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### Press Release

## University Innovation Pod Botswana - Future Earth Africa Hub Southern Africa Regional Node

The University of Innovation Pod Botswana has been designated as part of the Future Earth Africa Hub Southern Africa Regional Node. The announcement was made on November 22, 2024, by the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa. As a Southern Africa Regional Node, The University Innovation Pod will co-host the node to be led by the Malawi University of Science and Technology in partnership with other universities, including the University of Namibia, Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Venda, University of Zambia and Catholic University of Mozambique, Mulungushi University and Futura Envi 4ward-asbl of DRC, to drive the Future Earth Sustainability Science.

The Node will champion several regional strategic focus areas to be implemented as Work Packages (WPs).

WP1: Sustainability Science Champions

WP2: Networks and Partner Engagement

WP3: Knowledge Generation, Management and Dissemination

WP4: Science-Policy Interface

In line with the goals of the Future Earth Africa Hub hosted by the NRF, the overall objective of the Node is to support the Southern Africa region and their agro-ecological systems to achieve sustainability outcomes by developing, testing and proposing optimal sustainability practices, tools, platforms and capacity building and business models for improved livelihoods and sustainable resources use. To this end, the node will:

1. Develop and deliver capacity-building programmes to generate African Future Earth Champions
2. Strengthen stakeholders' partnership and engagement to create an enabling multi-actor ecosystem that supports packaging and availing knowledge information management and dissemination application of sustainability science.
3. Promote policy-science interface for informed decision-making. Finally, it will expand opportunities for sustainability science and research as a platform for technology and innovation advancement, leading to business enterprise in southern African ecosystems.

The Future Earth Africa Hub is part of the Future Earth Global Network, which is dedicated to expanding the understanding of global sustainability challenges. It aims to broaden the range of actors involved in defining these challenges and to connect top-down and bottom-up approaches to identifying solutions. This is achieved by facilitating research and fostering solutions-oriented collaborations across research, business, policy, and civil society.

The Future Earth Africa Hub ([www.futureearth.org](http://www.futureearth.org)) is a global organization that was launched in 2022 and is hosted by the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa. Its mission is to strengthen African sustainability science capacities, leadership, networks, foundations, and connections and elevate African sustainability scholarship on the global stage. The Hub currently includes a Leadership Centre and Nodes in all regions of Africa.

The Co-Director of the Southern Africa Hub Regional Node, Prof David Mkwambisi, who is also the Director of MUST Institute of Industrial Research and Innovation (MIIRI), highlighted that the co-hosting of the Node is an opportunity for the country and all local universities to take an active role in local and global sustainability issues. “It allows national professionals to enhance their capacities and access several opportunities, especially the upcoming researchers working on sustainability science,” said Prof Mkwambisi.

In his communication to MUST, Dr Michael Nxumalo, Director of the Future Earth Africa Hub, said: “The National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Future Earth Africa Hub (FEAH) are thrilled to be partnering with the Universities to ensure the successful establishment of the Node in Southern Africa. We believe that the leadership of the Universities will greatly contribute to the growth and impact of Future Earth in the region,” said Dr Nxumalo.

Professor Richie Moalosi, Director of the University Innovation Pod (UniPod), said that entrusting the university to co-host the Node validates the capacity and reputation that the Innovation Centre has created over the years and was visible in Botswana and beyond. He reiterated that UniPod will ensure that it successfully delivers on this initiative to realise its objectives and contribute towards global sustainability efforts. Our proposal was selected as the top submission among all applicants, convincing the team at NRF and FEAH to designate the UniPod as the Southern Africa Node of the Hub. This outcome clearly demonstrates the confidence that others have in our capabilities.

