

International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies 14th Biennial Meeting

on the Role of National Academies and
Universities in Promoting Human Rights
and Enhancing Equality



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The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) was inaugurated in May 1996. It was formed in response to the need for an Academy of Science consonant with the dawn of democracy in South Africa: activist in its mission of using science and scholarship for the benefit of society, with a mandate encompassing all scholarly disciplines that use an open-minded and evidence-based approach to build knowledge. ASSAf thus, adopted in its name the term 'science' in the singular as reflecting a common way of enquiring rather than an aggregation of different disciplines. Its members are elected based on a combination of two principal criteria, academic excellence and significant contributions to society. The Parliament of South Africa passed the Academy of Science of South Africa Act (No 67 of 2001), which came into force on 15 May 2002. This made ASSAf the only academy of science in South Africa officially recognised by government and representing the country in the international community of science academies and elsewhere

This report reflects the proceedings of
Public Session: Role of National Academies and Universities in Promoting Human Rights and Enhancing Equality, June 2023.

Views expressed are those of the individuals and not necessarily those of the Academy nor a consensus view of the Academy based on an in-depth evidence-based study.

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WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS (Prof Himla Soodyall, Executive Officer, ASSAf)

On behalf of the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies (IHRN) and the Academy of Science of South Africa, Prof Soodyall welcomed delegates to the second day of the IHRN conference and encouraged everyone to engage in productive debate and interaction.

REMARKS ON THE IHRN (Prof Martin Chalfie, Member, IHRN Executive Committee)

Prof Martin Chalfie is a University Professor and former Chair of the Department of Biological Sciences at Columbia University. He is a member of the United States (US) National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and the US National Academy of Medicine (NAM), where he chairs the Committee on Human Rights. Prof Chalfie is also a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a foreign member of the Royal Society. He obtained both his AB and PhD from Harvard University. He has received numerous awards for his work, including the 2008 E.B. Wilson Medal from the American Society for Cell Biology and the 2008 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, which he shared with Osamu Shimomura and Roger Tsien, for his introduction of Green Fluorescent Protein (GFP) as a biological marker. He currently serves on the Executive Committee of the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies.

Prof Chalfie gave an introduction and background to the IHRN, which was celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2023. The IHRN was created in 1993 by a group of people who wanted to unite in supporting colleagues targeted by human rights abuses as the result of their professional work. Formal membership is not required to be part of the IHRN. Nonetheless, since 1993, over 90 academies have contributed and participated in Network meetings and activities. The Committee on Human Rights of the US National Academy of Sciences serves as the secretariat for the network. Prof Chalfie was encouraged to see so many representatives of the network at the meeting.

The activities of the IHRN include firstly, to advocate for colleagues subjected to human rights abuses in their work; secondly, to promote the independence and autonomy of national academies; and thirdly, to raise global awareness of the concerns of human rights violations in the fields of science, health and engineering. The involvement of the academy members has been crucial for identifying and responding to human rights concerns with regarding to individuals and institutions.

The network also partners with several organisations that safeguard academic freedom and human rights, including supporting scholars at risk and health professionals under attack. In the foyer were videos, showcasing examples of projects in which the network had partnered.

Since 1993, 13 meetings were hosted biennially by national academies all over the world. This meeting was the 14th meeting. These meetings were important opportunities to get together and discuss topical issues around human rights in science. ASSAf was thanked for hosting this meeting, which was the first gathering since the COVID-19 pandemic, and for arranging a very interesting and stimulating programme.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER (Prof André Keet, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Engagement and Transformation, Nelson Mandela University, South Africa)

Prof Keet currently holds the Research Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (CriSHET) and is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Engagement and

Transformation at Nelson Mandela University. He is a former Visiting Professor at the Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality, Carnegie School of Education, and the Leeds Beckett University, UK and the 2018 Marsha Lilien Gladstein Visiting Professor of Human Rights at the University of Connecticut. He was Director and Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and served on the Commission for Gender Equality, before joining the university sector. Since entering the higher education field, he has held professorial positions at the universities of Pretoria, Fort Hare and Free State. He has been serving as transformation advisor and practitioner in various capacities in the sector. Prof Keet's research and postgraduate supervision focus on radical approaches to the study of higher education, such as critical and abolitionist university studies.

The verbatim keynote address¹, as presented by Prof Keet, is chronicled below.

“We should strain forward, with ‘critical hope’, because we are living the end of human rights in an age of rights without rights, and there are nowadays more books written on the demise of human rights than on its productive growth. We feel it, and we see it across the globe, around us and in us. With each uttering of the word ‘equality’, wider socio-economic divides are produced, and the very petition for rights rests on its criminally wide-spread violation. At various times over the past few months, I thus thought of the invitation to speak here today as a request to participate in an autopsy. Baudrillard (2002, 2009), the social theorist of the fatal, remarked, on many occasions that ‘something’ can be better understood in its disappearance, its death, since it is the autopsy that gives us a unique insight into the operations of this ‘something’. He had both the disappearance of democracy and human rights in mind, and famously described human rights as ‘nothing more than advertising’.

I have, over the past 15 years, found the work on the cusp of the ‘disappearance’ of human rights very insightful, productive and energising, as an acknowledgment, the insights of an imminent death that must be arrested. It is here, at the edge, where the work of the reanimation of human rights and equality can best be done to bring it back to life, to resurrect its promises, and to make it better in new forms. There is perhaps not a more appropriate set of institutions than national academies and universities to work at this edge, at the interface of the total disappearance of rights and the withdrawal of the possibility of the work of equality on the one hand, and their revitalisation on the other. This is what I would like to share with you about the role of these institutions on these themes. I hope you find it useful.

Friends and colleagues, it is a great honour to be here, and I appreciate the challenge that this invitation offers me. I do not take it for granted. Many thanks to ASSAf for the invitation and arrangements, Prof Himla Soodyall and Raj Mahabeer. Let me also acknowledge the ASSAf president, members and council members, members of national academies, and the IHRN. To the members of academies representing 25 countries today from the Americas, the Asia-Pacific region, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and Eurasia, all participants in attendance, here and online, many thanks for listening. I am ‘chuffed’ to share this space with you today.

The inspiring work of the network deserves acknowledgement – from the various resources, repositories and events it has launched, supported and hosted, to the overarching platform it has created for the amplification of human rights within scholarly communities. Such amplification, as I have argued many times before, should be rooted in both a healthy

¹ This keynote draws on research and writing that Prof Keet had been pursuing collectively with Luan Staphorst, Michaela Penkler, Joseph Bazirake, Neil Honeycomb, Tinyiko Chauke, Hashali Hamukuaya and Daniella Rafaely.

respect for, and a healthy scepticism towards human rights, and both a strong esteem for and doubt in our disciplinary work, across the sciences 'at one and the same time'. I have, on other occasions framed this as critique and disputations, crisis and critique, discourse, and betrayal, and so on. This is, I would argue, a fundamentally important point of departure, as it relates to the conversation on the role of national academies in promoting human rights – acknowledging the task of academies to be wary of normative frameworks, and rather be in service of protecting, advancing and critiquing human rights in a progressive and sustained manner. Justice Jody Kollapen probably made similar points last night.

There are four ways in which I generally would like my deployment of critique to be understood. Firstly, critique presupposes action and programmatic work. It is a deep search for alternative ways of doing the world. Secondly, critique is the splitting of an impasse, to make new possibilities visible. It 'is the work of love, justice, imagination, and actualization' (Rebughini). Thirdly, critique in this instance is an act of fidelity and loyalty, not dismissal, neither is it rejection. To critique, is to affirm, in the deepest sense of the word. And fourthly, critique, first and foremost, means self-critique. It has the renewal of our own cultural traditions, institutions, knowledges and practices in mind. It has, amongst others, the reconfiguration of the self as its target.

Reflecting on the role that the scientific, health and engineering communities can play in promoting human rights and enhancing equality through this understanding of critique, I have a huge sense of buoyancy and optimism, after traversing the website of the network, despite the current direction of the world and the negative trajectory of both the idea of democracy and the ideals of human rights. Why? Because the sciences, across the knowledge fields, and the universities as one of its prime residences, are inherently transformative.

I have consistently, over the past ten years, tried to formulate this argument on the plastic university and the idea of plastic knowledges, deploying Malabou's work. Yet, the potential transformative capacity of our knowledges and institutions can be much further actualised through critique. And, real critique speaks at the edge of annihilation, on the verge of self-destruction, to pull human rights and equality away from their ends. For us, in the academy of the academies, this means the possibility of undoing the self in the process of self-reconfiguration.

Yet, we are generally not good at self-critique or self-reconfigurations. This has prompted those who study the university and the academy to argue that we lack a critical ontology of ourselves. This point is the watermark of this little paper. Advances in the sciences, technology, engineering and health sciences – so widespread, innovative and impactful that leading publications cannot agree on the top-20 developments over the past 20 years – have implications for human rights in various ways. The work of the network is thus significant, and in this current phase of global geo-political developments, it should be upscaled and supported. The further building of global human rights networks in scientific communities, through seminars and advocacy programmes, should be encouraged, and protection activities to support academics and scholars under various threats require more energetic responses from all of us.

That is, the role of academies and universities that relates to human rights and equality, is, in a way, straightforward promotion, protection, advancement and the actualisation of rights within academies, universities and beyond. The task is also a complex one, because 'real rights' have been deeply buried under the weight of the standards, which, ironically, aim to express them in declarations, conventions, covenants and provisions on provisions. Our

institutions have the task to unbury this right, to bring it back to life and reinvest it with its radical potential.

Growing anti-scientific sentiments have huge implications for advancing human rights, as 'the better life' envisaged by the sciences is a life worth living in human rights terms. Attacking the sciences, academic freedom and scholarly autonomy seems to run parallel to the conservatisation of politics across the globe and in so many regions, impacting universities themselves. The list of countries that draws the attention of Scholars at Risk is growing fast, also covering all regions of the world. A deeper global crisis relates to the mistrust in the institutions of democracy and human rights, which not only redirects our attention away from the insanity of massive global inequalities, but is also tragically tagged by powerful new waves of intra- and inter- state racism, race-populism, bigotry of all sorts, everyday fascisms and ethno-nationalisms. It follows, then, that the advancement of human rights within and through national academies and universities on national and global levels is crucial, at an existential level. It should thus not simply be viewed as activities of our institutions, but be seen as central to the social production of academic freedom and social reduction of scholarly autonomy itself – it is central to the university as a university.

The social legitimacy required for this work is rooted in a critical sense of ourselves and our work. Herein lies the appeal of the critical: it opens ways for us to walk with the histories of our sciences, and of ourselves in complicity, forever in search of a non-attainable redemption confronting our own codes, dogmas and doctrines. This orientation is key in recognising that the 'human' that is attached to the rights we are called to promote, is not only worked upon by scientific innovations and scholarly insights. Rather, scientific and technological developments, now more than ever before, are culturally redefining the human itself. The redrawing of the frontiers between the humanities and the sciences seems to be driven by these innovations, giving scientific communities a responsibility of a special kind to engage in the deep questions of 'the human' of human rights.

It is clear from the network's resources on human rights that much thought and work are deployed to engage the relationship between science, technology and rights, and what it means to improve human life. A book on *Emancipatory Human Rights and the University*, edited by Felisa Tibbitts and myself, will be published in August this year. It attempts to show how a critical treatment of human rights, as a responsibility of the university, can be productive and affirming.

A key ethical task of our institutions is to consistently question our deeply held assumptions. Let me share two examples. One, in most university systems across the globe, transformation work is rooted in recognition-based and inclusivity-driven change. Our intellectual and programmatic trajectories on transformation have been streamed through the prism of rights and inclusivity, and the notions of consensus and deliberative democracy. That is, we are 'blind' to the fact that the very demand for recognition and inclusion, from a rights-based perspective, legitimises existing institutional arrangements. That there may be something fundamentally limiting about recognition-, inclusion-, diversity- and human rights-steered reforms is thus a prospect that seldom enters our engagements, let alone our scholarly imaginations. Yet, these frameworks, historically produced, are the immovable receivable categories within which we locate our transformation work, including our scientific and scholarly work. This is one reason, amongst others, why it is the responsibility of our scholarly communities not only to approach our work with a critical attitude, but to make visible the deeply held assumptions that are driving our vocations.

In the second example, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – framed as the human rights and human development instrument of our times – have now emerged as the 'new'

coordinates for research and praxes across the sciences, taking on a hegemonic character into which universities were interpolated, and we cheerfully follow. Yet, the dominant economic orders underpinning the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and now the SDGs, were key in converting human rights into a market- and industry-friendly framework over the past four decades, contributing to the socio-economic and planetary challenges we are facing today. The assumptions of development and the economic ordering underpinning the SDGs have not shifted; nonetheless, we are uncritically buying into them. Our tasks in the sciences are to work against the global challenges that are produced by the human rights violations that co-authored the SDGs, without handing ourselves over to the SDGs as the latest truth package. Critical posture should be extended to all normative frames. Part of the tasks of national academies and universities should be to make these deeply held assumptions float to the surface, for questioning, for interrogation, for change, for sharpening. This is not far from the idea that a healthy scepticism is the trademark of any good science, hard or soft, because, at the limits of reflection, the value of knowledge, it seems, depends on its ability to make any conclusive image of the universe impossible, as Bataille has argued.

The capacity and power of scientific, health and engineering communities in promoting human rights and strengthening equality is obvious. I have firsthand experience of this when I chaired our university's COVID-19 coordinating committee from 2020 to 2022, an experience that has been immensely educative. I stand in admiration of this work: from engineering, science and health sciences, to education, the social sciences and humanities. We must be mindful, however, not to convert this power into scientism, that is, the blind faith in 'settled science' that has justified some of the worst horrors of human history, as Thornton (2018) argues. Apartheid South Africa is a good example of this. Scientism can easily displace human rights orientations in scientific work, an ideology that national academies and universities should work against. However, an appropriate respect for the value of the sciences should not be conflated with scientism, neither should we shy away from engaging the dark side of sciences, the dark side of our work.

My last point on the role of national academies and universities relates to curriculum. In South African universities, only 0.6% of almost 100 000 modules and more than 6 000 qualifications reference human rights – a miniscule number compared to our loud human rights noise. The human rights and equality discourse of our transition has certainly not landed in the knowledge project. A big chunk of these modules are in law, and the rest are sparsely distributed across the 'other' social sciences and humanities, and very little, almost nothing in the 'hard' sciences. This is probably a global trend.

Believe me, I have a good sense of why this is the case, so I am not throwing this out as reactionary criticisms because I do stand in admiration of the work that the academies are undertaking. My simple point is that doable, deep work needs to be done on this front. Why? Because it seems that there is a correlation between the withdrawal of human rights discourse and science criticisms. They run hand in hand. Also a correlation between the mistrust of human rights and distrust in science and the retreat of science amid the rise of religious and other conservatisms in national, regional and global contexts and across the so-called 'soft' and 'hard' knowledge fields. Moreover, this retreat from an equality perspective has profound, negative implications for the project of anti-discrimination, and examples range from Uganda to the USA. I see some great panels in this meeting will be discussing these themes.

The speed at which techno-rationality has achieved dominance in higher education is another matter that should be up for deep questioning, since it is changing the very nature of universities, academies and our knowledge communities, with negative implications for

our capacity to advance human rights and equality. I do not have time to spend on this point except to say that we should keep an eye on it.

To conclude, in essence my sense is that great human rights work is under way within academies, universities and scholarly societies, but we can go so much further and deeper on the back of a critical ontology of ourselves. The critique that is strengthening the field does not cancel out the empirical evidence that suggests that the human rights framework has resulted in human rights advances for many people across the globe post World War II.

Thanks for introducing me to the human rights work that your outfits are doing. It is instructional. I wish you a productive meeting further."

PANEL SESSIONS

PANEL 1: Equity in Global Collaborations (Moderator: Prof Edward Kirumira, Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study, South Africa; Uganda National Academy of Science, Uganda)

Prof Kirumira is a Professor of Medical Sociology and Director of the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS) Stellenbosch, South Africa. He is a Fellow of the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS). His work focuses on HIV/AIDS, population and reproductive health, emergent diseases and global health. He has extensive in-country experience in programme development, management and impact evaluation in several African countries. He has taken on technical advisory roles for organisations which include UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, NORAD, and DANIDA. He studied at Makerere University (Uganda), the University of Exeter, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (UK), Copenhagen University (Denmark) and Harvard University (USA). Before joining STIAS as Director, Prof Kirumira was Principal of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Makerere University in Uganda and national Chair of the Central Coordination Mechanism for the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB.

Introductory remarks

The aim of this panel session was to highlight equity problems in global scientific collaborations and to suggest possible ways to address these, with reference to some examples. Firstly, an introduction was given on the *Cape Town Statement*², which was formulated to foster research integrity through fairness and equity. Dr Visagie talk also expanded on the subject of the indigenisation of research governance. The next talk by Prof Lyioke explored questions pertaining to moral ethics, especially in research ethics. In trying to frame this conversation, specific themes were identified for discussion. These comprised mutual benefits of collaboration, and emphasising the issues of trust and sharing. Other themes were equity of leadership and participation, research policy and examining global collaborations in a more action-oriented way. The *Cape Town Statement* formed the background to the discussions.

Prof Kirumira referred to the programme booklet and mentioned that the cover design had special significance for the discussion. He paid a compliment to the artist for creating such a striking image. In the picture, there is a sense of waves becoming inverted and converged, and yet inside those converged waves beauty is created in, for example, flower-like images. However, the artist reveals the notion that not all the products of that convergence mature into beauty. The image was inviting the delegates to converge ideas and discussions, but

² <https://www.wcrif.org/guidance/cape-town-statement>

not to expect that everything would lead to an outcome. Delegates needed to be aware that not all collaborations would be productive and satisfy expectations. The image inadvertently contained a fitting message on the theme of this session, which should not be missed.

Prof Kirumira shared some reflections on collaborations from his professional career in an anecdote regarding a visit to Japan in 2002/2003. With the intention of obtaining funding from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), he was accompanied by an older professor, who had done his PhD in Uganda many years before. Walking into the meeting room and preparing to make his presentation, the older professor interjected by saying 'give this young man money', and the funding was granted. Prof Kirumira stated that he received the funding, not because of the good proposals that he had prepared, but because of the trust that JICA had in the older professor. In discussions about equity, trust and the human factor are not sufficiently emphasised. Within collaborations, the human factor is both the starting point and also the end point. When trust is lost, the collaborations are lost, but when trust is gained, collaborations are effective and long-lasting. Therefore, in mutually beneficial collaborations, both partners benefit.

