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UNIVEN Welcomes New Era of Leadership as Mr Rudzani Mushweu Assumes Role of Council Chairperson



The University of Venda (UNIVEN) proudly announces the election of Mr Rudzani Mushweu as the new Chairperson of Council, following a special sitting held on Saturday, 15 November 2025. His election marks a significant moment for the institution as it continues its commitment to strengthening governance, deepening academic excellence, and driving transformation.

Congratulating Mr Mushweu, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni, expressed full confidence in the new Chairperson's leadership and vision. "I extend my heartfelt congratulations on your election as the Chairperson of Council. This is a significant milestone, and we are confident that your leadership, vision, and commitment will steer the Council toward continued excellence and growth," He added that Mr Mushweu's extensive experience and passion for advancing higher education will "inspire positive change and strengthen our institution's mission."

In his acceptance speech, Mr Mushweu delivered a heartfelt address characterised by humility, reflection, and a strong sense of purpose. He traced his first encounter with UNIVEN Council business back to 2002, when he was a student leader, noting how the context of higher education has dramatically shifted over the years. "Today, I accept the responsibility of leading Council under a completely different context," he reflected. "Our university has always been more than an institution; it is a living community of dreamers, thinkers, creators, and changemakers."

He drew inspiration from the words of UNIVEN alumni who recently described the institution as the "University of Life,"

a place that equips students with resilience, perspective, and readiness to contribute meaningfully to society. Their enduring appreciation, he said, is a testament to UNIVEN's transformative impact. Mr Mushweu also paid tribute to his predecessors, respected leaders such as Prof Barney Pitjana, Judge Yvonne Mokgoro, Dr Serobi Maja, and Mr Juneas Lekgetha, acknowledging the powerful legacy they leave behind. "I am standing on the shoulders of giants," he noted, emphasising that the responsibility ahead is both humbling and inspiring.

Looking to the future, he called on the Council and university community to embrace innovation, ethical leadership, and compassionate governance. While rejecting the impulse to promise radical shifts, he committed to strengthening UNIVEN's upward trajectory. "Together, we will work to ensure that our university remains a sanctuary for truth, a source of innovation, and a champion of integrity," he said.

Anchoring his message in the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world," Mr Mushweu urged the university community to remain united in purpose and intentional in their pursuit of excellence. His vision is clear: a University of Venda that produces students who are locally grounded, globally competitive, and ready to shape a better future.

As Mr Mushweu steps into this pivotal role, UNIVEN looks forward to a period of purposeful leadership, strengthened institutional culture, and continued transformation. The University extends its warmest congratulations and wishes him success as he leads the Council in advancing the mission and values of this proudly African institution.

Dr Mpho Tshikororo Inaugurated as a Member of the South African Young Academy of Science



Dr Mpho Tshikororo receiving the membership certificate, handed by Dr Avela Majavu (SAYAS, Co-Chair)

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) is proud to announce that Dr Mpho Tshikororo in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, has been inaugurated as a member of the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS). The prestigious ceremony took place during the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) Annual Awards Ceremony held on 29 October 2025.

Dr Tshikororo was among ten young scientists honoured for their outstanding contributions to their respective fields. The newly elected members will officially be inducted into SAYAS at its Annual General

Meeting scheduled for 29-30 November 2025, where they will participate in an onboarding session hosted by the SAYAS Executive Committee. SAYAS serves as a dynamic platform for South Africa's most promising young researchers, fostering collaboration, mentorship, and innovation across disciplines. The organisation is committed to advancing the role and visibility of young scientists, contributing to science-based solutions for the country's pressing social and environmental challenges. Through its initiatives, SAYAS empowers its members to influence policy development, champion scientific excellence, and drive interdisciplinary engagement both

locally and globally. Membership in SAYAS is reserved for outstanding scientists under the age of 40 who hold a PhD and demonstrate excellence and leadership in their various disciplines such as the natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, and the arts.

Dr Tshikororo's research focuses on climate change adaptation strategies with an emphasis on sustainable food production and resilient food systems in the face of climate-driven disruptions. His work also explores agricultural entrepreneurship and the modelling of agricultural markets to enhance

the sustainability and viability of agribusiness enterprises. By developing innovative and tailored agribusiness models, Dr Tshikororo continues to contribute meaningfully to South Africa's agricultural transformation and food security goals.

