Private sector, Japan's Kobe Institute ink deal to boost ICT

Minister Nsengimana and Amb. Miyashita with other officials pose for a photo after signing the agreement. / Nadege Imbabazi

The Private Sector Federation (PSF), through its ICT Chamber, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Japan's Kobe Institute of Computing (KIC), a prominent private graduate school of Information Technology, to support Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector.

The deal, signed last Friday, follows a visit of a high-level delegation to Rwanda that was led by the mayor of Kobe, Kizo Hisamoto, earlier this year as part of their plans to forge stronger ties.

Japanese ambassador to Rwanda, Takayuki Miyashita, said, "We strongly believe that ICT is a prerequisite to economic growth and it contributes to the required knowledge which leads to sustainable development. However, we have also been focusing on capacity building and human resource management, among other fields. It's therefore, a pleasure for us to partner with you."

The deal will see the two parties work together to enhance ICT capacity development under the project that will run for nearly two and half years, which is being supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

"Today we have witnessed a very important signing ceremony, and a significant milestone to the already existing partnership that the two countries enjoy. The partnership is contributing to human and institutional capacity building, and the private sector, which are all key aspects of Rwanda's Vision 2020. The efforts to support education spun from elementary to tertiary levels. We are so glad to work with you," said Jean Philbert Nsengimana, the Minister of Youth and ICT, during a reception held at the Japanese ambassador's residence in Nyarutarama.

Training 1,000 computer engineers

According to Robert Ford, the vice president of the ICT chamber, the project is worth $460, 000 (about Rwf370 million) with a long-term goal of producing a thousand engineers.

"This is part of a project that we started together with KIC to produce 1,000 software engineers that even the companies in Japan would outsource. It is through this that we have high hopes of producing fine programmers and software engineers in the country," he said.

"We are grateful that the trainers are Rwandans who will be training Rwandans," he noted.

The Acting president of KIC, Kenji Fukuoka, said, "The partnership will support the capacity development educational programme. However, we have also realised that university graduates here in Rwanda can hardly compete on the market, and this is the gap we want to fill. The ultimate goal is to generate quality professionals that can compete in any market,"

Kobe institute has been awarding scholarships to Rwandan students and there are 30 students who have completed their master's degrees, and 12 who are still pursuing master's degrees at the institute.

Fukuoka said this project will scale up the process of obtaining more professionals.