



UNESCO 9th Africa Engineering Week and 7th Africa Engineering Conference

Celebrating & Growing Engineering excellence in the African region

25 - 28 September 2023

CSIR International Convention Centre Meiring Naude Road, Pretoria, South Africa

PRESS RELEASE

Government prioritizing Investment in Infrastructure for Economic Growth - Deputy President, Paul Mashatile at UNESCO's 9th Africa Engineering Week Conference

25 September 2023: In his keynote address at the opening of the 9th UNESCO Africa Engineering Week (AEW) and the 7th Africa Engineering Conference on 25 September 2023, **Deputy President of South Africa, the Honourable Paul Mashatile** stated, "Investing in world class infrastructure contributes significantly to improving the quality of lives of citizens, as well as the competitiveness and attractiveness of countries, regions and cities."

In his keynote address to the conference attended by dignitaries from across the African continent, the Deputy President went on to state that: "Engineering is the backbone of any society and plays a role in shaping the world driving technological advancements, infrastructure development and economic progress."

"Today, African engineers play a crucial role in shaping our future. They are at the forefront of ground-breaking projects addressing pressing challenges in energy, water, transportation, freight and logistics, and also in the communication sector."

"It is therefore essential to bridge the gaps in our education system, promote research and development and foster an environment that enables inclusivity and professional growth. We must inspire empower the next generation of engineers by instilling passion for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics stem in our youth. Together, we can pave the way for a future where engineering is central to Africa's growth and prosperity."

Speaking prior to the Deputy President, **Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, the Honourable Sihle Zikalala**, stated, "We call on everyone including the private sector to join government in investing in the development of engineering professionals so that the built environment sector can function effectively by enhancing collaboration between academia, industry, the private sector and government." He emphasized that engineers must not consider themselves as pure technicians with no role in policymaking, "We must collaborate and your practical knowledge must inform the policy direction for our country to succeed."

Refilwe Buthelezi, the President of the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) in delivering the conference opening address stated that the 9th Africa UNESCO Africa Engineering Week and 7th Africa Engineering Conference is a convergence of like-minded individuals from different spheres coming together to transform the sector through an orchestrated researched effort, that prioritizes infrastructure development.



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She added: “The African continent is undergoing a transition period, a period where we need to focus on rapid transformation and economic growth. This event aims to increase visibility of engineering in South Africa, but also within the continent and the role that we play in creating a sustainable future. We are calling for more collaboration in growing the engineering pipeline. And this we believe, can be done by focusing more on basic education. STEM education is essential for Africa's future development as it produces students with the skills and knowledge, they need to solve some of the complex problems that we are facing on a day-to-day basis.” She concluded by stating that we need to find ways to build the Africa that we want.

In his address, **Martiale Zebazekan, UNESCO Regional Director, said:** “Since inception, nine years ago, Africa engineering week has grown, evolved and taking on a new board, bringing engineers and stakeholders from Africa and beyond to engage in discourse, collaborate and work together on solving the challenges of our continent. No one institution or individual country can achieve sustainable development on its own - collaboration and partnerships and access to reliable data are key.”

Mustafa Shehu, President-Elect of the World Federation of Engineering (WFEU), stated: “As we celebrate engineering excellence in Africa, we must also acknowledge the need for diversity and inclusivity within our profession as we celebrate the remarkable achievements of African engineers, whose contributions have played a crucial role in transforming their communities and societies and other themes celebrating and growing and growing in generic excellence in the African region.”

Eng. Papias Kazawadi Dedeki, President of the Federation of Engineering Organisations (FAEO) said: “Today, we don't just celebrate engineering excellence, we aim to harness it as a transformative for Africa. Our theme isn't just words. It's a call to action. It embodies our shared commitment to recognize celebrate and elevate exceptional work of African engineers.”

Eng. Martin Manuhwa, Conference Chair and FAEO Past President Southern Africa, in his address appealed to the Honourable Minister, the Honourable Deputy President and all the policymakers present, to ensure that the engineering field is supported by capacity building, is properly regulated, and that only competent qualified professionals are allowed to practice engineering. He also requested that government makes skills development a priority.

In delivering the vote of thanks at the end of the opening session of the conference, **Dr Bridget Ssamula, ECSA CEO,** stated, “As we engage, collaborate and network over the next three, four days, we look to innovate. We look to grow.”

The aim of UNESCO's AEW and Africa Engineering Conference is to honour, inspire, and cultivate engineering excellence across Africa. It serves as a platform to educate and enthuse the youth and the public about the fascinating world of engineering, emphasizing its role in addressing the pressing challenges faced in the region.

The 9th UNESCO AEW and the 7th Africa Engineering Conference takes at place at the CSIR International Convention Centre in Pretoria, South Africa, from the 25-28 September 2023.



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This year's conference continues to focused on critical issues impacting women in engineering, students and young professionals, business to business networking and technical paper sessions – with each running a dedicated programme for the duration of the event.

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About Africa Engineering Week

Themed “Celebrating Engineering Excellence in the African Region,” - the 9th UNESCO Africa Engineering Week (AEW) 2023 and the 7th Africa Engineering Conference from the 25- 28 September 2023, is an extraordinary gathering that celebrates and fosters engineering excellence in the African region. This groundbreaking event is more than just a conference; it seeks to inspire and educate the youth and the public about the awe-inspiring world of engineering and will showcase how engineers are the ultimate problem solvers and crucial players in addressing our continent's most pressing challenges. This annual event, proudly hosted by the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) in 2023, gains its strength from the collaborative efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the World Federation of Engineering Organisations (WFEO); and the Federation of African Engineering Organisations (FAEO).

Media Contact:

Charles Poulter
Media Manager | Africa Engineering Week 2023
SWM Communications
Cell: +27 76 812 8429
Email: charles@swmcommunications.co.za

ECSA Contact:

Mbali Dlamini
Public Relations Officer | Engineering Council of South Africa
Email: sybil@ecsa.co.za