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I am pleased to announce that the SAIW has now signed a MOU with South Africa's Nuclear Energy Corporation (NECSA) to establish a Nuclear School of Excellence in Pelindaba. The overall aim is to strengthen our national capability in non-destructive testing (NDT), with a special focus on the advanced ultrasonic phased-array (UT-PA) and time of flight diffraction (ToFD) methods.

The project will focus on the specific needs of the nuclear sector, which has had limited success in finding skilled NDT professionals. Also, though, this project will focus exclusively on recruiting and training women to take up careers in these advanced NDT techniques.

Historically, the number of South African women involved in NDT has been very low, with only 13.5% representation since 1980. Statistics taken from the start of 2021, though, show an improvement in these numbers, with 27% of all new NDT students now being female.

First and foremost, the project funding is to raise the number of women in NDT, so sponsorship is available for 10 people to be trained as Level 2 phased-array and ToFD NDT inspectors. So we are urging any woman who already has a Level 1 or Level 2 certificate in UT Inspection, or even an interest in NDT and a Matric Certificate with good results in mathematics and physical science, to contact the SAIW. This is a lifechanging opportunity.

Also on the NDT side, we have two gentlemen from Cameroon with us on the IAEA-sponsored NDT course. They are currently completing Level 2 qualifications in magnetic particle and penetrant testing with Jan Cowen, and doing very well.

The 20th World Conference on Non-Destructive Testing is finally taking place this year, after having been cancelled since COVID hit. It will be hosted by the Korean Society for NDT (KSNT) under the auspice of ICNDT and will be held in Incheon, South Korea during May.

We have also just finished Group I of our Sasol Training Programme, which started some 18 years ago as one of the original initiatives to develop NDT and welding inspectors for South African Industry: from Matric Level all the way through Level 1 and Level 2 NDT courses and then onto Weld Inspection courses. This programme even includes ASME Code courses and the Competent Persons qualification. We have been running these in alternate years, with most of the courses being conducted in various Sasol facilities. This last group of 20 started in January of 2023 and the training was completed by December.

Sasol continues to be very happy with the results of this programme and we are proud to have been chosen to partner Sasol in this important work. We look forward to starting the planning for Group J candidates for the 2025 year.

We have also been talking to UNIDO about a new group of Liberian Students coming to us as part of UNIDO's Youth Rising project. We trained about 11 Liberian welders in this programme in 2022 and we are expecting another eight or so, including women, to be spending approximately 28 weeks with us on the IIW International MMA Welder programme.

Because UNIDO has the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core, in addition to the International Welder qualifications, we have been asked to incorporate a welded construction project into the programme that, if implemented in Liberia, can easily become developmental in terms of jobs, the economy or the environment.

I am also pleased to announce that we have applied for an extension of scope for our SANAS 17021 certification for conformity assessment, which will enable us to certify companies to both ISO 3834 and ISO 9001. Unlike many other certification bodies, however, we will use two separate specialist auditors for these, so one does not end up diluting the other. We are very proud of the quality of our auditors.

John Tarboton