The second point was that the organisational element to equity in global collaborations may sometimes be more important than the scientific element within those collaborations, or it underlies and underpins the scientific productivity of that particular collaboration. The question of who the leaders in the collaboration are, and where is the partnership that nurtures and pushes the collaboration along. Examples are many, such as, longitudinal studies, where samples are shipped to some other place for analysis. It is important that as the scientific aspects of these collaborations are developed, there is also a need to pay attention to the capacity to lead and the capacity to coordinate. Furthermore, there needs to be an impact on the environment in which these collaborations take place. When a project is awarded to a university, but the university administration and research grant management office is not involved, it is very difficult to see equity. The partners in the collaboration, aside from the academic leaders, need to be empowered and recognised.

The third element of importance is research policy and action collaborations. Equity and global collaboration can be anywhere along these lines. The fluidity and the complexity of global collaborations need to be identified and appreciated.

When the IHRN and ASSAf decided on the topic of equity in global collaborations, they avoided using the term 'equality in national collaborations'. 'Equity' is not the same as 'equality'. Furthermore, the term 'collaborations' is always used in the plural, and refers to the diverse environs in which it takes place and the actors involved, both immediate to, and outside of, the collaborations.

The final point Prof Kirumira made was to examine the supply chain for envisioned equity in global collaborations, by examining how networked and individual organisations, resources, activities and technologies are involved in the creation of a product, which is, in this particular case, the research enterprise. Attention needs to be given to systems and processes involved in the production and distribution of equitable global collaborations. In this regard, university training in silos would not deliver favourable outcomes; neither would non-existent brokerage mechanisms. Research teams that are not cross-generational would also not deliver, just as non-interdisciplinary listening and facilitating platforms would not deliver.

However, it is not all pessimism, because there are examples where equity in global collaborations has taken place successfully. There are funding organisations that serve as

examples, such as the programme for Norwegian Higher Education Development (NORHED), which has recently become the Norwegian Partnership in Educational Development (NOPED). This signifies that there is growing realisation that equity in global collaboration resides in partnerships, rather than in just providing support.

Equity in global collaborations (Dr Retha Visagie, Research Integrity Manager, University of South Africa, South Africa)

Dr Retha Visagie heads the UNISA Research Integrity Office. She performs several global leadership roles as an internationally certified Senior Professional Research Manager. She is a Non-Executive Director and Chairperson of the EthiXPERT Board of Directors. She is a founding member and the co-chair of the Executive Committee of the SARIMA Northern Regions Community of Practice for Research Ethics and Integrity. She co-authored the recently developed "Cape Town Statement on Fostering Research Integrity through Fairness and Equity" and contributed to formulating the SARIMA/SANBio Southern African Development Community guidelines for research ethics and integrity in 2021. She is a Globethics.Net Global Pool of Ethics Experts member, and received the 2018 DST/SARIMA Award for Professional Excellence in Research Management. Dr Visagie's peers acknowledge her as a research ethics and integrity governance thought leader. She has spent the past nine years designing research support strategies, developing policies, and implementing research integrity support systems. She has co-authored several international scholarly articles and book chapters on social science research ethics. She is a co-editor of a Springer book on research ethics in Africa. Since 2016, she has trained over 3000 academics, research administrators, and members of research ethics committees. Her research niche has recently broadened to include the indigenisation of research governance. She continues to supervise doctoral candidates.

In opening her presentation, Dr Visagie echoed a statement by Justice Kollapen, the keynote speaker in the previous evening's dinner, namely that 'we should reflect on ourselves and on our own practices and our own biases'. When engaging in collaborations and when doing research focusing on human rights and indigenisation, it is important to practice humility, especially cultural humility. In this work it is important to listen to the communities, and to the voices of collaborators and partners, in order to have a sense of how they view concepts, words and relationships.

As Prof Kirumira indicated, it starts with the self, and therefore the human factor is key. Collaborations should be entered into for the long haul, in order to have an impact on society through research.

The *Cape Town Statement on Fostering Research Integrity through Fairness and Equity*³ was an outcome of the 7th World Conference on Research Integrity (WCRI) held in Cape Town, South Africa from 29 May to 1 June 2022. The *Statement* resulted from global consultation, with the intent to guide researchers, funders, research leaders and managers and other stakeholders to engage in equitable and fair collaborations. It is closely aligned with Goal 17⁴ of the SDGs of the United Nations, which urges nations to 'revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development'.

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*⁵ states that it is important 'to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable

³ <https://www.wcrif.org/guidance/cape-town-statement>

⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>

⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind'. The agenda is an attempt to end poverty, achieve food security, ensure healthy lives and reach most at-risk populations. It provides an opportunity for Africa to benefit from research, but it unfortunately also creates a chance for Africa to be exploited.

One of the challenges experienced by scholars on the African continent is that of 'helicopter research', which was a topic of media attention at the 7th WCRI Cape Town conference. Helicopter research is when 'researchers from wealthy countries engage in thoughtless field research in poorer countries with a focus on how they can benefit from the research and view as easy to do research on communities in Africa.—they violate research integrity and pose a moral problem'. Another important example that was flagged in a recent paper⁶. It reported on authorship of COVID-19 papers from the top ten medical and global health journals containing content related to Africa. It was interesting to note that of these papers, 66% of authors were not from Africa, one in five articles had no author from Africa, 59% of first authors and 81% of the last authors were not from Africa, and only 14% of articles had both an African first and last author.

It is also important to note that the journal, *Nature*, also addressed 'helicopter research' and referred to 'ethics dumping'⁷, and highlighted the importance of citational justice which refers to citing relevant local and regional research in publications resulting from projects in these regions. It has been demonstrated that does not happen to the extent it should when research is done in Africa.

A new framework aiming to promote inclusion and ethics in global research collaborations was published in the *International Journal of Sciences* (2 June 2022) and encouraged authors, editors and reviewers to consider the *Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings*⁸. This demands more transparency concerning ethics and asking key questions such as: Is the research locally relevant? Is legislation on animal welfare or environmental protection less stringent in the local setting than where the researchers are based? Was the study undertaken to the highest standards?

Another important challenge is 'othering', which often occurs in partnerships. 'Othering' is defined as 'alienation of knowledge systems that did not originate from the West, including various belief systems, historical events, and social relationships'⁹. This extends to interpersonal relationships within, and between, various stakeholder groups, consequently harming the spirit of trust, collegiality and professionalism that forms the foundation of equitable partnerships. Othering is also found in the use of language, creating a 'them versus us' conversation.

The *Cape Town Statement* raises two important matters. These are whether in inequity and unfair practices in research collaborations and contexts are research integrity issues, and which shared values and actions can promote equal partnerships. A number of factors are compelling motivations to give attention to equitable partnerships. Examples are unfair and inequitable research practices that remain prevalent and impact the integrity of the research include:

- skewing research priorities and agendas with research questions that fail to address local needs;

⁶ Naidoo, AV, Hodkinson, P, Lai King, L & Wallis, LA. *BMJ Glob. Health* 6, e004612 (2021) in Horn, et al. (2023) *Nature*, Vol 615 | 30 March 2023 p. 790 – 793.

⁷ <https://media.nature.com/original/magazine-assets/d41586-022-01423-6/d41586-022-01423-6.pdf>

⁸ Doris Schroeder, Kate Chatfield, Michelle Singh, Roger Chennells, Peter Herissone-Kelly, 2019. *Equitable Research Partnerships: A Global Code of Conduct to Counter Ethics Dumping*; <https://www.globalcodeofconduct.org/>

⁹ Chilisa, 2020

- power imbalances that undermine fair recognition of knowledge contributions within collaborations;
- unfair acknowledgement;
- lack of diversity and inclusivity;
- unfair data management practices that disadvantage researchers in a low-resourced environment; and
- Open Science as a 'pillar of research integrity', becomes a financial burden in under-resourced research environments.

Considering these factors, Horn *et al.*¹⁰ argue that inequity and unfair practices in research collaborations are certainly a research integrity issue. Research that is fair and equitable should deliver accurate, replicable and unbiased results, which are reported responsibly, with the appropriate acknowledgement of all stakeholders. Furthermore, research should be translatable into locally relevant, locally owned, and accessible interventions or policies. Initiatives such as research integrity training should support scholars to consider these goals in the planning, conduct and dissemination of their research.

Relating to the shared values and action guides that can promote equal partnerships, the *Cape Town Statement* advocates for fair practices, from conception to implementation of research, and provides 20 recommendations¹¹ for all stakeholders. These recommendations are grouped under five values and are unpacked and clarified in the document, namely:

- diversity,
- inclusivity,
- mutual respect,
- shared accountability, and
- indigenous knowledge recognition and epistemic justice.

Recommendations from the *Cape Town Statement*:

Increase diversity and inclusivity

1. Researchers should recognise the value of collaborating with colleagues from different disciplinary, geographical, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds and strive to achieve this diversity, especially when doing research in contexts and environments that are different from their own.
2. Research Performing Institutions (RPIs) should develop and implement policies, structures and processes that support and promote diversity and inclusivity in their research.
3. Funders from high-income countries (HICs) should aim to avoid so-called 'helicopter research' by including diversity stipulations in funding calls and funding local researchers directly.
4. Journals and publishers should question the practice of excluding local researchers from low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs) from authorship when data are from LMICs and have a low threshold for rejecting such papers.

Encourage fair practice from conception to implementation

5. All research stakeholders should be aware of potential power imbalances in their research collaborations and ensure their actions do not exacerbate them, but contribute to redressing imbalances.
6. Funders should identify and adopt practices that support fairness and equity in research collaborations and avoid practices that undermine fairness, such as unfair indirect cost

¹⁰ Naidoo, AV, Hodkinson, P, Lai King, L & Wallis, LA. *BMJ Glob. Health* 6, e004612 (2021) in Horn, et al. (2023) *Nature*, Vol 615 | 30 March 2023 p. 790 – 793.

¹¹ <https://www.wcrif.org/guidance/cape-town-statement>

allocations to LMICs.

7. Barriers to 'open science' participation by researchers working in low-resource settings must be identified and addressed by publishers, and other appropriate national and global stakeholders, such as science councils, funders, and similar institutions. Journals and publishers should adjust page costs for authors from low-resourced environments.

Mutual respect as a pathway to trust

8. Research priority and agenda setting should include all research partners; HIC research agendas should not be imposed on LMIC collaborators.
9. Research teams should identify mechanisms to enable planning and budgeting that minimise power and opportunity imbalances in teams and make roles explicit early.
10. Full, transparent budgeting is essential to enable fair practice and equitable resource allocation.
11. Data access, use, sharing, and openness requirements should not unfairly disadvantage LMIC collaborators.

Shared accountability

12. Research fairness requires a commitment from all stakeholders to address deficiencies in research capacity and systems in LMIC contexts.
13. LMIC governments must recognise the value of funding research to support locally relevant research priorities and be accountable for reducing reliance on HIC funders.
14. RPIs should prioritise the development of adequate research support systems to support researchers, including support for research management capacity development and open access page costs where possible.
15. HIC funders should incorporate some funding for local capacity development, mentorship, and research support systems.
16. Funders should take steps to minimise the negative impact of currency fluctuations on LMIC collaborators when they agree to fund research that involves HIC and LMIC collaborations.
17. RPIs from HICs collaborating with researchers from low-resource settings should ensure their researchers engage in fair practices and, where possible and appropriate, contribute to local capacity development and strengthening of research management systems and processes.

Indigenous knowledge recognition and epistemic justice

18. The unique value of indigenous knowledge must be recognised. Researchers and community researchers from indigenous communities are often best placed to articulate and translate this value into beneficial outcomes that can have an impact.
19. All stakeholders must ensure adequate recognition and respect of indigenous knowledge; avoidance of exploitation and stigmatisation of such knowledge by external researchers is essential.
20. Researchers involved in co-creating indigenous-led knowledge must ensure collaborations are grounded on mutual trust and respect, resulting in appropriate benefit-sharing and recognition.

In closing, Dr Visagie made a plea for these recommendations to be translated into clearer, locally relevant practices for all stakeholders, especially for researchers in resource-poor countries.

Best practices for equitable partnership in international collaboration (Prof Ike Iyioke, Michigan State University, USA)

Prof Ike V Iyioke has extensive teaching, research and administrative experience in the USA

and parts of Africa that spans almost two decades. His multidisciplinary backgrounds include a BPhil in Philosophy from Pontifical University, Rome; a teaching certificate from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN); a Master of Science in International Relations from UNN; a Master of Art in Environmental Science Journalism from Michigan State University (MSU); and a PhD in bioethics from MSU. He likes to explore questions pertaining to moral philosophy, particularly bioethics. His research interests include research subject/participant selection; biomedical research partnerships between Africa and the West; environmental science and public policy; environmental justice and racism; eugenics; science of life extension; and morality in primitive cultures. Prof Iyioke has authored several publications, including a 2023 book, 'Rethinking Clinical Trials and Redefining Responsibility for Research Participants: A Focus on Africa' (Ethics International Press Ltd., UK).

In his talk, Prof Iyioke gave an account of an ongoing project at Michigan State University in which included a document titled 'Best practices for equitable partnership in international collaboration'. This project entailed drafting a statement to set guidelines for collaborations.

Prior to the project separate guidelines existed in the different departments of the university, which needed streamlining and integration for unity of purpose. A campus-wide panel discussion was organised to debate and make inputs on a consolidated set of guidelines. This is an ongoing process that has not been completed yet, and Prof Iyioke requested inputs and comments on his presentation from the delegates at this meeting to assist in improving the document. As part of the itinerary of an International Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship programme, he will also interact with UNISA stakeholders to seek inputs on the topic. The final document will be presented to the colleges and finally to the MSU presidents office

It is hoped that the content of this document will serve as an official statement to be adopted for all international collaborations by MSU. It will both guide and hold to account the actions in all collaborations, from research and project development through to consulting and teaching. This document is meant to guide MSU academics who engage in research activities with governmental departments, research agencies and non-governmental organisations.

Important matters that need to be considered in the document include how to establish the value of international collaborations, and how to cultivate and maintain global collaborative principles (such as trust, humility, transparency, objectivity, courage and respect). Mistakes and lessons learned from previous failed collaborations also need reflection, as well as how to best re-evaluate and restructure power imbalances within and between regional, national and international partners. Most importantly, the ways in which donor demands conflict with equity in collaborations, by dictating how the funds need to be spent, are addressed. Finally, the document will be translated into other languages, so that it is not only available in English, but accessible to the wider academic environment, in the spirit of equity and for better communication.

Discussion and questions

Prof Kirumira noted that the *Cape Town Statement* made reference to the five values of research integrity, namely honesty, fairness, trust, accountability and openness. He asked Dr Visagie about the process to attain these, and how long would it take, based on the experience of her work on indigenisation.

Dr Visagie responded that these internationally recognised principles have also been

included in the *Singapore Statement*¹², a foundational document guiding responsible conduct of research. Realising these principles should start from the ground, as well as from the top. Universities, as research-producing institutions, need to take responsible conduct seriously. An example is the large number of COVID-19-related papers that have been retracted and noted on the Retraction Watch website¹³. This is concerning, because the reasons for the papers being retracted point mostly to issues of integrity. To counter this, universities need to make resources and funding available for studies on research integrity and responsible conduct in research.

Unrelated to the question, but also important, the *Cape Town Statement* should be adapted to the local context. Where it is underpinned by policies from a Western perspective, these need to be assessed critically and tailored to local needs before adoption. A first step is to translate the documents into local languages.

Prof Kirumira enquired about the extent to which the policies and statements (for example, the *Singapore Statement* and the *Cape Town Statement*) have been incorporated by Research Ethics Committees at universities.

Dr Visagie replied by pointing out the differences between 'research integrity' and 'research ethics'. 'Research integrity' relates to the standards of science that researchers ascribe to, whereas 'research ethics' is concerned with following rules, mainly for the protection of human rights and human dignity. There is close alignment between these two concepts. Indigenous scholars are often compromised by the requirements of ethics applications, which tend to represent a Western way of looking at ethics. When working with indigenous-led research, for example, informed consent would differ, incentives would be differently interpreted, and the existing policies might not accommodate those differences. UNISA has addressed these matters with specific guidelines from an Afro-global perspective, but more needs to be done. For example, on the application forms for research projects, there needs to be a section that enables indigenous research leaders to position themselves. The documents need to be aligned to the local cultural context.

Prof Kirumira noted that Prof Iyioke's presentation mentioned that researchers tend to chase after funding. He asked whether this might indicate that the problems lay with the researchers rather than the donors for research projects.

Prof Iyioke replied that researchers are challenged with respect to funding, but are trying to address the challenges. The demand for change regarding the race for money needs to come from scholars, as stated in the draft document. This is also made clear to donors, and discussions are commencing to change the way in which the system is approached.

Prof Iyioke also agreed with Dr Visagie that 'research ethics' and 'research integrity' are different. At a workshop earlier in the week, organised by the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), there were discussions on research procedures and methods, which were governed by Western ideologies. For example, some COVID-19-related research studies were conditional on Western view of informed consent based on individualism. However, this is not applicable in an African situation, where the approach is to obtain consent from the community; the family, clan or tribal group needs to be consulted for guidance as the decisions also affect the community. This is one of the aspects that will be included in the document that is being drafted, to create guidelines that can be used in an African context and applied across the board.

¹² <https://www.wcrif.org/guidance/singapore-statement>

¹³ <https://retractionwatch.com/>

Prof Kirumira referred to the statement produced by Prof Iyioke and commented that the process was as important as the final product (the document). He suggested that integrity forms part of ethics, and is related not only to the subject matter to be researched, but also to the context within which the research is embedded.

Prof Tagüeña asked the panel to comment on a new actor that is becoming more prominent in research, namely artificial intelligence (AI) and ChatGPT, which could have important implications for ethical issues.

Dr Visagie responded that AI is certainly a factor that could disrupt the scientific profession and the academic sector. However, it could also be helpful and beneficial, and should not be avoided and shunned. There needs to be a proactive drive, such as task teams at universities, to come up with guidelines to integrate AI into research in an ethical way. An important aspect to consider is that AI does not constitute authorship; it is not an author in its own right, and where it is used, it needs to be acknowledged. Students and academics need to be educated to use AI responsibly.

