Rwanda and the United States have signed a cooperation agreement on the peaceful use of nuclear energy, marking a step forward in Rwanda’s efforts to develop civilian nuclear power infrastructure.

The agreement was signed in Kigali during an international conference on nuclear energy development.

Rwanda’s Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Dr. Usta Kaitesi, signed on behalf of Rwanda, while Renee Sonderman, the acting deputy assistant secretary overseeing arms control and nuclear nonproliferation matters at the U.S. State Department, signed for the United States.

The memorandum of understanding aims to support the development and use of nuclear energy for civilian purposes, including electricity generation.

Separately, U.S.-based Holtec International and the Rwanda Atomic Energy Board signed an agreement to advance the deployment of Holtec’s SMR-300 small modular reactor technology in Rwanda.

The partnership supports Rwanda’s goal of establishing small modular nuclear reactors by 2030 as part of broader efforts to expand energy access and diversify power sources.

Holtec’s SMR-300 reactor is designed to generate up to 300 megawatts of electricity.

Rwandan officials have said the country chose small modular reactors because conventional nuclear plants, which can generate more than 1,000 megawatts, are more costly and require larger land areas and extensive safety buffer zones.

Small modular reactors are increasingly being promoted as a more flexible and affordable nuclear energy option for developing countries because they can be expanded gradually to meet rising energy demand.