

## Combating Predatory Academic Journals and Conferences

Predatory journals, publishers and conferences are on the rise and becoming increasingly sophisticated. These practices prey on the pressure researchers feel to publish prolifically, and include pay-to-publish models without peer review, fake editorial boards listing respected scientists, fraudulent impact factors, journal names deceptively similar to those of legitimate journals, and spam invitations to sham conferences with high registration fees.

Indeed, predatory journals and conferences threaten to cause long-term, widespread damage to research and researchers. Although several studies suggest the problem is widespread and increasing, the true extent and impact globally are not known, which makes addressing these practices all the more difficult.

Led by an independent working group of international experts nominated by academies around the world, this IAP study is gauging the extent and impact of predatory practices, identifying their root causes, and reviewing efforts to combat them. A vital part of the study is a survey for all members of the research community to raise their awareness, and gauge the extent and impact, of predatory journals and conferences across different geographies, disciplines and career stages. The survey ran for two months (November and December 2020) and is now closed. With thanks to all those who participated, info graphics representing the survey headlines can be found on the resources tab for this project, with further results being published in a peer reviewed journal in due course. These results are being used to inform recommendations on more effective ways to combat predatory practices and protect researchers everywhere.

Critically, the IAP study is engaging sister networks - such as the [Global Young Academy \(GYA\)](#), [International Science Council \(ISC\)](#) and [The World Academy of Sciences \(TWAS\)](#) - as well as representatives from all key sectors: research, publishing, libraries and indexing services, universities and international science governance organizations. It is also connecting with other research groups looking at this issue. Efforts to combat predatory practices in academia must necessarily engage key stakeholders across the globe to effect a concerted, coherent and coordinated approach.

The IAP study will report in early 2022 and is anticipated to inform a further major study on research evaluation, which lies at the heart of many of the global research community's challenges and for which predatory practices are a symptom.

A series of five webinars were hosted by the [InterAcademy Partnership \(IAP\)](#), with the [Global Young Academy \(GYA\)](#), the [Association of Academies and Societies of Sciences in Asia \(AASSA\)](#), the [European Academies' Science Advisory Council \(EASAC\)](#), the [Inter-American Network of Academies of Science \(IANAS\)](#), the [Network of African Science Academies \(NASAC\)](#) and [The World Academy of Science \(TWAS\)](#)- was designed to help researchers in their respective regions learn more about predatory academic practices and minimize their risk of using them.

## From the President



Academies are typically independent, highly committed institutions that recognize and promote excellence and achievement. By definition, academies

are merit-based, with members peer reviewed and selected from among the leading scientists predominantly in their country. They are vital civil society institutions that work together on wide-ranging public policy issues, free of vested political and commercial interests. 27 countries in Africa have well established renowned national academies and work together through NASAC on issues of vital national and regional importance. In addition, we are delighted to say that there are now 15 national young academies in Africa, for early career researchers who are committed to science serving society. Many of our members work closely with their respective young academies.

The decarbonization of transport in Africa online workshop brought together technical experts, policymakers and other stakeholders to discuss urban planning and public transport considerations in the decarbonization of transport in Africa, including infrastructure, financing, and policy considerations.

The 2021 Annual meeting of African Science Academies (AMASA-2021) focused on one of gangrenes of our time, the omnipresence of predatory academic practices in our science world, which, without making needed efforts to fight it, will ruin and destroy the whole academic system. Indeed, as mentioned in a remarkable paper published in *Nature* in 2019 (*Nature* **576**, 210-212 (2019)) by Agnes Grudniewicz (an assistant professor at the Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa, Canada) *et al*, “Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are

characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices”.

Predatory journals and conferences abound universities and research institutions, and make so many victims among readers and researchers particularly in least developed countries, where publish-or-perish culture is imported, and how many publications a scholar has become a major criterion for graduation or career advancement.

Predatory academic practices are therefore a global threat for knowledge and science progress, and resolutely compromise human development and living ecosystem prosperity. This explains the critical importance of this webinar, one of the five of the series jointly organized by the InterAcademy Partnership and its member institutions. This webinar, and your contributions to it as panelists and participants will help NASAC communicate the information, to raise awareness of the danger of these practices, to reflect on appropriate ways for minimizing the risk, to preview some of the recommendations of the IAP study on the topic, and to better prepare the actors to combat the phenomenon.

2021 was also a year where we experienced different variants of COVID-19. Most of the meetings and workshops were held virtually and we take this opportunity to truly appreciate both our members and partners.

We wish you a truly prosperous and very happy new year.

Yours faithfully,

**PROF. MAHOUTON NORBERT**  
President, NASAC

## Activities and Events

### The 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the NASAC general assembly

The seventeenth meeting of the NASAC general assembly was held virtually on 25 November 2021. More than 20 member academies participated in the meeting. Members reviewed the activity reports of the year 2021 and planned for the initiatives that will be undertaken towards enhancing the sustainability of NASAC in the near future.