Prof Iyioke expressed the view that science and technology are advancing faster than ethical principles and legal guidelines can be developed. At Michigan State University, an ethics institute is being established in response to ethical scandals, and to address future ethical challenges related to AI. At a recent conference on AI and big data, Prof Iyioke gave a presentation on how AI and big data are affecting Africa in the race of science and technology development. Prompt intervention is required to alleviate the possible impacts and consequences of AI. Even the developers and experts at the forefront of AI are calling for regulation of this fast-developing field.

Dr Martin commented that the issues raised in the session echo contemporary discussions in the USA, indicating shared concerns. The *Cape Town Statement* contains a clause about access to data from African countries and African populations, but it is difficult for this kind of collaboration to be realised. There is potentially a lot of research to be done arising from needs in developed countries that will impact the developing world; for instance, the move towards decarbonisation, which impacts Africa because of the available energy choices, and the need for minerals mined from Africa. Potentially, this research can be done without African collaboration. Dr Martin posed the question of how the framework of such research should be extended to include Africa.

Prof Entsua-Mensah noted that according to the *Lagos Plan of Action*¹⁴, African countries pledged to spend a percentage of their GDP on scientific research. She posed the question of how this can be prioritised at the level of the African Union.

The **chairperson of the National Research Fund of Kenya** commented on the need for African countries to allocate part of their GDP towards research. Kenya, for example, spends about 1% of its GDP on research.

Regarding the discussion of 'helicopter research', he indicated this is not altogether applicable to Kenya. About 99% of research published on Kenyan projects is authored by local researchers, and most innovations are the result of local research and development funded by the country itself.

Prof Chalfie suggested that the issue of allocating a percentage of GDP to research is a

¹⁴ <https://www.nepad.org/publication/lagos-plan-of-action>

topic for the network, or for representatives of the various academies to address. Initially, a fact-finding exercise would be required to establish what percentages of GDP the various countries are spending on research. Proposals could then be made on how academies could contribute to the discussion.

A delegate supported the suggestion and noted that this could become a leverage for researchers and universities to access funds for research.

Prof Entsua-Mensah emphasised that it should be borne in mind that Africa is a continent, and not a country. Scientific research in North Africa is generally more advanced than in sub-Saharan Africa, and within the different regions, some countries are more advanced than others. **Prof Kirumira** agreed that blanket statements on Africa should be avoided, since Africa is very diverse, with diverse countries and cultures. The use of the term 'sub-Saharan Africa' could also be perceived as derogatory, because of the implications that some regions are more advanced than others.

Prof Iyioke acknowledged the diversity of Africa, but observed that there are also some similarities across the region; for example, the concept of *ubuntu*¹⁵.

A delegate commented that the African continent has 55 states, each with its own challenges and circumstances. Most of the campaigning and advocacy for human rights tends to be done by NGOs, politicians, the media and the public. It is regrettable that the national academies are seldom involved.

Prof Entsua-Mensah noted that the question of what is meant by 'indigenous research' has not been answered.

Prof Sabiha Essack pointed out that the question of how leadership in collaborations could be advanced from the global North to the global South has not been answered.

Prof Sabiha Essack noted that the question of how perceptions of the deficit model could be changed in the global South has not been answered.

Prof London commented on a missing element in the discussions; the focus was more on knowledge production than on knowledge dissemination. The journal industry, which is key in the dissemination of knowledge, is driven by researchers and scholars themselves (in the form of reviewers and editors), but it is largely detrimental to equity. For instance, when locally published papers do not have co-authors representing the region, local scholars need to question and confront the publishers. Journal publishers generally do not have policies to address this, nor is it relevant to them. Furthermore, researchers from the global North often ignore papers resulting from the global South, or do not acknowledge them in citations. The publishing industry needs to become involved in equity, and the research community needs to push publishers to do so. Scholars publish their research out of a commitment to contribute to the public good, but publishing houses are driven by business principles and profits. There is a difference in the motivations of these two groups.

Dr Visagie agreed with Prof London, and stated that a similar issue had been raised at a recent conference at which it had been acknowledged that editors and publishers also need to take heed of the *Cape Town Statement*. There are specific sections in the *Statement* pertaining to editors and journals. The points made are important, especially

¹⁵'Ubuntu' is a Nguni term meaning 'humanity'. It is sometimes translated as "I am because we are" (also "I am because you are") or "humanity towards others".

when indigenous-led research is reviewed, but reviewers are often not familiar with the nature of such research and the basic premises of the research cultures.

In closing, **Prof Kirumira** highlighted the important points from the session. Firstly, the language and concepts used in the context of global equity in collaborations can be problematic. The question remains how to frame terms to be impactful and effective at all levels, and to enable equity. The issue of values also emerged. In the discussion around equity and global collaborations, Prof Kirumira asked why the concept of 'equity' is invoked mostly in relation to Africa, whereas it should be a basic premise that is universally applied in all global collaborations.

Regarding technological developments, a focus on good practices and recognition is due. However, it is important to ensure correct policies for scholars to foster productive and equitable engagements.

The advancement of leadership has not been fully discussed in the panel and needs to be addressed by programmes such as the Future Professors Programme. It should be the responsibility of senior academics and national academies to drive the discussion.

The *Cape Town Statement* is a call for action to all scholars. Prof Kirumira called on the IHRN and ASSAf to issue a statement that brings the African Union, the European Union and other high-level stakeholders into this discussion. He suggested that, in addition to the statements that the IHRN periodically issues, the network of scholars present at this meeting could work on such a statement. The delegates represent a good platform, because there are no conflicts of interest.

PANEL 2: Gender Equality and Gender-Based Violence (Moderator: Prof Refilwe Nancy Phaswana-Mafuya, Director South African Medical Research Council/UJ Pan African Centre for Epidemics Research, South African Medical Research Council, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Johannesburg)

Prof Refilwe Nancy Phaswana-Mafuya (PhD, PGD (Epi), MSc (Epi) is an epidemiologist and public health scientist. She studied at the University of Limpopo and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She is the Director of the first and newly established South African Medical Research Council/University of Johannesburg (UJ) Pan African Centre for Epidemics Research (PACER) Extramural Unit and a Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, Faculty of Health Sciences, UJ. She lectures in the MSc programme on Reproductive Biology and Reproductive Health (Epidemiology) at the Pan African University of Life and Earth Sciences Institute, African Union. She also serves as a mentor for the DHET Future Professors Programme, Phase II. Prof Phaswana-Mafuya was coronated as the Queen Mother of Research and Development by the Abeadze Traditional Council of the Abeadze State, Ghana in August 2022. Preceding this, she was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation at North-West University, acting Executive Director, Research Director and Chief Research Manager at the HIV/AIDS, STIs and TB Research Programme of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) for almost 13 years, as well as Editor-in-Chief and Executive Editor of the Journal of Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS (SAHARA Journal). Prof Phaswana-Mafuya has worked to better understand the epidemiology of HIV in South African and sub-Saharan Africa for almost 20 years, and in the last ten years she paid particular attention to marginalised populations that are at higher risk for HIV acquisition and transmission. She chaired the 9th SA AIDS Conference in 2019, the second largest medical meeting in the world. She is also a member of Dira Sengwe AIDS Conferences; the Higher Health Board; the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) Council, and the NRF Board as well as a Scientific Advisory Committee member of the Africa Health Research Institute;

an expert panellist at the International Expert Panel on Infectiology of the German Research Foundation; African–German Research Networks for Health Innovations in Sub-Saharan Africa; and a member of the World Congress of Epidemiology 2024 Local Organising Committee. She is an NRF-rated scientist and a Fellow of ASSAf, the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), and the Organisation for Women in Science for the Developing World (OSWD). In 2017, she was awarded the National Science and Technology Forum's TW Nkambule Award in recognition of her outstanding contribution to science, technology and engineering. She was featured in Fair Lady Magazine (2022) and Dialogue Magazine (2022) as a world-class woman scientist.

Introductory remarks

Prof Phaswana-Mafuya introduced the session by stating that gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most pervasive forms of human rights violations that threaten social justice, sustainable development, social cohesion and economic development. However, gaps and challenges in this regard continue to persist.

Present-day society is characterised by implicit, biased stereotypes and cultural norms that tend to overlook the abilities and capabilities of women, which make this panel session very topical and relevant. GBV persists in many forms and in all countries and contexts, and therefore it is an important conversation, both nationally and internationally. During the engagement in the panel session, these issues will be debated, in the hope of understanding the commitments and actions needed to achieve a just society.

Gender equity in the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) (Prof Julia Tagüeña, Senior Researcher, Institute of Renewable Energies, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico)

Prof Julia Tagüeña is a physicist and a senior researcher at the Instituto de Energías Renovables (IER) (Institute of Renewable Energies) of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). For 50 years, she has been a research professor teaching, advising and directing students at bachelor and graduate levels. Her research topics are solid state physics, renewable energies and sustainable development, while working extensively on science communication. She is a member of the Sistema Nacional de Investigadores, Level 3 (Mexico's National Research System with the highest rank). She served as Director of the Energy Research Center on its road to becoming an institute. Later, from 2013-2018, she was the Deputy Director for Scientific Development at the former Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT) (Mexican National Council of Science and Technology). During 2019 she worked ad honorem as coordinator of the Foro Consultivo Científico y Tecnológico. Throughout her career she has received different prizes, the most recent one being "The Public Understanding and Popularization of Science Award 2021, TWAS-LACREP". Furthermore, she is a member of different societies such as the Mexican Academy of Sciences, the UK Institute of Physics and the International Network of Public Communication of Science and Technology. She was also a founder member of the Morelos Academy of Science, established in the Mexican state of her institutional affiliation.

The focus of Prof Tagüeña's talk was gender equity in the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). The university, although situated geographically within North America, ~~was~~ is culturally affiliated to Latin America. Aspects of the university culture that will be discussed ~~were~~ are relevant to the whole Latin American region.

The equality movement at UNAM started in 1992 with a research project on gender studies. However, only around 2013, a strong feminist movement was mobilised. In 2020, a new

coordinating body of gender issues was created, Coordinación de Igualdad de Género¹⁶ (Gender Equality Coordination). This group performs an important role by organising meetings, workshops and conferences, and producing important publications, and had become the transversal way of the university to influence gender equality. It organises all gender equality committees in each institution of the university. If an institute, for example, has a GBV problem, the gender equality committee could be approached. Each committee consist of students, researchers and representatives of the university, and each committee member is appointed every two years, with one possible re-election. All committees at UNAM ~~were~~ are coordinated and organised under one umbrella theme, namely gender equality.

There ~~was~~ is also an advisory committee specifically for STEM (for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), of which Prof Tagüña is a member. This committee was established to encourage equal participation for women in technical careers, because traditionally women and men ~~were~~ are associated with different occupations. STEM is also related to sustainability, and in the same years that UNESCO developed the SDGs, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly instituted 11 February as the *International Day for Women and Girls in Science*. A purpose of this programme was to promote STEM as a career of choice to close the gender gap. STEM activities are grounded on critical thinking, which has to be encouraged in both boys and girls.

Academic functions of the UNAM committees included ensuring equal opportunities for research, equal levels of support in projects, and the same leadership opportunities. However, when a problem needs legal advice, the University Human Rights office has to be approached. This office has two branches, namely one for regular university matters and another focusing on gender violence. The office comprises lawyers and has very strict rules on confidentiality. The office has been very important in key GBV issues at the university.

In Mexico, GBV is regrettably still a big problem, and laws that address specific issues arising from high-profile matters carry the names of the women who were instrumental in exposing the perpetrators, or had been victims of GBV themselves. An example was Olympia's law on digital violence and Milena's law that dealt with acid attack cases.

The Academia Mexicana de Ciencias (Mexican Academy of Science) is not yet part of this network, but it will be included soon. A number of affirmative action activities for women in science have been advocated. In terms of gender discrimination there is horizontal discrimination (by disciplines) and vertical discrimination (by position), but there is also discrimination by age. For women that have children, the timespan of their academic careers is impacted. The Academia has an important research award for young researchers, which has been linked to an age limit of 40 years for men and 43 years for women. The three extra years gave many women the opportunity to reach positions and gain opportunities that would otherwise have been inaccessible to them.

Another activity of the Academia was to highlight Mexican female pioneers in professional careers (for example, the first female medical doctor, the first female lawyer, the first physicist, etcetera) and profile them in the media, to showcase the contribution of women in these careers. Another important event is Women's International Day, celebrated on 8 March, during which the colour purple is displayed on university buildings and prominent places throughout the campus and the city. This day commemorates women's struggle for equality, in the form of marches and gatherings.

¹⁶ <https://coordinaciongenero.unam.mx>

In closing, Prof Tagüeña stated that education should change humanity towards a more equal society, and justice must be obtained through law, but there is still the need for activism to accelerate change in gender issues. There needs to be a combination of all these actions, to achieve true equity and equality.

What's the numbers got to do with it? (Prof Vasu Reddy, Vice-Rector: Research and Internationalisation, University of the Free State, South Africa)

Prof Vasu Reddy is Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Postgraduate Studies and Internationalisation at the University of the Free State, South Africa. Prior to his appointment, he was Professor of Sociology and Dean of Humanities at the University of Pretoria. His research interests are gender, sexualities, poverty/inequalities, HIV/AIDS, as well as critical food studies. He is a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), and an NRF-B1 rated scholar. Beyond articles in these areas, his book-length publications include: Care in Context: Transnational Gender Perspectives (with Stephan Meyer, Tamara Shefer & Thenjiwe Mewiya, 2014, HSRC); Queer in Africa: LGBTQI Identities, Citizenship and Activism (with Zethu Matebeni & Surya Monro, 2018; Routledge); Queer Kinship: South African Perspectives on the Sexual Politics of Family-Making and Belonging (with Tracy Morison & Ingrid Lynch, UNISA Press & Routledge, 2018); State of the Nation: Poverty and Inequalities – Diagnosis, Prognosis, Responses (with Crain Soudien & Ingrid Woolard, HSRC Press, 2019); The Fabric of Dissent: Public Intellectuals in South Africa (lead editor with Narnia Bohler-Muller, Greg Houston, Maxi Schoeman & Heather Thuynsma, HSRC Press, 2020); State of the Nation: Ethics, Politics, Inequalities: New Directions (with Narnia Bohler-Muller & Crain Soudien, HSRC Press, 2021), University on the Border: Crisis of Authority and Precarity (with Liz Lange & Siseko Kumalo, 2021, SUN Press) and The Texture of Dissent: Defiant Public Intellectuals in South Africa (with Narnia Bohler-Muller, Gregory Houston, Maxi Schoeman & Heather Thuynsma, HSRC Press, 2022).

In presenting his talk, Prof Reddy positioned himself not only as an academic, but also as a scholar-activist, a role that has shaped his thinking and informed his position. He reasoned that the political project remains central to the intellectual project as well as the interventions that are required. The title of his talk was, 'What's the numbers got to do with it?'

Gender-based violence (GBV) incorporates difficult issues for which there are no silver bullets or complete solutions. In this lies the purpose of academies in the debate, namely bringing scholars together to find solutions. In this scholarly domain, there is a strongly developed body of research knowledge, including lived experiences, supporting the case for change. Although transformation has been occurring over a considerable period, equity is lagging behind. It encompasses events and processes over time, that are interrelated.

Prof Reddy introduced his topic with two vignettes. The first related to a former president of Harvard University, Larry (Lawrence) Summers, who in 2005, suggested that the failure of women to advance in their scientific careers resulted from differences in innate aptitude, rather than from gender discrimination. Summers provoked a furore by arguing that men outperform women in mathematics and sciences because of biological differences, and that discrimination is no longer a career limitation for female academics. Summers was an economist and served as Secretary of the Treasury under President Clinton, and he has a reputation for being outspoken. His tenure at Harvard was marred by clashes with African American academic staff and intellectuals, and during that period there was a significant decline in the hiring of women. On the issue of women in science, Summers argued that the most important reason for the gender gap is the same reason that few women held top positions in many high-powered professions, because they are less likely than men to work

the long hours expected for advancement in their careers. On the topic of long hours of work, he even said that more married men were prepared to make the high level of commitment than married women. His opinions gave a clear sense of the persistence of these beliefs and the importance of discussion.

The next vignette was also from North America. Ben Barres was an American neurobiologist at Stanford University. His research focused on the interaction between neurons and glial cells in the nervous system. From 2008, he was the Chair of the Neurobiological Department at Stanford. In 1997, he transitioned to male, and became the first openly transgender scientist in the National Academy of Sciences in 2013. He died in 2017 from pancreatic cancer. His autobiography¹⁷ titled *The Autobiography of a Transgender Scientist*, expressed his deep experience of gender issues. He said, "'Perhaps I was not good enough", is a thought that crossed my mind very often, until I heard others speak of the forced invisibility of women in science'. About his experience after his transition, he stated that 'by far the main difference that I have noticed, is that people who don't know I am transgender treat me with much more respect. I can even complete a sentence without being interrupted by a man.' In 2006, he published a commentary in *Nature*¹⁸, asking the question, 'Does gender matter?' Today, this panel is again asking that question and debating on the issue. The answer is logical and it does.

In contemplating the question of 'What do we know?', it is known that gender differences and perceived norms about gender and sexuality are pervasive. Academic institutions, by their very nature, are shaped by multiple competing forces and ideas that constantly need to be navigated, challenged, and unsettled. As a previous speaker aptly stated, 'nobody is an island'. People are deeply connected and interrelated into an ecosystem, and gender discrimination leads to exclusion, safety issues, violence and negative attitudes in the academic world in which cultures, the nature of the spaces, and the environmental ecosystem play a critical role. The consequences of these circumstances are known, as demonstrated by research and lived experiences, to be related to emotional psychological damage.

The case for change is very obvious. In South Africa, the statistics of ASSAf's membership show positive trends, namely that 30% of members of the Academy are women, and 34% are of diverse racial groups. Gender is not the only issue, however; intersex issues also require attention. Sadly, the debate on gender is still very binary and requires thinking beyond the binary boundaries. In spite of the cultures and the faces of our institutions changing, there are multiple issues prevailing. Women, as well as men who identify as females, are more affected. In recent decades, transgender issues have surfaced as a visible, political and intellectual issue, and need to be interrogated.

