia and the Republic of South Africa and expressed his readiness to provide the necessary support to the initiatives of Polytechnic University and other universities in Russia.

Дата публикации: 2025.12.30

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