

Features/Columns



•UNIDO representative Khalid EL Mekwad (right) and Vocation Education and Training Director Alex Simumba exchange the signed partnership agreement document as UNIDO chief technical advisor Rajam Venkatachalam (far right), Nortec principal Victor Mulenga and TEVETA Director General Cleophas Takataza (left) look on in Ndola recently. Pictures by KAFUKA CHANDA.



•UNITED Nations Resident Coordinator Coumba Mar Gadio delivers her speech.

Powering Zambia's skills agenda ...Sweden, Volvo, UNIDO, Nortec join forces

By MARTIN NYIRENDA

TO paraphrase Professor Chinwe Achebe's argument that when things fall apart, its centre can no longer hold, especially when education is not perceived as a human right for all throughout life.

Today the Northern Technical College (NORTEC) has managed to match access to technical education with quality.

The project has been established at NORTEC through a Public Private Development Partnership (PPDP) approach with support from the Embassy of Sweden/Zambia, Volvo Group, Government of Zambia (MCTI, MOHE, NORTEC) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

UNIDO chief technical advisor, Rajam Venkatachalam, opens up: "We also applaud the government for their contribution, in phase I they sponsored 263 students by offering bursary, now in phase II they have pledged to offer bursary for 500 students. "They also pledged to sponsor the teachers from ten colleges across the nation to engage with

every society to promote skills development and encourage women to excel in mostly male dominated fields such as engineering.

She underscored the fact that mechanical engineering was fast-changing across the globe from management to technical experts to ensure a balanced team was realized in the engineering field.

"It is only hoped that the partnership would go a long way and bear the desired fruits of success. We are promoting more females to be absorbed in the male-dominated fields," she said.

Ms Brumer stressed the importance of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to the national development agenda.

Earlier, Johan Reiman, from Volvo Group HQ who is the Project Manager - Corporate Social Responsibility, handed over an excavator to Nortec principal to be used by students as training equipment. This time around Volvo donated a high-tech 15 ton new tipper truck meant to be used for training purposes.

During the phase 2 signing ceremony for the ZAMITA project recently, UNIDO's representative, Head of Regional Office Khalid EL Mekwad said the first phase was designed and implemented in close cooperation between the Government and Sweden (both Government and PS) through SIDA and VOLVO within a public private partnership, all in line with the with Zambia's National Development Priorities and the UN Sustainable Development Partnership Framework for Zambia.

The support extended by the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Commerce Trade and Industry was crucial in the success of the ZAMITA. NORTEC played a pivotal role in securing the transfer of knowledge and expertise to the students in optimal conditions. What we expect from the partnership is the inclusion of poor people along value chains related to the company's core business; in gaining employment and production as producers, distributors and entrepreneurs. "To get a sustainable and systemic change, the training programme has to be designed

not only by the industry, but in close consultation with national authorities so that they fit the needs of different countries," Mr Simumba said.

He said that in the previous phase of the ZAMITA programme, meaning launching Zambia's first diploma programme in heavy equipment engineering, the curricula was successfully developed jointly by the industry, UNIDO and the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA).

Volvo Group, Director Business Development, Rashie Balkisson underscored the importance of the project, saying his company was committed to adding value to the skills development under the UNIDO programme between SIDA, Volvo, UNIDO and NORTEC.

To add to previous support and donations to the programme of training aids, Balkisson said the donation of Volvo Euro 6 15 ton Tipper truck by Volvo Southern Africa will be used as a training aid for the institution

to enable students have a practical learning experience.

He said he was happy with the commitment of other partners in successfully implementing the programme which has the potential to steer the economic success of industries to greater heights because industries cannot excel without appropriate quality manpower with right skills.

NORTEC principal Victor Mulenga expressed confidence that the programme will meet the needs of the national development goals in accelerating skills development to power various industries.

Mr Mulenga said the project seeks to add value to the country's development processes by improving the social life of the citizenry in line with the Seventh National Development Plan (NDP). "It is my hope that more organisations will come on board to supplement Government's effort in the delivery of quality education through more of such partnerships", Dr Gadio said.

Suffice to note, ZAMITA has managed to score positive achievements in adding value to Zambia's efforts to implement new and existing mining projects due to a severe shortage of specifically skilled and experienced personnel.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goal nine on Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, the United Nations believe that investment in infrastructure and innovation were critical drivers of economic growth and development.

Further, technological progress is also important in finding lasting solutions to both economic and environmental challenges, such as providing new jobs and promoting energy efficiency. Promoting sustainable industries and investing in scientific research and innovation, are all important ways to facilitate sustainable development.

"As the United Nations, we are delighted that NORTEC has managed to achieve a modern curriculum, upgrade infrastructure and install hi-tech training equipment under the project and is moving with the modern trends in the mining sector which are heavily reliant on skilled engineers, geologists, metallurgists, technicians, mechanics and artisans, among others," he said.

For a long time now, mining companies have complained that despite having locals with appropriate qualifications, many still lack the required knowledge especially in modern mining technologies that the firms have adopted.

NORTEC, as the largest technical institution in the country, has been the focal point in this renaissance and ZAMITA has enhanced quality training at the institution which has led to its nomination as the college of excellence for heavy equipment engineering studies by the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA).