The importance of the intellectual debate in asking critical questions on these issues is realised, and needs to be tackled by the academies at a practical level. Another matter is the political debate (mentioned by Prof Tagüeña), where advocacy remains central. The intellectual and the political are still deeply intertwined. Beyond awareness and information dissemination, cultures of patriarchy still need to be challenged. The dominance of men in institutional decision-making is still prevalent. At the practical level, there is the need for quantitative, national and globally representative data. The body of research coming from academies globally is fascinating, particularly the perspectives and recommendations they offer. Beyond quantitative data, qualitative information is also crucial, speaking to the question in the title of this talk, 'What's the numbers got to do with it?'

¹⁷ Barres, Ben (2018). *The Autobiography of a Transgender Scientist*. MIT Press. ISBN 978-0-262-03911-6.

¹⁸ <https://www.nature.com/scitable/content/does-gender-matter-by-ben-a-barres-10602856/>

Stories told from lived experiences are absolutely critical to changing and shifting mindsets, unsettling as they might be. Women are under-represented in science careers, particularly in STEM, but also increasingly in the Arts. Stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes prevail, and there is a lack of support for women pursuing careers. Nevertheless, there have been encouraging developments in South Africa, such as the Future Professors Programme. The rise of women in the South African Young Academy of Science, where over 50% are women, is a promising development.

Gender issues are rights-based, but rights are not normative and deeply contested. In an earlier panel session, it was stated that Africa is a continent comprising many countries, with differentiated approaches to thinking about human rights. The literature affirms that there are shared responsibilities towards gender issues, not only in the academies, but also in academia, industry, government and civil society. However, a big challenge is attrition in the workplace, and women bear the brunt of this, mostly because of motherhood and sometimes the role as a single parent. Women who enter academia later have to climb the ladder and compete with established scholars. =

Prof Reddy used the metaphor that producing a scholar is not like producing canned peaches, which are harvested, prepared according to a recipe, and put in a can for an extended shelf life. The question is how to sustain the interventions, and not merely fast-track female candidates to fill a tick box. The academies should do much more in this regard, for instance, asking the right questions, developing consensus studies and entering into the debate. The questions around gender and non-binary data are also very important, but perhaps it is most important to listen to lived experiences and stories of those people who ultimately make up the academies.

The Science Council of Japan tackling the gender gap (Prof Kanako Takayama, Graduate School of Law, Kyoto University, Japan)

Prof Kanako Takayama studied law at the University of Tokyo and then worked as a lecturer at Seijo University in Tokyo. From 1998 to 2000, she was a visiting scholar at the University of Cologne. She serves as Vice-Secretary General of the International Association of Penal Law. Since 2005, she has been a full professor at the Graduate School of Law at Kyoto University. In 2006, she was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit by Germany. In the same year, she joined the Science Council of Japan as an associate member, and in 2017 she became an ordinary member and secretary of the Committee of Law. Her research fields are criminal law and criminology. Since 2009, she has been an executive member of the Criminal Law Society of Japan, and at the same time an advisory member of the Ministry of Justice for the 2022 edition of the White Book on Crime. As an expert on due process of law and sanctions, Prof Takayama represented the Science Council of Japan at the last biennial meeting of the IHRN in Seoul, Korea in 2018.

Prof Takayama described how the Science Council of Japan is tackling the gender gap, which is a significant problem in Japanese society. In the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report* of 2022¹⁹, Japan ranked 116th out of 146 countries. Although educational attainment scored highly, political empowerment ranked very low in this measure, which denoted the persistent existence of discrimination against women. For instance, among political representatives in the parliament, fewer than 10% were women, and although educational attainment was high, only 20% of staff and students in universities were women.

¹⁹ <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/>

According to the White Paper on Crime of 2022, published by the Ministry of Justice, most victims of domestic violence during COVID-19 have been women. Whereas most types of offences drastically declined during the pandemic, the incidence of partner violence remained stable. These statistics have been contested, because local public officials handling those cases state that reporting such offences is now more difficult than before the pandemic, and there is a view that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an increase in domestic violence in Japan.

Furthermore, the White Paper on Suicide of 2022 reported that suicide rates among women increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, in line with a continuous rise during the past three years. In general, Japan has high suicide rates, ranking among the highest in G7 countries. Women suicides top the list when compared to other countries. Several causes have been debated, among which are economic and mental stress, discrimination between men and women (which is more damaging for women than for men), and the problems brought on by the solitude imposed during COVID-19. Some women turned to petty crimes such as shoplifting due to poverty, but also out of loneliness and a lack of social networks and support systems. The coronavirus pandemic placed additional stress on women for a number of reasons, including job losses in the service and retail sectors where women tend to work.

The Science Council of Japan has adopted several strategies to combat the situation. However, a necessity for the implementation of these strategies is the existence of precise statistics. Compared to other countries, Japan has stable and reliable data, which forms the basis of policy-making. Expert committees within the Science Council of Japan formulate policy proposals, for example, to combat poverty or to combat violence based on discrimination. At the same time, the Science Council of Japan itself has made efforts to promote gender equality among its members and associate members in order to become a model for Japanese society. At present, 37% of ordinary members of the Science Council of Japan are women, which is high compared to other public organisations in Japan.

In Japan, government ministries publish statistics on societal indicators, but do not make proposals with respect to solutions. It is the role of scientists in the Academy to make proposals, which already have impacts on legislation and policies. An example is the penal code amendments in 2017, where the report of the Science Council of Japan influenced the amendment of the definition of sexual crimes.

Nonetheless, challenges persist, mostly due to the long time needed to address gender equality issues in the legislation. In general, Japanese authorities are reluctant to address discrimination, and activism in this regard is welcomed by the government. Moreover, the counterproductive reforms in economic policies, such as the increase in people's social security premiums accompanied by a simultaneous reduction of social insurance benefits, is detrimental to society and to the cause of gender equality. This has happened because the proposals of scientists and the academies have not received sufficient consideration, strengthening the resolve of the academies to become more influential.

A lived experience (Ms Veni Naidoo, Events Manager, Sci-Bono Discovery Centre, South Africa)

Ms Veni Naidoo, a driven professional, has navigated life's challenges with an indomitable spirit, inspiring all who have had the privilege of crossing paths with her. Born into a modest family, she learnt the value of hard work and perseverance from an early age. Upon completing her studies, she embarked on her professional journey, determined to make a

positive impact in the world. She carved her path in the corporate world, proving her capabilities through her exceptional work ethic, intelligence and natural leadership skills. Her relentless pursuit of excellence saw her rise through the ranks, securing a well-respected position in her field. Veni's story is a testament to the power of resilience, love and determination. She embodies the qualities of a strong woman who has overcome adversity, risen above the challenge that life has thrown her way and emerged as a true force to be reckoned with. Her unwavering spirit and ability to thrive despite tragedy serves as an inspiration to all, proving that with resilience and determination one can conquer even the most difficult circumstances.

Ms Naidoo recounted a lived experience, which is presented here in her own words.

“Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests. Today, for the first time, I stand before you to share a harrowing account of a tragic event that unfolded on 28 July 2022—a day that forever changed the lives of 20 innocent individuals, a day that shattered the trust I once had in humanity.

Thirty-two counts of rape and multiple counts of robbery, sexual abuse and violence against the cast and crew that were at the Krugersdorp Mine dump. Among the 20, there were 12 women, eight brutally raped, two sexually abused and all were violently attacked and tortured and two were left untouched. Of the 8 men on set, 7 were violently attacked, stripped of all their clothing and tortured and one was left untouched.

We were filming a gospel music video and I was the producer on set that day. On our last scene we were confronted by approximately 60 men, known as *Zama Zamas*. They came running towards us, firing shots in the air and asking us to get face on the ground. At first, they just took our phones, bags and jewellery, then they came around for our clothes and shoes, sexually touching us, beating us, wanting us to take them off. And then the real nightmare began. They started dragging the women one by one into the bushes. We were not allowed to look up, but all you could hear were people praying and just crying, and screams from the women being beaten and raped. When they came for me, they pulled on my hair to see my face – they seemed angry, screaming the word '*mlungu*', which afterwards I found out meant 'white person', and then just pushed my face back to the ground. This angered them. This went on throughout the night, every time someone wanted to drag me to get raped, they subjected me to brutal assaults, using their firearms to strike me, kicking me relentlessly, violating my body with a gun in a horrific manner. They showed no mercy, imposing their dominance by standing on my knees, just to remove my socks. I was subjected to this torture, simply because I happened to be this *mlungu* (white person). The men (in our group) lying naked on the hard ground were kicked, beaten and tortured, and this seemed to give our captors a sick pleasure. They seemed to enjoy this power they had over us.

Just when we thought that this was going to be over, they asked us to stand up, walk in a straight line and go into a hole in the mine – here we had to lie down and it was then that I realised that this was the end. We all had to lie down in execution-style, waiting to be shot. They kept yelling at us, telling us we were going to die, all because they were searching for a set of keys for one of the cars we came in. One of the brave ladies who was translating for us, told them that the keys were in one of the pants they had taken, and whilst they seemed to be arguing amongst themselves, While we lay there, they were still pulling the women into the bushes, raping them again. After what seemed like forever, they asked us to walk in groups of five, to the cars. When we got to the cars these monsters made the women serve them the food and drinks that we had on set. And still they continued pulling the ladies into the bushes and savagely raped them, while others went around to the cars,

taunting us. Finally, four hours later, they asked us to leave – one car at a time. I was in the last car to leave because I waited for one of the ladies to be brought back to the car. She was being savagely raped. The look on her face still haunts me to this day.

I honestly have no idea how I had the strength to drive off to the police station. Four long hours of torture and we survived, but for the 20 of us our nightmare did not end. When I got to the police station, there was nobody that was trained to handle rape victims. The ladies that had arrived in the car before me were seated in front, still waiting to be helped, their clothes ripped. I had to scream at an officer that these were rape victims and we need help. I was told to wait my turn. It was only when the guy who was reporting a cell phone stolen said that he did not mind waiting, that he even decided to try and assist. We waited for a female officer to arrive and the ladies were then taken to a nearby hospital for a rape kit. On the same night, we were all asked to go to the site to identify the exact spots where we were raped and beaten. Still traumatised, I refused to go, but my car was used. So I waited with ripped clothes, no shoes, with bruises, a sore knee, shivering from cold in the front area of the police station. I was not given any room to wait, not offered anything to drink, not even spoken to. I waited another three hours until three o'clock in the night for them to come back to the police station, so that I could get my car. I just wanted to get home and put this behind me.

But unfortunately, that was not what happened. XENOPHOBIA, RACIAL INJUSTICES, HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, POLICE CORRUPTION: this is what the victims faced after the attack. Our information was leaked by the police on a WhatsApp group, and all our names, addresses and contact numbers reached social media and we were hounded by the media, every single one of us, with visits to our homes and work places. Then came the threatening calls which even a year later have not stopped.

Some of the ladies went to safe houses and some went to family and friends. I went to my family in Cape Town and I refused to switch on my phone. I wanted to shut off from everything, because the media was in a frenzy. There was so much propaganda going around.

Whilst I wasn't initially familiar with all the women on set, because they had accompanied the artist, a profound sense of maternal instinct emerged within me after the incident. There were girls on set of 19 years – the same age as my kids. It was during a phone conversation with the ladies, approximately a week later, that I discovered the distressing truth: the only medical attention they had received was the rape kit examination. No follow-up testing, no further assessments or HIV tests had been conducted on any of them, some as young as 19 years. Frantically, I reached out to my doctor, who provided me with a few contact numbers. Fortunately, Netcare stepped in to provide crucial assistance with the ladies' check-ups. Each rape survivor underwent a comprehensive examination, ensuring that they received the necessary care and follow-up, if required. Amongst them was a pregnant woman.

Regrettably, despite contrary portrayals in the media and by our Police Commissioner, none of us received any form of counselling during this period. The attention seemed to be solely directed towards four women from Alexandra Township, presumably for the sake of positive PR (public relations), while the remainder of the women and men were entirely disregarded. I reached out to a foundation called *Women4Change*, who together with Rape Crisis helped with counselling sessions for both the men and women. And together with *Women4Change*, we helped raise funds to assist seven of the rape victims with financial contributions for six months.

The fact that xenophobia reared its ugly head in this narrative only deepens the wounds inflicted upon the victims. The Nigerian male victims had to flee to their embassy to get help the day after they were subjected to this violent crime. The news was all about these victimised foreigners, alleging that they planned this attack and that they took the women to a mine to rape them. The fact that their information was leaked, meant that they were all subjected to constant harassment. When they got to the embassy, the police were there, demanding that they give DNA samples, or they would be arrested. It was demanded only from them, and not from the white man on set.

I arrived back to Johannesburg, and was inundated with calls from the media wanting to know what happened, blaming the company, asking if this was planned. I went to the Nigerian embassy to try and help. Not only were these men traumatised by this incident, the victims were now treated like criminals. They were all in a bad state, but no help was given.

To further compound the injustice, the police arrested 14 *Zama Zamas* at random, accusing them of the rapes and attacks. These men were later released, due to no DNA evidence and no positive identifications – so why were they arrested? Many questions remain unanswered, such as the fate of the woman who had equipment in her home, the same woman who was on set with her daughter and son, and all three miraculously escaped harm on that fateful night. Regrettably, the case has been closed, leaving us without the answers and accountability we seek.

That fateful night, besides the tragedy we endured, we suffered an immense financial blow, losing over two million Rands worth of equipment. This equipment was the culmination of years of dedicated saving and hard work, representing our means of livelihood. Its sudden and complete disappearance has left us grappling with the task of rebuilding our lives, finding ways to gather resources once more, and re-acquiring the necessary equipment to generate an income and sustain ourselves again and carry on the work we love doing.

This past year has not been easy for me. I am on a very difficult journey, a journey of healing. I have put so much of my time into helping all the other men and women that I haven't really dealt with my own trauma, and it is only since February this year that I started my own counselling journey. It is not easy, and there are times when I feel like giving up. I'm frustrated, I'm angry and I'm constantly anxious. This incident has left a part of me broken – a part that wants to leave this country I call home – a beautiful country that needs to be cleaned and healed. A country that I am afraid to live in.

I will never be the same person I was before 28 July 2022. As I stand here today, I carry the weight of the pain and the trauma that befell the victims on that dark day. But I also carry with me the strength, resilience and determination of a woman that refuses to be defined by these horrors. Let us remember the victims, honour their courage, and work together to create a safer, more compassionate society. Let us learn to respect one another. Thank you for giving me the time to tell my story."

Discussion and questions

Prof Phaswana-Mafuya commented on perceptions that many institutions have policies and committees, but lack robust gender-mainstreaming activities. For example, women are often caught up in the dual responsibilities of motherhood and employment. Institutional strategies do not address these issues at times when, for example, a child is ill and the mother needs to tend to the child. The manner in which equality is addressed does not give real support with respect to many of the issues faced by women.

Prof Tagüeña responded that the Gender Equality Coordination has been created to make rules that are affirmative in their actions. For instance, during COVID-19 women researchers stopped producing papers and outputs, while male researchers produced more papers, because of the traditional responsibilities at home. These issues are addressed by the new rules in the university.

Prof Phaswana-Mafuya made the point that women can also be disadvantaged through affirmative action language, which can create expectations of promotion.

Prof Tagüeña responded that when talking about affirmative action, it is important never to compromise quality in research, but rather to understand everybody's situation.

Prof Iyioke noted that the panel had reiterated that attitudes of racism, and gender or cultural bias are still prevalent. In spite of the #MeToo Movement that took down influential people who showed prejudice, such attitudes are sometimes lauded. He gave the example of demeaning comments made by the Presidents of Nigeria and the USA, who went on to win elections in their countries. Prof Iyioke posed the question of what approach would be most appropriate and most effective in dealing with such attitudes.

Prof Reddy responded that this is a complex question without easy answers. The gender project is ongoing and unfinished, despite most countries having progressive gender policies. However, if mindsets, attitudes and cultures do not change, the policies remain meaningless. In institutional hierarchical systems, there is still no understanding when, for example, women have to fetch children from school, and many institutions do not accommodate this. There are examples of highly scholarly and research-productive women who are so traumatised in the system that they have abandoned their PhD studies and stopped doing research. Intervention is required in that process in order to have an impact. Collective, shared responsibility is required in all institutions to constantly reflect on how to make the culture conducive to change.

Prof Phaswana-Mafuya commented that Prof Reddy had raised the important topic of 'going beyond the binary'. Society in general is far behind in that regard. The question is how to accelerate an understanding of intersectional issues of sexuality to move beyond the binary. These challenges go beyond gender. Generally when there is talk about collective responsibility, then nobody takes responsibility.

Prof Reddy responded that there is no easy solution, but scholarly institutions such as ASSAf could start consensus studies, collecting data, including from lived experience and advocacy. The gender issue is becoming highly problematic, and it is apparent that there is deep reluctance in society to deal with the issue of transgender sexuality. Even though contexts have changed, mindsets within institutions have not changed, which is still evident in the standard male/female tick boxes; for instance, in attendance registers at universities.

Dr Brézin commented that women colleagues have complained that when something they said was repeated by a male colleague, it drew more attention. He also raised the issue of women who have published papers under a married name, and had to continue using this as their academic name even if they were divorced. A recent trend is that many professional women keep their maiden name to avoid such situations.

Another audience member commented that an example of 'dishonest' reform is the practice of creating bogus roles for women in institutions in order to achieve the required equity numbers. This essentially entails placing women in soft posts such as marketing, secretarial and administrative support. In Europe, the private sector is more progressive in

this regard and is more flexible in terms of gender responsibilities. In the European Union, there has been considerable progress in recognising women, and a lot of people don't see gender in the private sector; however, race is still a challenge. 'Women alone have not moved the dial for women', which implies that more effort is required to make appropriate laws.

An online comment to the panel was that in the discipline of physics, male scientists are increasingly taking up household roles, including childcare. This was followed by the question of whether this is an emerging trend for men in academics to take up household roles.

Some panel members agreed, but said they do not have data to answer the question conclusively.

Prof Entsua-Mensah pointed out that some countries have back-tracked from equity policies. In Ghana, for example, women had been empowered due to progressive policies in a previous regime, but over time (and due to changing regimes) those policies have been eroded and patriarchal attitudes have resurfaced. The head of state had a great impact on the mindsets towards equity and had a role to play to sensitise citizens towards a more equal society.

Prof Phaswana-Mafuya agreed that leadership is very important. In Africa, traditional leadership can be mobilised to support changes of attitude towards women.

Prof Tagüeña asked Ms Naidoo whether she was of the opinion that there had been drugs involved in the attack she had experienced. There had been incidents of that nature in Mexico, and mostly there were drugs involved.