### AMASA 2021: Predatory Academic Practices

NASAC partnered with the Inter Academy Partnership (IAP) to host the AMASA 2021 which was held on 24 November 2021. The main topic of the event was “*Predatory Academic Practices*”.

The event was open to young and senior academics, the private and public sectors as well as policymakers. Participants discussed on actions to be taken by academies to mitigate the vice.

### ASSAf Awards for Outstanding Achievement

The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) awarded two gold medals to Professors Shabir Madhi and Barry Schoub for their contributions and engagements with society through their scientific activities.



Prof. Shabir Madhi



Prof. Barry Schoub

Amongst other contributions, both Professor Madhi and Professor Schoub made outstanding contributions to the effective communication of the impacts of COVID-19 to the general public, a clear demonstration of the translation of their scientific knowledge for the benefit of society.



**Professor Roseanne Diab** has been awarded a TWAS (The World Academy of Sciences) Medal in recognition of her unceasing efforts to achieve change towards gender transformation in science worldwide.

Professor Diab is the Director of GenderInSITE and Professor Emeritus in the School of Environmental Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal and the immediate past Executive Officer of the Academy.

## Gene Editing Technology Initiative

CropLife International continued to fund NASAC and Africa Harvest to continue the Gene Editing Technology Initiative (GETI) for a second phase. The first phase facilitated the establishment of a GETI working group named “*African Association of Genome Editing Professionals for Sustainable Agriculture*”.

Phase 2 of this project will conclude in June 2022, with more GETI champions in the Working Group, training and outreach activities. The first activity starting January 2022 is to host a series of webinars in the 5 African sub-regions targeting Researchers, Regulators, the Public and Policymakers. The experts will be supported to become the ‘voice’ of gene editing technology in Africa and beyond. The Group is further expected to influence policymakers to create a supportive regulatory environment for the development and commercialization of gene editing technology products.

## NASAC/ISC-SIDA-funded LIRA project (2016-2020/21)

NASAC in collaboration with the International Science Council (ISC) continues to implement the “*Leading Integrated Research for Agenda 2030 in Africa (LIRA 2030 Africa)*”.

A series of three webinars were held on 8-10 December 2021 to discuss LIRA programme and projects achievements.

## The 3<sup>rd</sup> NAS Scientific Conference

The Nigerian Academy of Science (NAS) will hold its third scientific conference themed “*Science and Technology Innovations for National Growth and Development*” on 25-26 January 2022 in Abuja, Nigeria.

For further details on the event, please visit/click on [www.nas.org.ng/conference](http://www.nas.org.ng/conference)

## Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) Webinar

The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) in partnership with the Inter Academy Partnership (IAP) organized a webinar on “*The scourge of predatory journals and conferences in academia*” on 2 December 2021.

The webinar highlighted some of the key emerging findings and recommendations of an InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) study on “*Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences*” which will report in early 2022.

## The Nigerian Academy of science (NAS) Ambassador Lecture

The Nigerian Academy of Science (NAS) in collaboration with the University of Ilorin (Faculty of Life Sciences) hosted a lecture on “*Nigeria's Hydrocarbon Resources: Current and Future Trends: and Challenges toward a reliable energy diversification*” on 30 November 2021.

The lecture was part of the academy vision to improve quality of life for the Nigerian society through the promotion of science. The Academy is increasing its visibility through the dissemination of sound scientific knowledge in the Country’s tertiary institutions.

## Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS) Launches Consensus Study

The Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS) published a consensus study entitled “*Trust in Our Nation: Building Effective Governance and Partnerships Systems for Uganda's Development*”.

The report was launched on 24 November 2021 by Emeritus Principal Judge of the Uganda Judiciary and Chair of the Uganda Elders Forum, Rev. Cannon Justice James Ogoola and received widespread local media attention.

To read the full report, download it for free at the UNAS website, [www.unas.org.ug](http://www.unas.org.ug).

# Announcements and Appointments

## Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)



Professor Abdool Karim has been elected to the Governing Board of the International Science Council (ISC). He has been elected to the office of the Vice-President for Outreach and Engagement.

The [International Science Council](#) (ISC) was created in 2018 following a merger of the International Council for Science (founded in 1931) and the International Social Science Council (founded in 1952).



Professor Phakeng has been admitted as a Fellow of The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS). Through her election, Professor Phakeng has been honoured by TWAS for the outstanding contribution that she has made in her field of expertise, to the advancement of science in the developing world.

TWAS elected 58 new Fellows, bringing the total TWAS membership to 1,343. Professor Phakeng is one of twenty new women members, representing 34 per cent of the new class.