This speaks to SDG number five aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The programme has played a crucial role in closing the skills gap in male dominated fields by attracting more women to pursue technical and engineering programmes, said Dr Gadio.

UNIDO has pledged to ensure that NORTEC trains engineers who are able to innovate, design, create and maintain products, systems and equipment for the benefit and wellbeing of humans.

UNHCR chief to visit Zambia

By MATTHEWS MUSUKUWA

ON January 1, 2016, Filippo Grandi was elected by the United Nations General Assembly as the new United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, taking over from Antonio Guterres whose term of office had expired.

Mr Grandi was elected to serve a five-year term, until December 31, 2020, after which he will either seek a new mandate at the General Assembly or step aside for another person to take over.

Before being elected high commissioner, Mr Grandi had been engaged in international cooperation for over 30 years, focusing on refugee and humanitarian work.

He served as commissioner-general of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Middle East and as United Nations deputy special representative for Afghanistan.

His election in 2016 at the

UN General Assembly made him become the 11th United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Probably, his wealth of knowledge and experience in dealing with refugee related matters was too much to be ignored when he was subjected to contest for the UNHCR top job against other equally good candidates.

Since his ascendance to the office of the UNHCR, Mr Grandi has been on assignment to a number of countries where he has facilitated the provision of humanitarian assistance to people who face displacement for various reasons.

However, the high commissioner is yet to visit most of the refugee host countries in the southern part of the African continent where thousands of people face displacement due to various reasons, ranging from natural calamities, diseases and political instability, among others.

This week, the United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has announced that after four years in the house, he is ready to make a long trip down to Zambia in the southern region of Africa to see how the country is providing protection to refugees in the various settlements.

Zambia is currently hosting over 84,000 refugees, former refugees and persons of concern in its three refugee settlements and transit centres.

The UN refugees agency chief is expected in Zambia for a three-day working visit in what will be his first ever visit to the southern African country from 16 to 18 October, 2019.

Mr Grandi confirmed in Geneva, Switzerland that he is set to travel to Zambia through South Africa where he is also expected for three days.

His visit to Zambia will coincide with the 5th International Conference for African Ministers responsible for civil registration and vital statistics, which will take place

from 14 to 18 October, 2019 in Lusaka.

The conference on civil registration, which is very critical to addressing the challenge of statelessness that the world is striving to address through the #Belong campaign, has been organized by the African Union (AU) in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Zambian Government.

Civil registration system covers all births and deaths, issues birth and death certificates, and compiles and disseminates vital statistics including cause of death.

It can also record marriages and divorce.

During his working visit to Zambia, Mr Grandi is expected to meet President Edgar Lungu for talks at State House.

He will visit Mantapala Refugee Settlement in Luapula Province where Congolese

refugees are being hosted. Mantapala is one of the three refugee settlements.

Other settlements are Mayukwayukwa in Western Province and Meheba in North Western Province.

The high commissioner confirmed his visit to Zambia at the ongoing 70th session of the Executive Committee Meeting of the UNHCR.

He expressed his optimism to visit the actual refugee settlement where the Home Affairs Minister Stephen Kampanyongo who was leading a Zambian delegation at the ECXCOM in Geneva, Switzerland.

Mr Grandi said he wants to visit the actual refugee settlement where the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) is being implemented to see how the programme has been rolled out.

Zambia is currently the only country in southern Africa implementing the CRRF, which is being piloted in Mantapala refugee settlement in the northern part of the country.

The high commissioner noted that being on the ground will help him appreciate the challenges that the host countries of refugees face.

Mr Kampanyongo noted that Zambia is fortunate to be accorded an opportunity to host the high commissioner for refugees so he can have firsthand information on what Government is doing to provide protection to refugees and persons of concern.

Mr Kampanyongo told the high commissioner that it will be an honour to take him to the refugee settlement in Luapula so he can see how Zambia is addressing issues of the refugees.

The minister used the opportunity to request Mr Grandi if he could be given a slot at the 5th International Conference for African Ministers responsible for civil registration to address

the delegates on matters of statelessness.

He said the high commissioner said he would be glad to spend some moments at the conference if time will allow.

He said the conference is important to ending statelessness because it deals with national documentation of the UNHCR.

His visit will coincide with the 5th International Conference for African Ministers responsible for civil registration.

The last time a UN high commissioner for refugees visited Zambia was in 2007 when Antonio Guterres, the current United Nations Secretary General, visited Mayukwayukwa Refugee Settlement in Western Province and Kala Camp in Luapula Province.

During his visit to Zambia, Mr Guterres interacted with refugees from several African countries and assured them that the UNHCR would continue to seek durable solutions for them.

Mr Guterres held open and candid discussions with Congolese refugees at Kala camp as well as with Angolan, Rwandan and Burundian refugees from Mayukwayukwa settlement in the western part of the country.

The then UN refugee agency chief also attended the 27th Summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Lusaka and held meetings with senior government officials, diplomats and representatives of UNHCR and sister agencies.

The Zambian Government has made huge contributions to the provision of international protection for the refugees.

So far, Government has allocated about 106,000 hectares of land to refugees and spends about US\$2 million every year on officers providing services in the refugee settlements. ZANIS



•HOME Affairs Minister Stephen Kampanyongo confers with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi at the just ended 70th session of the Executive Committee Meeting in Geneva Switzerland.