Ms Naidoo replied that it was not known whether drugs were involved, but anyone who could inflict such acts was probably not in their right state of mind. It was possible that the *Zama Zamas* were pawns in a bigger game, and that the situation was set up.

Dr Elmahdi described the talk by Ms Naidoo as a testimony of heroic courage and strength, and commended ASSAf and IHRN for bringing such a story to this platform as a glimpse of reality. In the discussion on research and data, to hear real lived experience gives the data new meaning. She suggested that it would be worth investigating how so much has been invested in GBV interventions without much apparent progress. Another point, which is more relevant to the situation in Sudan, is to consider the indigenous perspective in research, because an outsider would not be able to understand the dimensions and nuances of the society. Local researchers and community members could add a lot of value.

In closing, **Prof Phaswana-Mafuya** emphasised that eliminating GBV must be a common effort and common achievement, as this is an issue that concerns everyone, involves everyone, requires everyone, and needs urgent attention.

PANEL 3: Addressing Stigma and Discrimination (Moderator: Prof Rasigan Maharajh, Chief Director, Institute for Economic Research on Innovation, Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa)

Prof Maharajh graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Forskningspolitiska Institutet (Research Policy Institute) of the School of Economics and Management at Lund University in Sweden. He is also an alumnus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Harvard Business School. Prof Maharajh has worked in and presented his research in over 30

countries. He has been a visiting professor and researcher in Brazil, Cuba, Kenya, India and Sweden, amongst others, whilst also holding concurrent faculty appointments at the Sustainability Institute and the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) of Stellenbosch University in South Africa. He re-joined academia in 2004 with the launch of the Institute for Economic Research on Innovation (IERI) at Tshwane University of Technology, after various previous deployments, including as Head of Policy at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) (1997–2004) and National Coordinator of the Science and Technology Policy Transition Project for South Africa's first democratic government (1995–1997). Prior to 1995, and whilst formally engaged in adult education and human development variously as: Senior Researcher at the Education Policy Unit (EPU) of the University of Natal (UNB) (1994); National Coordinator and Researcher at Operation Upgrade of Southern Africa (1993); Research Assistant at the Macro-Education Policy Unit (MEPU) of the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) (1992); Research Assistant and Desk-Top Publisher at the Labour and Community Project (LACOM) of the South African Council for Higher Education (SACHED) (1988–1990), Prof Maharajh simultaneously held elected leadership positions within the organised student, youth and labour structures of the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the African National Congress (ANC). He holds appointments to the governing boards of public and private enterprises and was also a Ministerial Representative to the Council of Rhodes University (2012–2017). He was an elected Senator of Tshwane University of Technology (2012–2015). Prof Maharajh is a member of the Steering Group of the South Africa Forum for International Solidarity (SAFIS), where he convenes the Working Group on Foreign Policy. He is also the Interim Coordinator of the Campaign to Advance a Global Citizens Movement for a Great Transition (TWC). His primary research foci include the political economy, innovation systems and public policies in the context of the global knowledge commons, economic development, social cohesion and democratic governance. He has produced and contributed to numerous monographs, peer-reviewed articles in accredited scientific journals, chapters in academic books, seminars and colloquia. He serves on the editorial boards of scientific journals, is an active peer reviewer for a range of associated academic publications, and is a frequent member of scientific committees for conferences and research projects.

Introductory remarks

Prof Maharajh introduced the panel session on 'Addressing Stigma and Discrimination' with a quote from a 2018 IHRN publication²⁰, explaining why academies are involved with issues of rights. Four reasons were given.

One reason is that, to a great extent, their work is concerned with improving the lives of individuals, and engagement with internationally recognized human rights norms is vital in thinking about what it means to improve human life. Secondly, in some cases, as where academies grapple with the opportunities and risks presented by new technologies, academies can also contribute to societal understanding of rights, which is continually growing and evolving in response to new challenges.

Prof Mararajh emphasised this point in the context of the sixth global mass extinction facing the planet, and the acceleration of technological change.

²⁰ Engaging with Human Rights in the National Academy context: a resource guide by the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies. September 2018. Page 3.
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602ef3248d7ea838db1f0b09/t/6113eaf044aa541505967670/1628695297873/08.11.21+H.R.+Network+Guidebook.pdf>

Thirdly, engagement with human rights standards is also important for academies seeking to provide assistance for colleagues suffering severe ill-treatment and respond to broader issues of abuse and discrimination related to research and scholarship. In such situations, academies and their members frequently issue appeals grounded in human rights law. Finally and most fundamentally, through their concern for human rights, academies reaffirm the fundamental principles on which their work, and that of the global scientific enterprise, relies.

On this basis, the panel discussions will contribute to widen the understanding of stigma and discrimination experienced in academia. Based on the previously-mentioned four reasons, it is obvious that the need for engagement is particularly relevant for our current contemporary conjunction. With the human species presently numbering over eight billion people, the contradictions between the subjectively defined social, economic and political systems, and the objectively framed ecological boundaries confronting our expansion give rise to accelerated crisis of change and a looming spectre of various catastrophes. The urgency for academia to reconnect with society is therefore of crucial importance.

The collective global knowledge commons have undoubtedly propelled the human species to unprecedented growth and development. Unfortunately, the outcomes of development, including both tangible and intangible aspects, have not been sufficiently diffused or equally shared so as to ensure that all of humanity benefits from the progress achieved in scientific and technological research. The world is just emerging from a global pandemic, in which the human species had been threatened by a virus and its subsequent variations.

Massive investments in research and development over long historical timeframes had been brought together and proved capable of delivering solutions to the challenges that humanity was experiencing. However, the underdeveloped socioeconomic conscience soon retreated into ensuring profitability of some industries, and the global population was confronted by what was referred to as 'global vaccine apartheid', which challenged the scientific fact that all of humanity can only be safe if all are safeguarded. This included being afforded the possibility of producing vaccines where they are needed and contributing to the global knowledge stock. However, the pharmaceutical research and development industry insisted on patent protection, as opposed to considering the human lives that would be lost. Stigma and discrimination drew their support from unscientific beliefs that did not allow for interrogating the substantive basis or subsequent biases. Helping to find the way through the conceptualisations and the contestations regarding stigma and discrimination is the purpose and objective of this panel discussion.

Perspectives from Switzerland (Prof Martina Caroni, Vice-Rector for Teaching and International Relations, University of Lucerne, Switzerland)

Prof Martina Caroni is tenured Professor of International, Constitutional and Comparative law at the University of Lucerne. After attending schools in Berne, Switzerland and Florence, Italy, Prof Caroni studied law at the University of Berne, Switzerland and Yale Law School in New Haven, Connecticut. During her studies at the University of Berne, Prof Caroni worked as a research assistant at the Institute for Criminal Law and Criminology. Upon graduating from the University of Berne, she worked first as a research associate, then as a senior research associate at the Institute for Public Law at the University of Berne. In addition, she also clerked for six months as a lawyer at the Secretariat of the European Commission of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. In 1998, she completed her doctoral dissertation on the protection of private and family life in immigration matters. The doctoral dissertation was awarded the Walther Hug Prize for one of the best doctoral dissertations in 1999. In 2001,

while at Yale Law School, Prof Caroni was awarded the Master of Laws (LLM) and began her research on her habilitation (post-doctoral thesis) on campaign financing in Switzerland. Since April 2002, she has taught and undertaken research at the University of Lucerne, first as Assistant Professor, and since 2006, as full Professor for International, Constitutional and Comparative Law.

Prof Caroni commented that the topic of the session is important and challenging, yet solutions will still not be found at the end of the discussions. She summarised the important points from the previous sessions that had relevance to her presentation. Firstly, human rights are currently under pressure. Secondly, we need to recognise and reflect on the inherent biases in the system. Thirdly, science is currently being criticised, and increasingly so since the COVID-19 pandemic. There is prevailing mistrust towards scientists, and some aspects of science are called into question. There is also the rise of scientism²¹ among the population at large, where society consider themselves knowledgeable by consulting sources such as Doctor Google. Fourthly, scholars and thought leaders need to realise and acknowledge that current unequal treatment or distinctions within society might very well be considered as discrimination in years to come. Examples of these include gender-specific medicines, and the parochial paternalistic approach to the rights of children, as it is protected by the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child²². Some of the decisions taken by government, administration, society, in view of the best interest of the children will be seen as discriminatory in the future.

The above points were brought to the forefront by the COVID-19 pandemic, sometimes with positive results, but mostly it brought out the worst aspects of society. For example, Swiss society broke up in different camps, and opposition was fiercely voiced. Corona sceptics have created a new political party that is running for election in Switzerland. These groups proliferate questions such as whether the virus is real, and whether the restrictions were necessary, and they claim that the government made vaccinations compulsory for all citizens without discussion. These issues have destroyed the coherence of society. Moreover, universities and academies have been challenged, and faced with difficulties such as including all students in the class under lockdown circumstances. Remote teaching methods were accompanied by the difficulties of not being accessible to all students. When universities were allowed to teach in person again, not all students were able to attend for various reasons and did not have equal access to the discussions and learning.

Some difficult cases reached the Swiss Federal Court. It was ruled that students were allowed to return to classes in person, provided that they had a vaccination certificate, or could produce proof of having already contracted COVID-19, or had been tested and found to be negative for the virus. The testing was very costly, and in one case the university did not agree to provide testing free of charge to students. This university was found to have violated the constitution for not having granted equal access to education.

There are challenges to be considered in taking action against discrimination and stigma. Foremost are the prevailing attitude and existing bias pervading most societies. Artificial intelligence, which is based on algorithms, also includes inherent bias. Climate change also poses a challenge. The Paris Agreement²³ states that the rights of future generations need to be protected; however, the future generation is an unknown group. Current politicians and leaders make decisions that might be discriminatory towards a future generation

²¹ According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, it is defined as 'an exaggerated trust in the efficacy of the methods of natural science applied to all areas of investigation (as in philosophy, the social sciences, and the humanities)'.

²² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

²³ <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/paris-agreement>

because it is not possible to define who they are.

It is important to consider the roles of universities and academies in addressing the problem of stigma and discrimination. Universities are teaching and research institutions, with responsibility for studying the causes, consequences and impact of stigma and discrimination from various perspectives in an interdisciplinary way. They have to create and develop evidence-based solutions. Universities have to promote inclusion and diversity in an environment where individuals feel valued, protected and empowered. Universities also have the task of raising awareness and advocacy, in workshops or other activities that involve the community. Universities have a role in policy development by defining practices and strategies to combat discrimination and stigma within their own institutions, and to support individuals in need. This includes teaching staff, students and society at large, including any individuals who are experiencing discrimination and exclusion. Universities need to become inclusive and diverse.

By comparison, the task of academies is to function as a linkage between science, politics and society. They consist of experts from various disciplines, who can provide expertise and guidance and evidence-based policies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the governments of most countries were supported by scientific task forces from academies, who were experts and could provide guidance. Furthermore, academies can convey power from experts and bring together governmental and non-governmental sectors, as well as affected people and stakeholders. They have a role to play in raising public awareness through education, contributing to advocacy, and influencing governments and society at large. Finally, academies have a role in capacity building, through the members who are renowned experts and distinguished in their fields of speciality.

Xenophobia in academia (Prof Jonathan Jansen, President of the Academy of Science of South Africa)

Prof Jonathan Jansen is Distinguished Professor of Education at the University of Stellenbosch and President of the Academy of Science of South Africa. He started his career as a biology teacher in the Cape and holds a PhD from Stanford University, as well as honorary doctorates from the universities of Edinburgh, Vermont, Cleveland State and Cape Town. He is the author of the award-winning book, Knowledge in the Blood (Stanford University Press), and his recent books include 'The decolonization of Knowledge (Cambridge University Press, with Cyrill Walters) and 'Corrupted: A Study of Chronic Dysfunction in South African Universities' (Wits University Press). He was recently elected to the membership of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and holds an A-rating from the National Research Foundation.

Prof Jansen's talk focused on xenophobia in academia. When reflecting on xenophobia in South Africa, certain events come to mind, such as the killing of the Mozambiquean man in the Alexander township in Gauteng by black South Africans for being a foreigner, the hounding of Somali and Eritrean owners out their spaza shops in informal settlements, or foreign farm workers in the Western Cape being slayed for competing with local workers. The occurrence of such xenophobia has not only been embarrassing for South Africans to observe; it has also been confusing to see black South Africans turning on black brothers and sisters from the rest of Africa.

Xenophobia is not limited to the streets and the townships, but also occurs on university campuses in South Africa. A research project is currently investigating this issue, by interviewing students from other African countries enrolled for doctoral studies in South Africa. The aim of the study is to understand the experiences of xenophobia on South African

university campuses. It is an indictment of the university system in South Africa that at the end of most interviews with these students, the questioners ended up apologising to the interviewees for the hurt that has been caused on campuses. A forthcoming book by Prof Jansen, entitled '*Academic Xenophobia*', is an in-depth examination of this topic.

Academic xenophobia manifests itself on South African campuses in various ways. One example is in refusing to appoint people from outside South Africa in posts, to the extent that the posts remain unfilled. When applicants from other African countries submit applications, it is ensured that they are not shortlisted. When they are appointed, it is not on permanent contracts, but only on a short-term basis. Alternatively, candidates can be appointed but are never promoted. The universities that are most guilty of this conduct are supposed to be the more liberal universities in South Africa. When leaders in the universities set the tone of an anti-African ethos, the staff in university posts fall in line with that attitude.

The universities that can least afford to push out non-South African black academics are the rural universities (the so-called 'previously disadvantaged universities'), because they need the academics to teach. Those universities (for example, the University of Fort Hare) have a large contingent of African professors and show far greater welcoming practices to academics from other African countries.

Universities should be one place where there should be no discrimination, because by definition the university is a place where the doors are open for talent, regardless of the origin or nationality of students. In many cases, universities are kept afloat by Africans from other countries; for example, Prof Kelly Chibale, a world-leading chemist from Zambia, is at the University of Cape Town; STIAS is headed by Prof Edward Kirumira who is from Uganda; the leading analytical philosopher from Cameroon, Prof Achille Mbembe, is at the University of the Witwatersrand; and a leading archaeological researcher, Prof Innocent Pikirayi at the University of Pretoria. They have all made enormous contributions to these universities and institute which will be infinitely poorer without these individuals. Prof Jansen expressed the view that South Africa is a country that 'shoots itself in both feet when it comes to academic talent'.

The political causes and motives behind such attitudes originate in a struggling economy, where the pressure is on the poor to secure a living for themselves. There are two apparent reasons for the xenophobia at universities: namely, a history of exclusion and trauma in South Africa, with severe abuses of human rights over three centuries, as well as apparent encouragement to behave in xenophobic ways through government policies and legislation.

Science councils need to take a clear stance to not be party to xenophobia, but instead to be led by academic values. Whether in the appointment of members of the academy or of staff, academies such as SAYAS and ASSAf need to set the example by continuing to recruit the best talent from everywhere, regardless of country of origin.

Discussion and questions

Prof Maharajh urged the need for resistance to xenophobic behaviour. In 1929, the Italian philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, wrote: 'The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.' South African scholars carry the responsibility to confront these issues in the wider dimensions. The intergenerational aspects that were referred to in the first speaker's presentation also need much more attention from all.

Prof Tagüeña noted that a child born in Mexico becomes a Mexican citizen, and the parents become the parents of a Mexican child. This changes their situation because they become part of the system. However, this is possibly not true for every country. She asked how this might relate to what Prof Jansen had said.

Prof Jansen responded that in most countries, children born in that country get citizenship. However, laws are changing to make it more difficult, irrespective of where children are born. Denying citizenship to children is part of a global agenda. In developing countries, politicians do not necessarily pay attention to evidence-based science.

Prof Caroni responded that it is much more difficult to get citizenship in Europe. Switzerland is among the top three most difficult countries to gain entry into. However, xenophobia in academia is not prevalent in Switzerland. The majority of the professors in most faculties in Switzerland are non-Swiss, but this has not originated in a pushback from Swiss nationals. In Austria, for example, professors with tenure that are not Austrian are granted automatic citizenship. Xenophobia presents in different political and social contexts.

Considering his own experience of trying to deal with discrimination in institutions, **Prof London** reflected whether the strategy to use science and research to address and initiate difficult discussions actually works. Research that was done two decades previously is now being repeated, begging the question of the value of research in changing fundamental worldviews in the absence of practice.

On the question of whether science can help shape societal values, **Prof Caroni** responded that agreement is needed on the values that science should introduce to influence society. The question that arises is whether more can be done if there is no action from the government. Popular support for a cause often makes a positive contribution, for example in climate change issues, which has seen a significant increase in human rights-based litigation. Society has to pressure the government into taking action, but it is not clear whether this will work for science. Science is criticised and not trusted because 'society knows better'. The lack of interest and even criticism from society in respect of science is a big problem. The situation of science is very different from that of labour issues, for example, because funding has to be made available to support research activities, even when the outcome of the research is not known.

A representative of the Nigerian Academy of Science asked whether there are any laws or bills of Parliament to address xenophobic behaviour, and whether anyone has taken any action to oppose such practices. Regarding academic competition with foreign applicants, South Africans need to be trained in order to compete and increase their ability to be qualified for academic posts.

Prof Jansen observed that legislation is less important than politics in South Africa, and in most developing countries. Many African academics came to South Africa after 1994, and especially after 1999, attracted by the African Renaissance vision of President Thabo Mbeki. This has gradually changed under successive regimes, to the point that there is now an attempt to remove foreigners from the country, which is severely detrimental to South Africa and the economy. If the science and mathematics teachers from Zimbabwe are taken out of the South African education system, for example, the system will collapse.

Prof Moshabela commented that when science is used with the intention of being provocative, it is welcomed and accepted to a greater extent than rules. Laws that govern science are different from those that govern labour, human resources and other disciplines. South African institutions need the best talent and excellence, but South African universities

have been aggrieved by their own leading academics going to Europe or to the USA, known as the 'brain drain'. It is important to create an environment for scholars to be able to operate in South Africa. Likewise, other African countries would prefer their talent to stay within their own countries. Prof Moshabela posed the question of how this could be realised. The term 'brain circulation' is used in this context, namely giving exposure to leading scholars, but not taking them away from their home ground.