His recognition as a SAYAS member not only underscores his dedication to advancing agricultural science but also reflects the University of Venda's growing impact in fostering cutting-edge research and leadership among young academics.



The newly inaugurated SAYAS members

GTCI at UNIVEN and Vhembe District Municipality Forge Green Technology and Agricultural Collaboration

The Green Technology Confucious Institute (GTCI) at the University of Venda (UNIVEN) held a landmark roundtable discussion. The discussion took place on 05 November 2025 at 2Ten Hotel in Sibasa. It brought together representatives from UNIVEN, Vhembe

District Municipality, Limpopo Department of Agriculture, and Chinese academic and research Specialists from Hubei University of Technology (HBUT) to advance joint initiatives in green technology and sustainable agriculture.



Delegates from UNIVEN GTCI, Vhembe District Municipality, Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Hubei University of Technology pose for a group photo following a landmark dialogue on green technology and sustainable development.

Delegates from Vhembe District Municipality included specialists in water, sanitation, energy, and agricultural engineering. The dialogue served as a dynamic platform for cross-cultural exchange and strategic collaboration.

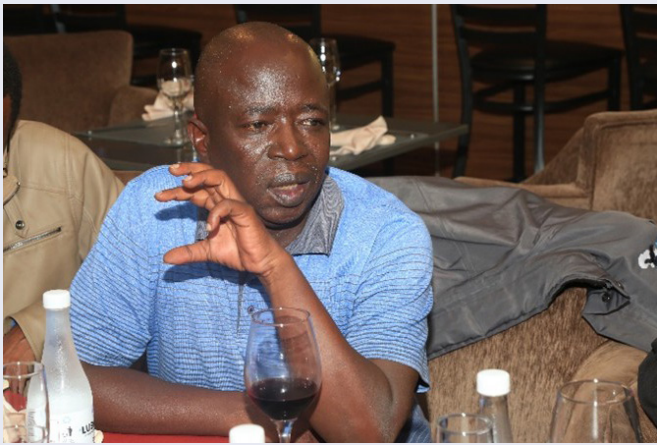
Central to the discussions was the localisation of agricultural machinery to meet the needs of small-scale and semi-commercial farmers in South Africa. Experts from HBUT shared China's successful model of government-backed innovation, where targeted research funding enables the design, testing, and large-scale production of equipment tailored to farmers' realities. "We do not just develop machinery, we ensure it serves real people in real fields.

If a prototype does not benefit farmers, it does not go into production." explained Prof Hu Xinyu from HBUT's Agricultural Machinery Engineering Research Institute.

The Municipality representatives highlighted ongoing challenges including limited access to land, inadequate mechanisation, water distribution inefficiencies, and restricted market access for crops such as macadamia nuts and soybeans.

"Young graduates with agricultural degrees often sit idle, not out of unwillingness, but because they lack access to land, tools, and market linkages," noted Mr Matome Mokoena from the International Relations Officer from the University of Venda.





Delegates are engaged in a discussion.

To address these challenges, delegates proposed establishing a 'living lab' model, a tripartite partnership between universities, local communities, and government, to co-create practical, scalable innovations. Proposed projects include solar-powered agrivoltaics systems that integrate crop cultivation with energy generation, smart irrigation technologies, and post-harvest processing tools to reduce food loss and boost productivity.

The meeting also explored the creation of joint research centres, prototype development facilities, and an innovation and commercialisation hub to bridge the gap between academic research and rural implementation. Efforts are underway to formalise these collaborations through existing Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and to leverage both South African and Chinese

funding mechanisms.

Prof Eric Maluta, Co-Director of the Green Technology Confucius Institute, emphasised the collaborative spirit of the initiative. "This is not just about technology transfer, it is about co-creation. We are building friendships that power progress," he said.

The dialogue concluded with a celebratory toast to Sino-South African cooperation, marking the shared commitment to sustainable development, green innovation, and inclusive agricultural growth.

The Green Technology Confucius Institute at the University of Venda continues to play a pivotal role in strengthening ties between China and South Africa. It is promoting not only language and culture but also people-centred, practical technological advancement that supports rural livelihoods and environmental resilience.

