

ZELDA VENTER
HIGH COURT REPORTER

THE 19TH African Human Rights Moot Court Competition begins this week in Benin, where the host is the University of Abomey Calavi in Cotonou.

The University of Pretoria's Centre for Human Rights organises this moot competition every year, in partnership with a faculty of law at different universities in Africa.

The aim of the competition is to foster a generation of African lawyers who are knowledgeable and competent to submit cases and pres-

ent arguments before the African Court on Human and People's Rights.

All law faculties in Africa are invited to send one faculty representative in the field of human rights, who will serve as a judge in the preliminary rounds and two undergraduate students to represent their university at the moot court.

Students argue a hypothetical case, based on the African Charter on Human and People's Rights,

before a bench made up of human rights experts.

This year's case involves criminalisation of negligent HIV transmission, polygamy, sexual conduct at initiation schools and jurisdiction of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

The panel that will judge this year's final round includes Constitutional Court Justice Johann van der Westhuizen, the chief justice of

Benin, Justice Robert Dossou, and Dr David Padilla, former secretary-general of the Inter-American Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The African Human Rights Moot Court Competition has become the largest annual gathering on the continent of students and lecturers of law. Established in 1992, 915 teams from 127 universities, representing 47 African countries, have participated so far. "The moot court compe-

tion should have been held in Benin long ago. It is one of the leading post-1990 democracies in Africa.

"It has one of the most respected constitutional courts on the continent," said Frans Viljoen, director of the centre.

The university with which the centre is collaborating this year also has a Unesco Chair in human rights, and Viljoen said they saw the moot court as an important step towards

closer collaboration with Benin.

The University of Pretoria team will once again take part this year and its members feel confident about their chance to win.

Tukkies has won the competition several times. Its last win was in 2008 when it was held in Pretoria.

This year's participants are Octavia Pletschke and Jan Norval, both third year LLB students. Their coach is Daniel Keevy, a Master's

student who himself participated in the African Moot in 2007. "This year's standard is exceptionally high and we have a very good team," Keevy said. These two students were chosen from 16 Tuks law students."

Both Pletschke and Norval said they had worked hard. "Two months of preparation will come down to two days of argument. But we have put in 110 percent and that is hopefully enough," Norval said.

This year 58 universities from 25 countries will participate, which will consist of 41 English teams, 14 French teams and three Portuguese teams.

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