Prof Moshabela observed that the 'juniorisation' of academic staff in institutions could become a problem. Due to the problem of unemployment of younger academics, there is more willingness for older colleagues to leave their posts to create openings and opportunities for younger researchers. However, this creates problems when younger scholars are stepping into roles that are too big, because they have not yet accumulated the necessary experience and the academic gravitas required. This means that older academics need to be brought back to mentor and support their younger colleagues. Instruments governed by law and regulations are being used in attempts to deal with the space of science that needs to be limitless.

Prof Jansen responded that the pipeline of young people into higher education is the real problem. In South Africa, half of the learners that enrolled in grade two do not reach grade 12. The result is that there are now more African students from outside South Africa graduating with postgraduate degrees than students from South Africa itself. This is not sustainable in the long term, because South Africa is losing out on national development.

There was a comment that in terms of world ranking, most South African universities rank very high. Many excellent students and lecturers of high quality from Kenyan universities are lost to Namibia, Botswana and South Africa, and are creating advantages for South African universities.

On the question of why African academics come to South Africa, **Prof Jansen** responded that the interviews reveal that they come because of the good laboratories and infrastructure, because salaries are paid on time, and because there are not devastating protests every day. To be able to invite people from African countries to come and study in South Africa is very positive for the country. It is also cheaper to study in South Africa than in Europe. However, there is a darker side to this. In the research currently undertaken by Prof Jansen, at the end of the interviews all participants were asked: Would you recommend others to come to South Africa today? Sadly, none of the interviewees gave a positive response.

Prof Maharajh observed that South Africa is not the only country dealing with these issues. There are 195 countries in the United Nations with which South Africa could collaborate, but the funds and resources available to research has stagnated. There is increased demand for research services, but staffing levels have declined. Academic institutions worldwide are largely facing similar pressures and changes. However, academies fail to learn from one another or to respond with the necessary urgency.

In closing, **Prof Maharajh** urged scholars to pay more attention to the difficult issues that have been discussed. The Academy has influence in the hierarchy in which it is located, but politicians are not the only community that constitute society. Politicians occupy a temporary position, based on the regime or institutions under their control. Part of the task of academics as public intellectuals is to challenge the shaping and relevance of those institutions. Continuing to perpetuate existing systems will result in similar outcomes. In Africa, at the philosophical level, it is important to recognise another epistemology, namely '*I am because of who you are*'. From a global perspective, a common humanity is being

confronted by challenges on an ecological scale that need to be confronted together. The critical role for both academies and universities is to invest in confronting these challenges.

PANEL 4: Safeguarding Academic Freedom (Moderator: Prof Peter Vale, Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship, University of Pretoria, South Africa)

Prof Peter Vale is a senior research fellow at the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship at the University of Pretoria, and the Nelson Mandela Professor of Politics Emeritus at Rhodes University, South Africa. He is also an honorary professor at the Africa Earth Observatory Network (AEON), of which he was a founding member. Notably, Prof Vale was the founding director of the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study (JIAS); acting Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Western Cape; Director of Research at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA); Director of the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) at Rhodes University, and Co-Director (with Rob Davies) of the Centre for Southern African Studies at the University of the Western Cape. He has served as UNESCO Professor of African Studies at Utrecht University, Professor of Politics at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, and Visiting Professor at the University of Bergen, Norway. He is an elected member of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa, a member of the Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, and a Fellow of the World Academy for Arts and Science. He was elected as a member of the African Academy of Science in 2015. Professor Vale's research interests include social thought, intellectual traditions in South Africa, the future and politics of higher education, and the origins of international relations in South Africa, and he has published extensively in all these areas.

Introductory remarks

Prof Vale commented that the panel discussions of the meeting had been very powerful, although time did not allow for comprehensive in-depth deliberation on the topics. This also applied to the topic of the current panel session, namely academic freedom. The focus of the discussion would be limited to possible actions to address challenges to academic freedom.

South Africa is an interesting case study of academic freedom. As early as the 1950s, South Africa had engaged in a regular discourse on academic freedom. In 1959 the apartheid government passed the University Extension Act²⁴, which extended the number of universities in South Africa, but excluded black people from admission into the established (read white) universities. These developments established a robust platform for a strong debate on academic freedom which was augmented by a conversation on institutional autonomy (the rights of universities to admit students). As a result, academic freedom lectures became a regular feature from the 1960s onwards and have continued as a tradition at the English-speaking universities in South Africa. It is a testimony of what was learnt in South Africa that these lectures took place at all and that they continue thirty years after apartheid ended is evidence of a continuing concern over academic freedom and especially institutional autonomy in the country. Prof Vale referred to the poem 'I met a man who wasn't there. He wasn't there again today. I wish, I wish he'd go away...'²⁵ by Hughes Mearns, and commented that politicians and even some academic managers wished that the idea of academic freedom would go away.

If academic freedom in the old South Africa was threatened by raw politics of race, it is

²⁴ https://disa.ukzn.ac.za/sites/default/files/pdf_files/leg19590619.028.020.045.pdf

²⁵ <https://poets.org/poem/antigonish-i-met-man-who-wasnt-there>

disciplined today by new forms of politics. For example, in the current conversations on academic freedom there is a distinct absence of a discourse on the political economy of higher education and the knowledge project. Until all scholars understand its deleterious and restricting impact threats to academic freedom will continue.

As a result, it is clear that many restrictions of academic freedom should be considered as self-inflicted wounds. Here is an example. In blindly accepting the regime of ranking and rating that over shadows the world of universities, we still have to ask why it is that not a single ranking or rating criterion related seems keen to measure the issue of how academic freedom . Surely, if we are interested in protecting academic freedom, we must become interested in pivotal questions like this.

Without asking searching questions on the issue of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, scholars will signal to the world that these ideas of have run their course.

Safeguarding academic freedom (Prof Stephanie Burton, Co-Vice-President, Academy of Science of South Africa)

Prof Stephanie Burton is Professor in Biochemistry in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Pretoria (UP). She is the former Vice-Principal for Research and Postgraduate Education at UP (2011-2020). Prof Burton is the President and a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa (RSSA), Vice-President of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), Research Fellow for Universities South Africa (USAf), a member of the Governing Council of Future Earth, and Co-Chair on the Board of the International Academy Partnership (IAP). She holds an MSc in Organic Chemistry (1990) and a PhD in Biochemistry (1994) from Rhodes University. Her academic career started in Biochemistry and Biotechnology at Rhodes University, and subsequently in Chemical Engineering at the University of Cape Town. She served as Director of Postgraduate Studies, and Director of the Biocatalysis and Technical Biology Group at Cape Peninsula University of Technology before her appointment to the UP Executive. Her research interests are sustainability, and applied biochemistry, and she has published widely and supervised numerous postgraduate students. Prof Burton is recognised for her leadership and expertise in research strategy, research management and performance, capacity building, postgraduate training, innovation, open science and science communication initiatives, and internationalisation. She serves on several national and international bodies for research and doctoral training. She is currently coordinating national projects on mentoring and capacity development for early-career academics as chairperson of the USAf Community of Practice in Postgraduate Education and Scholarship, and Research Lead for the USAf Advancing Early Career Researchers and Scholars Programme.

The main focus of Prof Burton's talk was on what academic freedom means. The UNESCO definition²⁶ (1997) recognises the freedom of academics to:

- Teach and discuss,
- Carry out research and publish the results and make them known,
- Freely express opinions about the academic institution or system in which one works,
- Participate in professional or representative academic bodies, and
- Not to be censored.

Another way to look at academic freedom is the academic freedom index²⁷, which measures academic freedom based on specific criteria, namely:

- The freedom to research and teach,

²⁶ <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-concerning-status-higher-education-teaching-personnel>

²⁷ <https://academic-freedom-index.net/>

- The freedom of academic exchange and dissemination,
- Institutional autonomy,
- Campus integrity, and
- The freedom of academic and cultural expression.

The most recent academic freedom index report shows that academic freedom has declined in most countries in recent years.

Academic freedom is defined by four common factors.

- Academic freedom is at the heart of scientific progress and innovation.
- Scientists need to be able to pursue their work with independence, integrity and impartiality, with the freedom to develop their own ideas.
- Quality assurance and research integrity need to be adhered to, through open peer review, not only of articles but also of proposals and ethical approaches.
- Ultimately, academic freedom is about promoting diversity, inclusiveness and collaboration.

What is meant by academic freedom in academia and academic institutions? Broadly, it entails defending institutional freedom and autonomy. This includes the freedom to teach, research, report and speak. Aside from these, aspects that affect academic freedom encompass:

- Research priorities, critical thinking and robust contestation of ideas,
- Communication of ideas,
- Freedom to adhere to ethical standards and research integrity without constraints,
- To determine the content of curricula without standardisation or external influence,
- Freedom from constraints of institutional regulations and pressures by management and sponsors,
- Freedom from narrowly defined funding opportunities, and
- Freedom from campus surveillance, prevention of targeted attacks and repression of academic life.

The 1997 White Paper on Transformation of Higher Education in South Africa²⁸ and the 2008 CHE report on Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability²⁹ give a more comprehensive context to the above.

Attacks on academic freedom are a reality, and are becoming increasingly frequent, wide-ranging and impactful. Such attacks are experienced in countries of conflict, affecting academics' and institutions as well as their freedom to be mobile, to report their research and to collaborate. Other forms of constraints include closed societies, where women are constrained regarding what they can do. There are also academics who are constrained regarding what research they may do and there are academies which are regulated and controlled by the their governments which means that the academies are not autonomous or free. There is also the impact of militant and extremist groups, attacking scholars and limiting freedom of speech, is another serious limitation of freedom. Lastly, constraints from government authorities are also considered an attack on academic freedom.

These factors can have the effect of undermining higher education systems and restricting research, as well as impacting tertiary education systems and the academic careers of academics and students, and prevents science from making progress. An organisation

²⁸ <https://www.justice.gov.za/commissions/feeshet/docs/1997-WhitePaper-HE-Tranformation.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.che.ac.za/file/5332/download?token=7LsSPkQ>

called *Scholars at Risk* publishes an annual report, *Free to think*³⁰, and monitors attacks on higher education communities through the Academic Freedom Monitoring Project.

National science academies should serve as independent institutions, dedicated to advancing scientific knowledge, promoting critical thinking and fostering intellectual freedom. They should act as guardians of academic freedom, advocating for the autonomy of researchers, and protecting them from undue political, ideological or commercial interference. The question is whether this is the reality.

Focusing on the roles of science academies in general, their objectives include the following:

- To promote scientific excellence, by recognising and honouring achievements, awarding prestigious prizes and fellowships for significant contributions and maintaining high standards of scientific inquiry.
- To conduct research and policy studies. This is done through convening expert committees on specific topics, providing evidence-based advice to policy-makers and thereby contributing to resolving societal challenges.
- To advocate for science policy. Academies engage with policy-makers, governments and other stakeholders, often with a more unified and coherent presence and with more authority.
- To safeguard academic freedom, by advocating for autonomy and independence of scientists, defending the rights of scientists to pursue their research and contributing to the public discourse.
- To promote international collaborations through the support of scientists under threat seeking mobility.

The role of ASSAf, under the mission statement of *Science for Society*, is to promote the rights of scientists to engage in freedom to research, write, and speak robustly and professionally. ASSAf views academic freedom as integral to the intellectual life of South African academics and 'deplores any managerial or state policy that has the effect of limiting the open publication and discussion of ideas, arguments, insights and findings within institutions of research and higher learning.' Furthermore, researchers and teachers in higher education should be free to follow their own ideas, arguments, insights and findings. Elements of this include avoiding scholarly misconduct, contributing to peer review and publication on open domain, collegial governance and ensuring an intellectually free environment.

In a 2010 statement³¹, ASSAf identified three threats to academic freedom, namely intrusive government regulations; excessive influence of private sector sponsorship on research, student admissions and curriculum design; and limitations to freedom of speech in universities.

International networks of academies have a role to bring together academies from different countries. These are, for example, the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), which is a network of 160 academies, the International Science Council (ISC), a larger umbrella organisation of academies, and The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS). These networks work together on the *Science International Project*³², bringing together 280 national, regional and global science organisations worldwide, and recognises the need for the international scientific

³⁰ <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/free-to-think-reports/>

³¹ Academic freedom statement from the Academy Of Science Of South Africa (ASSAf). *S. Afr. j. sci.*, Pretoria, v. 106, n. 3-4, p. 1, Apr. 2010. Available from <http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0038-23532010000200018&lng=en&nrm=iso>. access on 14 July 2023.

³² <https://council.science/current/news/science-international-at-risk-researchers>

community to address the number of threatened, displaced and refugee scientists worldwide.

Furthermore, the Scholars at Risk (SAR) programme, an international network of institutions and individuals whose mission is to protect scholars and promote academic freedom, authored a number of reports on the issue, in which they identify many different areas where scholars are at risk. Other objectives of the SAR are to offer safety to scholars facing grave threats, provide advisory services, campaign for scholars who were imprisoned or silenced in their home countries, monitor attacks on higher education communities worldwide, and provide leadership in deploying new tools and strategies for promoting academic freedom.

Academic freedom is supported by a number of international efforts. The United Nations (UN) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966³³ has a paragraph that speaks to the freedom of scientific research and creative activity', and is legally binding for all current 171 parties of the United Nations.

Another international body, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) is committed to:

- Protection Of Researchers From Undue Influence On Their Independent Judgment;
- The Possibility For Researchers To Set Up Autonomous Research Institutions And To Define The Aims And Objectives Of The Research And The Methods To Be Adopted;
- The Freedom Of Researchers To Freely And Openly Question The Ethical Value Of Certain Projects And The Right To Withdraw From Those Projects If Their Conscience So Dictates; And
- The Freedom Of Researchers To Cooperate With Other Researchers, Both Nationally And Internationally; And The Sharing Of Scientific Data And Analysis With Policymakers, And With The Public Wherever Possible.

The ISC Committee for Freedom and Responsibility in Science (CFRS)³⁴ upholds four fundamental scientific freedoms, namely, freedom of movement, freedom of association, freedom of expression and communication, and freedom of access to data and information. The CFRS monitors and responds to threats to these freedoms around the world in the form of letters, announcements, statements and commentaries.

Beyond these letters, articles, announcements, statements and commentaries, the question of what can be done still remains. Prof Burton proposed four possible actions:

1. The academic community needs to take more care in monitoring and evaluating the impact and progress resulting from statements that are issued. This includes following up on statements to understand the effects they have had, if any.
2. The academic community needs to pay more attention when reporting on research to include all forms of media, and clearly show the importance and impact to society. Scientists have an obligation to communicate to the public, and the public has a right to know what research has been done and what it means for society.
3. The academic community needs to engage with all stakeholders, including the private sector, communities, schools and sponsors.
4. The academic community needs to build trust and respect, in order to gain support from society.

³³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

³⁴ <https://council.science/what-we-do/freedoms-and-responsibilities-of-scientists/how-cfrs-works/>

Perspectives from the Royal Society (Mr Luke Clarke, Head of International Affairs (Americas, International Organisations, Africa), Royal Society, United Kingdom)

Luke Clarke currently leads the Royal Society's international relations and activities with the Americas, international organisations and Africa. In that capacity and in previous roles, he has led a wide range of international projects, including overseeing a major programme of activity with US partners, engaging Russia in science diplomacy, developing a network of the science academies of the Commonwealth, and completing a study of science in the Islamic world. Mr Clarke was born in Papua New Guinea and grew up in Sudan and Somalia before moving to the UK. His professional, study and travel experiences span more than 60 countries. He has a degree in politics and a keen interest in history, science and international relations.

Mr Clarke's talk presented the Royal Society statement on academic freedom. The Royal Society, the national science academy of the UK, is a self-governing Fellowship of about 1 800 (?) eminent scientists from the UK and around the world, and is dedicated to promoting scientific excellence for the benefit of humanity. In 2020, the Royal Society published a statement³⁵ on academic freedom, which was launched on International Human Rights Day (10 December). The statement outlined how the Society considers academic freedom to be central to the practice of science. It offered a definition of academic freedom, and what attacks on it looked like.

The statement drew on the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the status of higher education teaching personnel and similar sources, and was developed through consultation with a wide range of national and international stakeholders. It defined academic freedom as 'The freedom of scientists to teach and debate ideas, carry out research and publish and communicate the results, express opinions about the academic system or institution in which they work, be free from institutional censorship, and to join and participate in professional/representative academic bodies'.

It also highlighted the importance of institutional autonomy, namely the freedom to manage the core activities of research and teaching without interference. Institutions have the responsibility to ensure that they support the academic freedom of their scientists, put in place clear and transparent systems and policies, and promote related values such as equitable access to education and research.

The Statement also defined what attacks on academic freedom entailed, namely 'limitation by restrictions on research, teaching or debate on a particular subject; discrimination; the refusal to publish certain material; certain hiring/promotion practices; restrictions on freedom of movement; violence, threats and/or prosecution and imprisonment.'

The release of the statement was timed to coincide with the Royal Society taking on the chair of the UK and Ireland Academies Human Rights Committee (UKIHRC). The Royal Society is one of seven academies in this group. The Royal Society covers the natural sciences, and within the UK HRC other academies covered social sciences, humanities, engineering and medicine. The UK HRC also includes the national academies of Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

The UK HRC supports academic freedom and the rights of researchers to conduct research

³⁵ <https://royalsociety.org/-/media/about-us/international/royal-society-statement-on-academic-freedom.pdf?la=en-GB&hash=A0A018B5805C1222F8F9DB327B78797A>

around the world free of persecution. It mainly does this through responding to alerts. The IHRN was particularly acknowledged as the source of most of these alerts which are invaluable to the work of the UK HRC. The UKHRC's practice is to act only in cases where there is evidence that the human rights of researchers have been violated due to their scientific or academic work. The group would then explore the full range of possible responses to such alerts, and also provides a forum for discussion on issues relating to academic freedom and the human rights of researchers. Since the statement was published, the Society had intervened in a number of cases, for example relating to researchers at risk in Iran, Sudan and Mexico.

The Royal Society launched a new strategic plan in 2022, which committed the Society to be recognised internationally as a leader with respect to academic freedom. An internal theory of change exercise was also developed, suggesting where the Society might be best placed to act in support of academic freedom. Like many national academies, the Royal Society is independent of government, which gave the Society the freedom to intervene in cases, and allowed it to maintain credibility in terms of reputation on academic freedom.

The Royal Society is a member of international science organisations and networks such as the ISC, IAP and TWAS, as well as other networks that are not specifically linked to academic freedom but provide platforms to meet and to exchange information regularly. There are also a wide range of networks of individual scientists and Fellows, which can be valuable in alerting on human rights issues as they occurred on the ground.

