

26TH JANUARY 2026

Dear Esteemed Fellows of The African Academy of Sciences,

I hope that the new year is progressing as planned and that you are meeting your personal targets.

My year started with a bang as I attended the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** in Davos last week. I'd like to share some of my thoughts and observations with you, before circulating a full report of our related activities in a newsletter by the end of the month.

This year's forum was convened amidst a palpable sense of geopolitical tension, as established international frameworks were being strategically re-evaluated and challenged. Discussions **heavily prioritised** geopolitical shifts, economic policy, and business strategies, thereby **pushing scientific insights to the margins** of primary discussions.



Notably, science leaders remained **conspicuously underrepresented** on the main stages of the Forum. This trend persists even with increased global recognition of the critical role that science and evidence-based solutions play in addressing planetary and societal challenges. In the case of African scientists, this absence was even more pronounced, notwithstanding the continent's potential as a hotbed of future innovations and unique solutions. Regrettably, our homegrown insights rarely feature on the world stage or inform high-level policy discussions that shape global agendas.

Still, Africa had much to celebrate. Approximately **14 African countries**, including South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Morocco, Liberia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Equatorial Guinea, Tanzania, Namibia and Mozambique, sent high-level delegations. They actively pursued strategic investments, forged partnerships, and asserted the continent's role as a vital contributor to global solutions. Some **noteworthy examples** to that effect were **Nigeria** and **South Africa**, which both hosted National Houses at the Davos Promenade. These served as central hubs for ministerial engagements, investment roundtables, and cultural diplomacy.

In an exciting development, **South Africa** was declared to be the **host** of the **Spring Davos in April 2027**. This role was attributed to its consistent and visible presence at the Davos Promenade, as well as its leadership role at previous Davos meetings. As we celebrate this achievement, let us bear in mind the importance of providing a moral compass to global leadership. After all, such was the consistent role played by the late Honourable Nelson Mandela at Davos in 1992, 1997 and 1999.

On the scientific front, The **Frontiers Science House** was one of the outstanding peripheral events of the WEF. It convened over 100 scientific leaders from 16 countries, including Nobel laureates, with the explicit aim of integrating scientific breakthroughs into policymaking. Its programme featured more than 50 sessions covering critical areas such as open science, health, climate, technology, AI and governance.

As a proud **partner** of the Science House, the **AAS** utilised the opportunity to pitch the African science agenda in several sessions. We plan to take this collaborative initiative further and secure, with our partners, our **own table** at the Spring Davos in 2027. We aspire to integrate African scientific leadership **directly into** the Davos agenda. The presence of African scientists at high-level policy discussions will undoubtedly guarantee that deliberations about their resources, climate vulnerabilities, and technological future are shaped **by Africa** rather than for Africa. This will reinforce the continent's agency and its ability to assert its own priorities and solutions.



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I would like to end this letter by reiterating a message that I delivered during one of the roundtable events at The Science House. *It is essential that Africa moves from being a consumer of science to a producer of relevant, world-class scientific knowledge.* Indeed, our continent's prosperity and stability depends on our ability to invest in our own research and innovation ecosystems, cultivate pan-African collaborations, and ensure that our science directly serves the needs of our people.

Sincerely yours,

Prof Lise Korsten (President, AAS)