

Dear **Esteemed Fellows of The African Academy of Sciences**,

I wish you a wonderful and prosperous new year. May 2026 be a year defined by new breakthroughs, exciting discoveries, and resounding success stories across every level of our continent's science ecosystem.

As we welcome the new year, let us commit to walking together, unified in our purpose to harness opportunities and unlock unparalleled scientific excellence for Africa. This journey will require us to explore even more innovative funding avenues, deepen our collaborative partnerships, and build strategic networks that will benefit the African ecosystem.



To this end, we have celebrated the next phase of the **European Union (EU) - African Research Initiative for Scientific Excellence (ARISE) 2**, which we launched in June 2025 in Ghana, and the **China-Africa Agricultural Science and Technology Innovation Alliance (CAASTIA)** which was launched in November 2025 in Ethiopia. Similarly, we collaborated with the Frontiers Research Foundation (FRR) and launched **Frontiers** at the Science Forum in South Africa, as well as the **African Planet Prize (APP)**. Such collaborative efforts will solidify the AAS's position as a leading player in Africa's science, technology and innovation landscape.

Yet, as we proceed, we must also be conscious of the challenges ahead. The year began with a stark reminder of our shifting **geopolitical landscape**, as the United States announced a withdrawal of support from 66 United Nations organisations. This decision is bound to have negative effects on African science funding and research support, unless we can create another dynamic within the global science ecosystem.

In spite of these challenges, our resolve only strengthens. The theme for this month's World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, '**A Spirit of Dialogue**', could not be more fitting. It is a call for the **bold, collective action** that our time demands. The **Frontiers Science House** at Davos will be of special interest to the AAS. This new global space, a partnership between the AAS, the FRR and other strategic players, is dedicated to placing transformative science at the heart of the world's most pressing conversations and championing science in Africa.

As Africa rises to the occasion, we must recognize that our greatest strength lies within **our own science ecosystem**. This would entail nurturing young and mid-career scientists, supporting our Fellows, and connecting with our diaspora. To this effect, our strategic partnerships with the **African Union Development Agency New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD)**, the **French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)**, the **French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD)**, and the **African Light Source (AfLS)** Initiative will be vital to creating a resilient, self-sufficient scientific future.

In exciting news, the **African Union Commission (AUC)** and its implementing agency, AUDA-NEPAD, are finalising a landmark **\$6.8 billion science and innovation fund**, entitled the **African Science Technology and Innovation Fund (ASTIF)**. This fund will facilitate the implementation of the **Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2034** vision. Such a monumental investment in agriculture, health, ICT, energy, and the environment will inevitably propel our continent towards a knowledge-based, innovation-led future.



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Moving away from continental developments, the AAS has embarked on its own process of rejuvenation. We are restructuring our governance and operational systems to become more agile and effective. Last year, the AAS bade farewell to the previous Executive Director (ED), Prof Peggy Oti-Boateng, whose contract ended in October 2025. A fellow and former ED, Prof Catherine Ngila was welcomed as the Interim ED until the new ED takes office in the first quarter of 2026.

In closing, I would like to make reference to the Chinese Year of the Fire Horse, and its symbolism of unstoppable energy. In that spirit, let us forge ahead with strategic focus and unwavering determination to achieve our shared scientific goals for Africa.

I look forward to our continued collaboration.

Sincerely yours,

Prof Lise Korsten (President, AAS)