Awareness-raising was mostly conducted in the form of letters and statements to highlight cases where the rights of researchers were infringed, and facilitation of events and discussions on academic freedom more broadly. The Society and other members of the UKIHRN, advocate for the rights of researchers at risk by writing to governments of countries where researchers have been persecuted for their academic or scientific research.

An important component of this work are high-profile champions, well-respected figures in the global academic community who promote academic freedom and the rights of researchers.

It was noted that academies had limits, and in many areas other organisations were better placed to assist. Practical help at grassroots level was better provided by organisations such as Scholars at Risk, or the UK Council for At Risk Academics (Cara). These organisations help academics in immediate danger to remove themselves from places of risk and provide practical support. The Royal Society has a special relationship with Cara, dating back to the latter's founding at the Society's premises 90 years ago, and more recently both have worked together to support scientists at risk through various initiatives such as a joint annual lecture and other events.

Some challenges were highlighted. According to the Academic Freedom Index Update 2023, the UK was placed 61st out of 179 countries. Another challenge is that scientists and academies need to work with their counterparts in countries experiencing human rights issues, but with whom collaboration is essential in order to address common global threats such as climate change.

With regard to Ukraine, the Researchers at Risk Fellowships Programme, led by the British Academy and including the Royal Society as a member, supported 177 Ukrainian scientists to come to the UK and continue their research at institutions in the UK. Although there is a particular focus on Ukraine, there is a wish to open the scheme more widely when possible.

The Society hosted a conference in May 2023 to discuss how research could be directed to assist in the recovery of Ukraine.

In response to the question of what was to be done, it was important to recognise a number of threats to academic freedom throughout the world. Some of these result from mistrust in scientific institutions, growing nationalism and authoritarianism in some countries and regions, and increasing political polarisation. Academies need to recognise their responsibility to address these socio-political factors, just as they do with the increasingly urgent challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. Increased information sharing, more communication, and comparing practices were therefore needed. Ultimately, academic freedom is essential for the practice of science.

Perspectives from the World Federation of Science Journalists (Ms Milica Momcilovic, President, World Federation of Science Journalists)

Ms Milica Momcilovic is the President of the World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ), a multinational charity dedicated to advancing science journalism and communication through a wide variety of activities with universities, governments and NGOs, to promote standards and the role of science journalists as key players in civil society and democracy. Ms Momcilovic holds the position of Editor in the Science Program at the Radio/Television of Serbia (RTS) and writes for the popular science magazine ELEMENTI. Through her special coverage of international science events and interviews, she has obtained rich experience and strong knowledge of scientific issues and challenges internationally.

Ms Momcilovic introduced as a science journalist and represents the World Federation of Science Journalists, a not-for-profit organisation to support science journalism. Based in Canada, it has 70 charters in many countries, mostly in the global South, and constitutes more than 50 000 professionals. The majority of members of the network are women and, most members have a master's degree in journalism or similar qualification.

The network includes members that are science journalists and write for the general public, but some members are linked to publishing houses of scientific journals. The activities of the network ranges over 67 countries and encompasses many languages.

The purpose of the talk was to deliberate on how to interact and communicate between a non-academic platform and an academic forum such as the present meeting. The most important role of science journalists is to inform, to explain science and to be a bridge to pass scientific knowledge to the public. Science communication is often said to have a similar purpose; however, science communication is very different from science journalism. Science journalism addresses misinformation around scientific issues, with independent journalists reporting accurately on science without institutional influence. This was difficult before the COVID-19 pandemic and became even more difficult afterwards because of the increasing mistrust in science.

The WFSJ represents science journalists and does not represent the media. Members practise science journalism independently and report neutrally on scientific issues. However, WFSJ members occasionally experience problems with the community of scientists when they are not accessible to journalists and did not share their stories. Institutions often have a spokesperson that represents all scientific faculties and disciplines, but science journalists need to have access to the scientists themselves for interviews and direct interaction. Prominent scientists have rejected requests for interviews, often on grounds that could be construed as discrimination.

When writing on matters of an investigative nature, science journalists like other fields of journalists are often also under attack from the scientific establishment. For example, after a colleague reported on plagiarism in science, academic institutions wrote to the journalist's editor insisting that they be dismissed. Harassment and threats on social media are commonplace, and this became worse during the pandemic because of the tsunami of misinformation and disinformation that was aired on various media platforms.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a large portion of virus-related news was covered by general reporters, who were not skilled to provide accurate scientific information about complex and important issues regarding the pandemic. This problem was not well managed by the traditional media, but it was also not managed by scientific institutions or entities such as the World Health Organization (WHO). In this case, the WFSJ negotiated an agreement with the WHO to have briefing sessions with medical experts that were restricted to the science journalism community and not for general journalists

Another important aspect in science journalism is to have enough time to fact-check articles, and to have access to credible experts on the topics. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were available experts who were not credible and did not have the credentials, but the credible sources were inaccessible and did not speak to journalists. Moreover, the media did not acknowledge the importance of science journalism in conveying the correct information.

The WFSJ was continually engaged in self-reflection and developing guiding principles to improve service levels. In December 2022, the network was invited to be part of a working group on the *Declaration on Science for Social Justice*. This was an important step in recognising science journalism as a partner in the scientific community. The WFSJ was grateful to be part of the conversation, and urged greater communication between academies and the network.

Discussion and questions

A **delegate of the Czech Academy of Sciences** commented that the panel had addressed an important issue from the perspective of one that comes from a country such as the Czech Republic that values academic freedom very highly because of its history of communism and violation of human rights. The agenda of trusted research is very important, but these values are under threat in many countries. A difficult predicament is that of scientific collaborations with countries where academic freedoms do not exist (for example China and Russia), and where unethical practices are prevalent.

Mr Clarke responded that society is grappling with issues related to collaboration with countries such as China and Russia. It is important to be mindful of the risks and trade-offs involved, and to distinguish between individuals and institutions that are state-backed, and those that are more independent.

Prof Jansen added that trying to differentiate between individuals and institutions is complex. In the Russian academy for example, scientists are part of the state science system and it is difficult to distinguish when issuing an invitation to a scientist. Furthermore, some institutions have been accused of double standards. There is a very welcoming stance towards Ukrainian scientists, yet one does not see the same generosity towards Syrian, Palestinian or other scientists from conflict areas.

Mr Clarke concurred that there is a large focus on Ukrainian scientists. Funding is made available because it is a priority of the UK government to support Ukraine. It is hoped that

the success of the scheme will become an example to be implemented more widely. However, there are other programmes that support Syrian researchers, and together with CARA an online symposium was held for Syrian researchers to showcase their research and stimulate collaborations. Furthermore, making the distinction between individuals and institutions is not easy and is 'messy' in most cases. Currently, collaboration with Russian scientists has in most cases halted. The Polar Research Project, for example, has been discontinued.

A delegate representing the **Swedish Science Ethics and Literary Academy** noted that the academy is developing a statement on academic freedom. In relation to recent events, the 2018 expulsion of the Central European University from Hungary is something for the meeting to react to. The question arose in what way is this a violation of academic freedom. Delegates at the present meeting were invited to respond to a clause that could be added to any statement on academic freedom, namely that 'Any action that threatens the existence of a well-funded institute of research and higher learning can take place, only if based on academic standards.' An example of an attack on an academic during the COVID-19 pandemic is the social media storm brought against a Swedish professor and paediatrician regarding his research on the spread of COVID-19 in children and preschool children. He was violently attacked on social media, with the result that he discontinued those studies. In line with ideas expressed earlier that universities and academies should be the guardians of academic freedom, a proposal was made that it should be an obligation of academies and universities to provide protection within a country against hate speech and other attacks on social media. This statement is not covered by the current principles.

Mr Clarke responded that the comment was very helpful. If there was anything that the Academy or the Royal Society could contribute, they would be willing to engage. The issue of the Central European University has been a concern for the Society and its Fellows. It relates to an earlier statement on governments taking over institutions of learning and academies. The UK HRC responds to such cases on an individual basis.

A delegate referred to the *Times Higher Education*³⁶ ranking of universities and observed that the impact of academic freedom as a criterion accounted for less than 1.72 % of the overall ranking. However, as part of Goal 16³⁷ of the SDGs (Peace, justice and strong institutions), there is an index on academic freedom based on self-evaluation regarding the existence of academic freedom policies at institutions. There is another measurement for university governance that has an even smaller weighting. It might be possible to make suggestions to *Times Higher Education* and propose an index of academic freedom to include in their measure of rankings.

Mr Clarke appreciated the suggestion, which would be followed with interest.

Prof Burton commented that it is relatively easy to make such statements or to try to prevent damage by developing a policy, but implementation and avoiding negative consequences of academic bullying are complicated. Ways are needed to enforce statements or policies.

Ms Momcilovic emphasised the pressing need for clarification that 'social media' cannot be regulated and can therefore not be defined as 'media'.

A delegate from Mexico explained:

³⁶ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/>

³⁷ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>

- In Mexico there is currently a strategy to reduce academic freedom, and Prof Tagüeña is part of the group that has been targeted and affected. Furthermore, the Mexican Congress has approved a law on Science and Technology Innovations that will reduce academic freedoms in Mexico.
- The American Convention on Human Rights of 2021 defines the principles of academic freedom based on the UNESCO Declaration. Apart from the rights, higher education institutions have duties and responsibilities to uphold the rights.
- In developing countries, there are many problems to be solved at national and local levels. Academies also have duties in terms of solving the problems, and the balance between freedom and duties needs to be disentangled.

Mr Clarke concurred with the views on rights and responsibilities. The ISC committee framed the freedom of rights and responsibilities very effectively. It was well illustrated in the point regarding research security in an authoritarian state.

Prof Chalfie voiced a concern experienced in the Americas, namely that universities respond to accusations and human rights transgressions in very different ways. Some universities are very supportive of staff that have experienced human rights attacks, whereas this is not the case at other universities. A disparity exists between different organisations. There is a general feeling that universities are covering themselves to avoid liabilities, and the academic staff are left to fend for themselves. Delegates were invited to comment on this view.

A delegate commented that when breaches of academic freedom are observed, some kind of solidarity in the academic community might be expected. Yet, in recent years there have been breaches, such as one national academy that was not choosing members through election by peers but on the basis of nominations. Election by peers is not on the list of principles for academies. One might have expected a reaction from the global science community, but that was not the case. An explanation of this silence is required.

Prof Jansen responded to the remarks of Prof Burton, noting the importance of making a clear distinction between institutional autonomy and academic freedom. In practice, these can have different consequences, depending on which is more important.

Prof Burton replied that the questions and comments point to issues of roles and responsibilities. The discussion of the session was largely around what it means to have academic freedom, which is not the same as autonomy. Since the collective community of scientists is academics within academies, there should be a sound, logical and justified rationale for whatever policy, decisions or statements are made, and this needs to be made transparent.

PANEL 5: Advancing Social Justice through Promotion of Access to Health Care (Moderator: Prof Sabiha Essack, Deputy President and General Secretary, ASSAf, South Africa)

Prof Sabiha Essack is the South African Research Chair in Antibiotic Resistance and One Health, and Professor in Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). She established the Antimicrobial Research Unit at UKZN and secured a number of research grants from national and international funders to investigate strategies for the prevention and containment of antibiotic resistance. Prof Essack is the Deputy President and General Secretary of ASSAf, Vice-Chair of the WHO Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Antimicrobial Resistance (STAG-AMR), Senior Implementation Research Advisor at the International Centre for Antimicrobial Resistance Solutions (ICARS) in Denmark, and member of the International Pharmacy Federation (FIP) AMR Commission at The Hague in The

Netherlands. She is a peer-reviewed member of the Southern Africa FAIMER Regional Institute and co-founder of the South African Committee of Health Sciences Deans. Prof Essack's current research interests include the molecular epidemiology, pathogenomics and metagenomics of antibiotic resistance using next-generation sequencing and bioinformatics, and strengthening health systems to optimise infection management in the context of antibiotic resistance and stewardship.

In opening the last session, Prof Essack set the scene with a few opening remarks. She stated that failures in ensuring social justice and human rights were most profound in humanitarian settings where people were displaced by war, natural disasters and poor socio-economic determinants of health and wellness. Most of the countries represented at the meeting had communities that were affected to some extent. This should concern the scientists in these countries and beyond, as well as the science that was conducted.

The SDG³⁸ SDGs, which are the global means of ensuring that nobody is left behind in terms of basic rights, were very important in this debate. The third goal (Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) was central to the other 16 goals, but it was also the goal that was most compromised in humanitarian settings. This required innovations in health and social systems, policies and programmes, and called for different approaches to science and research activities.

Such innovations were accomplished by various research domains. 'Intervention research' was about developing, improving and testing the efficacy of new interventions, usually under controlled conditions in defined populations of a powered sample size. It could be termed 'proof of concept'. Out of the former followed 'implementation research', which entailed solving implementation problems for proven interventions. It showed how to make an intervention work within real-world settings and contexts. This could involve an element of 'health systems research', which explores the factors that affect the performance of a health system, as well as 'operational research', which addresses operational challenges within health systems. The discussions in this panel session would elaborate on these aspects.

Making the right to health real: A challenge for our academies and universities (Prof Leslie London, Chair of Public Health Medicine in the School of Public Health and Family Medicine, University of Cape Town, South Africa)

Prof Leslie London is a Professor in Public Health in the School of Public Health and Family Medicine at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. He is head of the Division of Public Health Medicine and leads the Health and Human Rights programme in the school, as well as leading a research field in the Centre for Environmental and Occupational Health Research. He has published over 200 peer-reviewed journal articles and books or book chapters, and supervised to completion over 50 master's and PhD students. He is a Steering Committee member of the Network on Equity in Health in Southern Africa (EQUINET), jointly leading its work on human rights, and he currently coordinates the Learning Network for Health and Human Rights, a collaboration between civil society organisations and four universities on developing best practice for realising the right to health. He has been a member of the People's Health Movement South Africa since inception, and is active in human rights teaching, research and advocacy, both nationally and internationally. He is active in the Governance and Conflict of Interest in Public Health Network (GECI-PH), with a particular interest in research to limit alcohol industry influence over alcohol harm-reduction policies for population health.

³⁸ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

The right to health is now widely accepted. Section 27 of the South African Constitution³⁹ provides that 'every person has the right to have access to health care services, including reproductive health care'. The *Declaration of Alma-Ata* of 1978⁴⁰ states that health 'is a fundamental human right and that the attainment of the highest possible level of health is a most important world-wide social goal whose realisation requires the action of many other social and economic sectors in addition to the health sector.' The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)⁴¹, adopted in 1966, defines the right to health as 'The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.'

The right to health is, however, challenging to implement. It requires pressure from researchers and civil society to translate rights into reality. Moreover, the right to health is more than just health care. It includes addressing the challenges of polluted water, road deaths, lack of housing and other social ills. This is appropriately described by ICESCR as 'an inclusive right, extending not only to timely and appropriate health care, but also to the underlying determinants of health, such as access to safe and potable water and adequate sanitation, an adequate supply of safe food, nutrition and housing, healthy occupational and environmental conditions. a further important aspect is the participation of the population.' It is important to consider this when talking about health issues.

Science changes and the view of what is right and what is not also changes. New technologies bring new knowledge, including the recognition in hindsight of the errors made, such as the indiscriminate spraying of DDT and the endorsement of cigarette advertising by doctors.

The South African National Environmental Management Act⁴² includes the precautionary principle, which is described as 'a risk-averse and cautious approach, which takes into account the limits of current knowledge about the consequences of decisions and actions to be applied'. This principle is pertinent and important for scientific practices as a whole, because insights change with new technologies.

Article 12 of the ICESCR affirms the Right to Enjoy the Benefits of Scientific Progress (REBSP), which has not received enough attention in the debates on health rights, and is not adequately implemented. The right of the inventor to own and enjoy the benefits of the invention needs to be balanced with ensuring public benefits. However, COVID-19 exposed this as a problem, where patent protection of vaccines enjoyed priority over allowing countries to manufacture vaccines. During the pandemic, there was a rapid expansion of academic knowledge around the virus, creating the possibility of changing the global response to the pandemic; in practice, however, those that needed the products of the scientific progress most were the last to get them.

A local example was that of a small-scale farmer in rural KwaZulu-Natal, who was indiscriminately handling pesticides with high health risks, where science could have benefited her and provided information on risks and alternative treatments for the agricultural pests.

³⁹ <https://www.justice.gov.za/constitution/SACConstitution-web-eng-02.pdf>

⁴⁰ <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/declaration-of-alma-ata#:~:text=Primary%20health%20care%20is%20essential,afford%20to%20maintain%20at%20every>

⁴¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

⁴² <https://www.gov.za/documents/national-environmental-management-act>

This raises the question of the practical implications of the REBSP for scientists and academies. It is rare for science to have the end-user firmly in mind at the beginning of innovations, and by the time developments reach fruition, ensuring access to the benefits is mostly reactive. In reality, patents and Intellectual Property (IP) barriers have blocked access to knowledge for society. A system is needed that fairly balances innovation and the rights of the inventor with public access and benefits. A good example is the mRNA vaccines, which were developed with public funds, but were captured for private benefit, and only modestly titrated into limited access for low-income populations. Even now, the stranglehold over mRNA technology transfer is blocking vaccine autonomy for Africa.

For science to be equitable, it has to be oriented to the benefit of society, particularly the most vulnerable. IP protection needs to be balanced with user access in ways that are fair and not primarily oriented towards protecting the profits of corporations. IP laws need to be changed to increase benefit-sharing. The academies could play a role to develop such policies. Scientists as citizens also have a duty to demand an accountable health system. In South Africa, scholars have played an important role during the era of AIDS denialism, and more recently scientists have played a role in exposing the Life Esidimeni⁴³ case.

However, science has to be valid and not impacted by threats from conflicts of interest. The example of the Sugar Sweetened Beverage (SSB) tax in South Africa is a case in point. In July 2016, a government policy paper proposed a 20% tax on all sugar sweetened beverages (soft drinks) to reduce the incidence of chronic morbidities. There was intense public debate and a great amount of negative press around this issue, as well as heavy lobbying by the sugar and soft drinks industry. A research report was commissioned by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) titled *A stealth tax, not a health tax*, which clearly opposed the tax, based on scientific arguments. The IRR engaged with National Treasury to drop the tax. Subsequently, it emerged that the Coca Cola company had funded the study, which represented a blatant conflict of interest. The SSB tax was finally adopted at 10%.

