

23 January 2025

NEWS RELEASE

World Economic Forum announces new Centre for Industry and Technology based at University of Pretoria



Back row: Børge Brende (President and CEO of the World Economic Forum), Patrice Motsepe (businessman and entrepreneur), Dr Blade Nzimande (Minister of Science Technology and Innovation), Solly Malatsi (Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies). Front Row: Sebastian Buckup (Head of Network and Partnerships; Member of the Executive Committee, World Economic Forum) Dr Precious Moloi-Motsepe (Motsepe Foundation), Prof Francis Petersen (UP Vice-Chancellor and Principal).

The World Economic Forum is set to launch four new Centres for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR), including C4IR South Africa, which will be hosted at the University of Pretoria (UP).

The Forum announced the signing of agreements for the four new Centres on 23 January 2025.

C4IR South Africa, which will be formally known as the South African Centre for Industry and Technology, will be run in collaboration with leading South African academic institutions and will advance the nation's

readiness for the future of global value chains and energy transition. The Centre will focus on the twin challenges of inclusive cross-industry digitisation and decarbonisation. Once launched, it will be the first C4IR Centre in South Africa and the second on the African continent.

“The upcoming launches of four new C4IR Centres underscores our commitment to shaping a future where technology better serves humanity,” said Børge Brende, President and CEO of the Forum. “Together, with our growing network of global partners, we will continue to harness the power of innovation to address society's most pressing challenges and create localized solutions with global reach.”

To accelerate innovation and partnerships in pursuit of this mission, the SA Centre for Industry and Technology will partner with government and business and leverage the Forum’s global communities and initiatives, notably those led by the Forum’s Centres for Advanced Manufacturing and Supply Chains and Energy and Materials and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

“The launch of the Centre for Industry and Technology, in partnership with the World Economic Forum, is a major step in driving technological progress and industrial transformation,” said Professor Francis Petersen, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UP. “The Centre will help position South Africa for manufacturing readiness and support its sustainable energy transition towards net zero. The University of Pretoria is proud to sign this agreement today.”

About the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution Network

The Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution is a platform for multi-stakeholder collaboration, bringing together public and private sectors to maximise technological benefits to society while minimising the risks. It explores exponential technologies and drives their responsible adoption and application, leveraging a global network of independent national and thematic centres.

The new announced Centres in Pretoria, Muscat (Oman), Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) and Uttar Pradesh (India) will tackle critical global challenges with innovative solutions tailored to national and regional needs.

The World Economic Forum launched the first Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in San Francisco in 2017, followed shortly by Centres in Japan and India. The Network now includes Centres in Azerbaijan, Colombia, Germany (Berlin Global Government Technology Centre), Korea (Gyeonggi), India (Mumbai, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh), Israel, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia (Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Centre for Space Futures, and the Riyadh Centre for Cyber Economics), Serbia, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, the United States (Centre for Trustworthy Technology and US Centre for Advanced Manufacturing in Michigan), Ukraine (Kyiv Global Government Technology Centre) and Vietnam.

About the University of Pretoria

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa. Spread over seven campuses, it comprises nine faculties and the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2025 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Accounting and Finance; Architecture; Electrical and Electronic Engineering; Law; Sport Science; and Veterinary Science.

Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their 2024 World University Rankings (WUR). UP entered the top 50 in the global 2024 Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings for the first time, among a record 2 152 universities and institutions from 125 countries/ regions ranked in 2024. UP moved to 42nd in the world in 2024 from 69th in 2023 and also ranked among the top 10 universities in the world for two SDGs, with a notable No. 8 ranking for both SDG 1, “No Poverty” (first appearance), and SDG 8, “Decent Work and Economic Growth”. This highlights the university's dedication towards social justice and equality.

About the Annual Meeting 2025

The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2025, taking place in Davos-Klosters from 20 to 24 January, convenes global leaders under the theme ‘Collaboration for the Intelligent Age’. The meeting will foster new partnerships and insights to shape a more sustainable, inclusive future in an era of rapidly advancing technology, focusing on five key areas: Reimagining Growth, Industries in the Intelligent Age, Investing in People, Safeguarding the Planet, and Rebuilding Trust. Click [here](#) to learn more.

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Media enquiries can be directed to Mr Sashlin Girraj - Public Relations & Events Manager

Email: sashlin.girraj@up.ac.za | Cell: +27(0)72 447 3784