Another example of conflict of interest is in the regulation of e-cigarettes. The industry called for deregulation of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and cited a study in a British medical journal (Stephens, 2017⁴⁴) that e-cigarette vapour has less than 2% of the carcinogenic potency of cigarette smoke. In this study, however, the author omitted nicotine, the biggest component of ENDS liquid, as a potential carcinogen, because of a lack of data on nicotine's carcinogenic potential. The author also failed to recognise other toxicants in ENDS liquid, and overlooked that ENDS vapour is ten times more carcinogenic than nicotine inhalers. The paper was used in engagement with the public, which amounted to misinformation and misuse of science. Science needs to be valid.

The third example is the *Following the Science* seminar presented by the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World. This foundation, however, is funded by a tobacco company that promotes e-cigarettes, which was, in all likelihood, also the intention of the message in the seminar. A study on Schools of Public Health and whether they will accept funding from cooperates for non-communicable disease research revealed that some do due to limited state research funding. This is a problem that the academies need to think about.

Why should this matter? It is important because public policy can be shaped by health research. The COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase of fake science in the scientific and popular media. In the extreme, it led to interventions being proposed without any scientific

⁴³ <https://section27.org.za/life-esidimeni/>

⁴⁴ Stephens WE. Comparing the cancer potencies of emissions from vapourised nicotine products including e-cigarettes with those of tobacco smoke. *Tobacco Control* 2018. 27:10-17.

evidence. Scientists are not blameless. A study in 2020⁴⁵ showed that many health academics would accept funding from corporate organisations for research, because of limited state funding. This is something that academies need to address.

These issues hold great challenges for academies and universities, namely to participate in the promotion of a science policy system that enables everyone to enjoy the benefits of science. The University of Cape Town has become involved in addressing potential conflict of interest in health care research by building capacity through online short courses and a free downloadable toolkit⁴⁶.

The question of what has to be done is not difficult to answer. Knowledge production needs to be directed at furthering research into priority health problems, building capacity for independent research, and pushing for the IP Policy to be translated into a new patent regimen to balance the benefits of the inventor and the public. Knowledge translation is needed to ensure that information reaches those members of society who need it. This includes challenging the profit-oriented business model of science journals.

Perspectives from Sudan (Dr Shaza Elmahdi, Sudan Country Director, Centre for International Private Enterprise, Sudan)

Dr Shaza Elmahdi is Sudan Country Director at the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) based in Khartoum, Sudan. She works closely with partners representing the private sector, civil society and government to implement CIPE's strategy in Sudan, which includes policy and regulatory reforms, enhancing anti-corruption initiatives, engaging in public-private dialogue, and improving democratic governance in Sudan. Prior to joining CIPE, Dr Elmahdi worked as a Researcher at the Global Women Institute at George Washington University, collecting and analysing data related to Gender-Based Violence in conflict zones, including South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. She also worked as Sudan's Focal Point at the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, leading women-focused programmes across Sudan and managing the organisation's regional strategy. She also worked as a consultant with Human Rights Watch, MDPD, Centerlinks and other organisations. Dr Elmahdi spent several years working at the Grants Department at CIPE's headquarters in Washington DC, managing grants and contracts in addition to her role as the Monitoring and Evaluation Point of Contact. She has an MPH degree from George Washington University and a bachelor's degree from the University of Khartoum.

Dr Elmahdi's presentation reported on the current situation in Sudan, especially the impact of the current conflict on the health system. It was intended to connect the debates and perspectives spoken about during the present meeting with the reality that is playing itself out in Sudan.

Sudan has experienced very disruptive political and governance conditions during the last four years. In 2019, a revolution ended a 30-year dictatorship, and a transitional government was installed. However, a coup soon overthrew the interim government, and the current military conflict arose in April 2023 in a further attempt to take over the country. All signs point to the possibility of a drawn-out civil war in Sudan.

⁴⁵ Nakkash R, Ali A, Alaouie H, Asmar K, Hirschhorn N, Mugharbil S, Nuwayhid I, London L, Saban A, Rashid SF, Ahmed MK, Knai C, Bigland C, Afifi RA. Attitudes and practices of public health academics towards research funding from for-profit organizations: cross-sectional survey. *Int J Public Health*. 2020 Sep;65(7):1133-1145. doi: 10.1007/s00038-020-01416-0. Epub 2020 Aug 25. PMID: 32840634; PMCID: PMC7497330.

⁴⁶ <https://health.uct.ac.za/school-public-health/conflict-interest-health-research>

Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, has a population of 10 million out of a country population of 40 million people. Eighty per cent of the health facilities and infrastructure are concentrated in Khartoum, which has been the hardest hit by the conflict, and the situation in terms of health services is desperate. Dr Shaza described the situation as of 27 May 2023, shortly after which she was forced to flee the city. Of the 88 hospitals in Khartoum, only a handful remain open after weeks of fighting and shelling, and 18 doctors have been killed. More than 900 professors and university lecturers have been forced to leave Sudan, and all universities and schools have been closed. Hospitals have been hit in airstrikes and by artillery fire, and doctors have been targeted for attack. These actions could potentially be described as war crimes.

As a developing country, even in times of stability, Sudan's health infrastructure is poor, lacking basic facilities, equipment, supplies and medicines, with a big disparity between rural and urban areas in terms of service provision. The current situation is dire. East Nile Hospital has been taken over by rebel forces as their base and has been subjected to direct bombing by enemy fire, while civilian patients were still being treated in the hospital. Other hospitals have been subjected to intense looting and vandalism. A maternity hospital has been taken over by soldiers who are pressuring doctors to prioritise the treatment of soldiers over civilian patients. Doctor colleagues have been killed or abducted.

The health system is failing under these pressures. Data from Sudan's Doctors' Union suggests that 70% of health care services are no longer operational due to a lack of supplies, personnel and functioning infrastructure. Twenty-one hospitals have been forcibly evacuated by militants; 17 hospitals have suffered aerial or land bombings; and nine ambulances have been attacked. The number of civilian deaths stands at 866, with 3 721 injuries.

Some of the worst fighting has been in the impoverished West Darfur where Sudan's Doctors' Union has reported more than 280 civilian deaths in two days because of lack of access to health care. Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières) (MSF) has been forced to cease almost all activities in the region. In those hospitals still able to function, water is scarce and electricity unreliable. Surgeons are sometimes operating under the glow of cell phone lights, relying on basic surgical tools. Resources such as oxygen cylinders and dialysis supplies have completely run out. In some hospitals, supply chains bringing food and medicines to Khartoum have been disrupted by violence and shooting.

Since the onset of the conflict, human rights defenders have been targeted by both sides of the conflict in order to limit their access to information about human rights violations. Sudanese human rights defenders who volunteer to support Sudanese civilians on the ground are often targeted, as well as those advocating against the war and for an end to the violence. On 27 May 2023, the human rights defender, medical doctor and surgeon, Alaa Nugud was captured at his home in Omdurman and taken to an unknown location.

What the presentation could not highlight, due to time constraints, was the rampant destruction of universities, libraries and schools. Scholars and professors are fleeing the country. The entire memory of science and academia is being erased from Sudan.

Dr Elmahdi raised the question, which has been a recurrent theme during the present meeting, of what the IHRN can do to help, and she proposed several actions:

- In showing solidarity with Sudan, the Network could call for action to redress, campaign for more just treatment of health workers and increase advocacy.
- The Network could support displaced and refugee scientists by connecting them with

fellow scientists in other regions, who could provide hosting opportunities, collaborations and partnerships, as well as technical and financial support.

- To assist in the recovery after the conflict, the Network could help in the assessment of damage, rebuild science infrastructure (through financial or other means) and assist in the recovery and restoration of academic institutions.
- The Network could support digitalisation of museum and archival documents in order to preserve them.

The most immediate action that the IHRN could take would be to issue a statement of support to Sudan. Dr Elmahdi called upon academies to publish such a statement, and to take a strong stand with the academics and health workers at risk.

The South African health care system: Giving voice to the people through the People's Voice Survey (Prof Mosa Moshabela, Associate Professor and Deputy Vice Chancellor: Research and Innovation (Acting), University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa)

Prof Mosa Moshabela (MBChB, MMed, MSc, PhD) is a Professor of Public Health and Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. An esteemed academic and clinician scientist, he was awarded the Public Health Innovation and Lifetime Achievement (PHILA) Annual Award (2022) by the Public Health Association of South Africa (PHASA) for his contribution to Public Health in South Africa, and a Ministerial Special COVID-19 Award (2020–2021) for COVID-19 Science Communication and Public Engagement. Prof Moshabela is the Chairperson of the Governing Board of the National Research Foundation (NRF), Board Member of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Health in the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), Health Commissioner to the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, and one of the seven multi-sector commissioners on the Premier's Provincial Planning Commission. Primarily, Prof Moshabela's contribution has been in the improvement of access and quality in health care to combat infectious diseases, in relation to HIV and TB, and in the areas of health systems, services and policy research. Prof Moshabela is now focused on implementation science, which cuts across multiple disciplines; involves the design, implementation and evaluation of complex interventions in healthcare services and programmes; and seeks to improve access, quality and equity in health care, for resource-poor settings in sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, he leads the Quality Health Systems and Transformation (QuEST) centre in South Africa, a collaboration with the TH Chan School of Public Health, Harvard University, USA, and he is a faculty member in HIV, Infectious Disease and Global Health Research Institute (HIGH IRI) at the University of Washington in St Louis, USA. Globally, he is a member of the international advisory board for Lancet Healthy Longevity and the Lancet Commission on Synergies between Health Promotion, Universal Healthcare Access and Global Health Security, and the commission of the US National Academies for Science, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) on the Global Roadmap to Healthy Longevity.

Prof Moshabela's presentation addressed the South African health care system and reported on the People's Voice Survey.

South Africa recently passed the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill through a committee of Parliament. This Bill is intended to improve universal health coverage and to make it affordable to the citizens of South Africa, while ensuring a service of high quality.

South Africa has a history of two health systems. There is a public health system that serves the majority (84%) of the population and consumes 43% of the health funds in the country. There is also a private medical health system, serving only 16% of the population, but consuming a similar amount of investment as the public sector. Between these two systems,

there is another segment of the population who are taking out health insurance or paying out of their own pockets for medical health. The system is very hospital-centric and needs to be decentralised to focus on the community and primary health care clinics. Moreover, the health system is traditionally approached from the supply side (the services rendered), lacking the perspective of the population.

In South Africa, the main problem of the public health system is that of quality. The key findings related to quality in the South African Lancet Commission Report⁴⁷ are as follows:

- Gaps in ethical leadership, management and governance contribute to poor quality of care.
- Poor quality of care costs lives.
- Malpractice cases and medical litigation are threats to the realisation of the right to health care in South Africa.
- The human resources for health crisis will undermine the achievement of high-quality universal health coverage.
- Health information system gaps constrain the country's ability to measure or monitor quality and its improvements.
- There is fragmentation and limited impact of quality of care initiatives.

The Lancet Global Health Commission Report⁴⁸ proposed three important requirements of a healthcare system. Firstly, health care needs to be delivered consistently to improve or maintain the health of the society. Secondly, it needs to be valued and trusted by all people; and thirdly, it has to respond to changing population needs.

The framework for high-quality health systems sets out the components of an equitable, resilient and efficient health system. In this model, the supply side is emphasised, and the benefit for the people is not at the core of the framework.

A research project, the People's Voice Survey, in which Prof Moshabela collaborated, investigated citizens' perspectives on the health system through telephone interviews. The results for the South African part of the study showed that the quality of the public health system was rated very poor or fair, whereas there was more satisfaction with the private health system.

The intention of the NHI Bill is to view the health system as one whole system. In reality, however, two different health systems exist that are perceived and experienced differently by the population. Persons using the private health system are generally more educated and can afford the higher costs associated with private health care, compared to the users of the public health system. The study reveals that the greatest benefit obtained from the private health sector is that of technical quality, but in the public health sector the users have better access to services. In an ideal health system, easy access and good technical quality need to be balanced, which is currently not achievable. The NHI is an attempt to create a level playing field for all users, which is not possible.

The People's Voice Survey study also found that the most important predictor of trust in the health system is whether government considers the opinions of people in reforming health systems and making decisions. The private sector lacks confidence in the reform of the health sectors, whereas the public sector is more convinced that their interests are

⁴⁷ South African Lancet National Commission. Confronting the right to ethical and accountable quality health care in South Africa: A consensus report. Pretoria: National Department of Health, 2019. <https://bhekisisa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/620a9eb9-final-sa-lnc-report.pdf>

⁴⁸ Kruk et al., (2018). High-quality health systems in the Sustainable Development Goals era: time for a revolution. *The Lancet. Global health*, 6(11), e1196–e1252. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(18\)30386-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(18)30386-3)

considered in decision-making. If trust is such an important driver, the question is how to gain people's active participation in the reform of health systems.

Finally, Prof Moshabela suggested that in the reform of South Africa's health system, there needs to be deliberation to shift the debate from the interests of policies benefiting users in the private sector, to the interests of the public itself. New approaches are needed to bring the voices of the majority of society into the debate.

Discussion and questions

In response to a question on how housing impacts health issues, **Prof London** replied that there is known to be an impact, but not enough research has been done on this. Scholars should be directing research to this area.

Prof Janssen enquired about the interest of the government in not dealing with IP barriers that are blocking access to knowledge for society. **Prof London** responded that the policy has been in development for a long time, but has not yet been concluded. There is a need for civil society to exert pressure to get the policy implemented, which is something that ASSAf could possibly take on.

A delegate proposed that positive stories are needed that illustrate the difference that the health system has made in South Africa society. **Prof London** responded with the example that South Africa has significantly reduced AIDS mortality through the biggest antiretroviral programme in the world. Pre-natal transmission has been reduced to less than 1%. South Africa has the capacity to produce vaccines, but is not allowed to do so due to politics and IP legislation. Many countries in Africa could produce vaccines, and those blockages need to be unlocked to enable the positive outcomes of research. **Prof Jansen** commented that the health system is unlikely to be effective with the current government in South Africa.

Prof Jansen expressed his deep concern about the situation in Sudan and appealed to the Academy to urgently deliberate with the Council and colleagues to find ways to assist. The problems perceived in South Africa fade away in comparison to the existential threats in Sudan. It would be inattentive and unconscionable of the meeting if there was not a discussion of actions in support of colleagues in Sudan. ASSAf needs to reflect how to respond to the situation and assist academic colleagues and health workers.

Prof Tagüeña commented that many people would like to help, but do not know who to contact and what is immediately needed. Dr Elmahdi would be the right person to lead this discussion and provide information and advice on the right direction of action. She observed that Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières, MSF) is doing valuable work in many conflict situations and enquired what their role was in Sudan, and how Dr Elmahdi viewed their involvement.

Dr Elmahdi expressed appreciation for the willingness to take action and indicated that aid is needed before it is too late. She responded that MSF has suspended their activities in Sudan because their offices have been looted. Many international aid organisations such as MSF and Oxfam have been evacuated. Almost 1.5 million people have been evacuated from Khartoum. The situation in Sudan could rapidly turn into a civil war due to ethnic divisions within the county. The immediate priority should be to address what can be done rapidly. Those institutions that have the ability to intervene immediately could assist with the protection of scholars, especially elderly senior professors that are exposed to the difficult logistics of escaping the conflict. The assessment of the damage is another area where help is needed. An advocacy campaign to enable the protection of scholars and academics in

the current negotiations is very important. Currently, the parties are negotiating safe corridors for humanitarian assistance, but it is important to include another dimension, namely protecting the universities, health facilities, medical staff, scholars and scientists. Academies could urge the mediating governments (USA and Saudi Arabia) to pressure both parties in the conflict to take accountability for their actions.

Prof Moshabela acknowledged the importance of an immediate response, but there is a further need for planning related to the recovery phase, where assistance is needed to restore the society. **Dr Elmahdi** agreed that this is important. She mentioned one of the main challenges of the universities, namely the digitisation of libraries. Some universities and museums in Sudan are very old and contain ancient archival material, which needs to be digitised to mitigate possible losses due to destruction. These projects have not yet been completed and need to be supported. Evidence is being collected on human rights violations, but the violations to academics, health facilities and scholars have largely been neglected. The community of scholars and academics is best suited to intervene in this regard, and the timing of the present meeting is appropriate to take a stand.

CLOSURE (Prof Himla Soodyall, Executive Officer, ASSAf)

In closing the meeting, Prof Soodyall thanked the moderators and the panellists for their presentations and engagement. Prof Peter Vale received a special vote of thanks for catalysing the meeting. Everyone involved in convening and organising the meeting was thanked, with special appreciation to Raj Mahabeer and staff at ASSAf.

APPENDIX: LIST OF ACRONYMS

AB	Artium Baccalaureus
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ASSAf	Academy of Science South Africa
CARA	Council for At Risk Academics
CHE	Council on Higher Education
COVID	Coronavirus disease
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DDT	Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloroethane
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
DST	Department of Science and Technology (now the Department of Science and Innovation)
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIC	High-income country
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IAP	Inter Academies Partnership
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IHRN	International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies
IP	Intellectual Property
IRR	Institute of Race Relations
ISC	International Science Council
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
LMIC	Low- and middle-income countries
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MPH	Master of Public Health
mRNA	Messenger RNA
MSF	Doctors without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières)
MSU	Michigan State University
NAM	<i>National Academy of Medicine</i>
NAS	<i>National Academy of Sciences</i>
NGO	Non-Government Organisations
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NORHED	Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development
NRF	National Research Foundation
REBSP	Right to Enjoy the Benefits of Scientific Progress
RPI	Research Performing Institutions
SA	South Africa
SAMRC	South African Medical Research Council
SANBio	Southern Africa Network for Biosciences
SAR	Scholars at Risk
SARIMA	Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSB	Sugar Sweetened Beverage

STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
STI	Sexually transmitted disease
STIAS	Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study
TB	Tuberculosis
TWAS	The World Academy of Sciences
UCT	University of Cape Town
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UK	United Kingdom
UK HRC	UK Academy of Human Rights Committee
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNAM	National Autonomous University of Mexico
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAf	Universities South Africa
UNISA	University of South Africa
US/ USA	United States of America
WCRI	World Conference on Research Integrity
WFSJ	World Federation of Science Journalists
WHO	World Health Organization