Professor Phakeng is the Vice Chancellor: University of Cape Town

## Nigerian Academy of Science(NAS)



The President of the Nigerian Academy of Science, Professor Ekanem Braide FAS was elected the Vice President for Resource Mobilization at the African Scientific Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC) congress held in Nairobi between the 22nd and 25th of November, 2021.

## Hassan II Academy of Science and Technology

Prof. Mostapha Bousmina, President of the Hassan II Academy of Science and Technology and President of the Euromed University of Fez, was elected on November 24, 2021, in Nairobi, Kenya, with an overwhelming majority, President of the African Science, Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC), which falls under the African Union (AU).

This is a high position within the AU's scientific bodies that requires high skills such as those possessed by Professor Bousmina, a connoisseur of higher education, scientific research and innovation. He has a long academic experience both in Canada, where he held a senior research chair on nanotechnology, and in Morocco.

## Tunisian academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts, Beit al-Hikma

Prof. Mahdi Abdeljaouad has published a book titled "*Arabic Arithmetic in the Fourteenth Century*".

For further details on the book click on <https://doi.org/10.34663/9783945561638-00>

# On the Spotlight

## Decarbonization of Transport in Africa

NASAC in partnership with InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) organized a virtual workshop on “*Decarbonization of Transport in Africa*” on 15-17 November 2021. The event brought together technical experts, policymakers and other stakeholders in the transport industry to discuss urban planning and public transport considerations for decarbonization in regard to infrastructure, financing, and policy. Though **Africa** currently has one of the lowest motorization rates globally, it is poised to become a major new player in the transport sector in the near future, with the potential to become a leader in the **decarbonization of transport movement**.

Aligned with [Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa \(STISA\) 2024](#) priorities 3 (Communication – Physical and Intellectual Mobility) and 4 (protect our space), the workshop analyzed policies to transform the transport fleet and related infrastructure, to electrical power generation with which transport will be increasingly coupled in the future, and to human behavior. The workshop adopted a holistic approach to address transport supply and demand for passengers and for freight. It produced recommended priority actions for governments and other stakeholders during the next 10-15 years as well as the longer term.

The adoption of common policies and regulations across the world could bring economies of scale to the introduction of **innovative greenhouse gases emission reduction solutions**, for road and maritime transport, and for aviation. The [2019 report](#) by IAP’s European regional network, the [European Academies’ Science Advisory Council \(EASAC\)](#), on the decarbonization of transport, which primarily targeted EU policy makers, will provide a starting point for discussions.

Over the first two years, several coordination meetings will be held throughout Africa to produce an African regional report. In the second phase of the study, funding permitting, regional reports would be produced in a similar manner for the Americas and Asia region by IAP’s constituent regional networks, [InterAmerican Network of Academies of Science \(IANAS\)](#) and [Association of Academies and Societies of Science in Asia \(AASSA\)](#). The project will culminate in an over-arching global report and a final workshop to review the similarities and differences among the four regions.

Transitioning to zero-carbon transport in Africa is essential to achieving the SDGs and keep climate change in check. Zero-carbon transport can also improve quality of life while promoting healthy economies in Africa. For example, transitioning from fossil fuels to electric mobility could create new jobs and economic opportunities, especially if supported by a strong partnership between the transport and energy sectors.

As partners and stakeholders carry this discussion forward, we must ensure that today's urgent needs are not met at the expense of future generations. The future of mobility is one where transport is reliable, cost-effective, safe, accessible for all, and keeps CO2 emissions in check.

# Member Academy Feature

## Zimbabwe Academy of Sciences Strategic Plan (2021-2025)

The Zimbabwe Academy of Sciences (ZAS) functionally operates through the three Colleges: the College of Life Sciences, College of Physical Sciences and the College of Social Sciences. The roles and functions of ZAS are spelt out in its Constitution. At a national level, ZAS is desirous to provide national leadership on scientific initiatives and innovations in key areas that include health and heritage studies, water and sanitation, climate change, sustainable environmental management, and national security, as guided by the national research priorities and key projects of national significance.

The Vision for the Zimbabwe Academy of Sciences (ZAS) is “*The Zimbabwe Academy of Sciences seeks to be the leading catalyst for knowledge-sharing, innovative solutions, evidence-based policy formulation and advisory services in Zimbabwe, Africa and beyond*”. The Mission states that ZAS exists to “*Monitor the environment, identify problems and opportunities, provide and communicate the ultimate evidence-based solutions that benefit society for sustainable development by mobilizing the science community and other resources through smart partnerships with government, academia, private sector, development partners and civil society*”. However, there is need for self-renewal, task-oriented, relevancy, agility, flexibility and consistency in the renewed Mission to develop innovative solutions to address Zimbabwean challenges and strategically advance Zimbabwe to be a global power. The ZAS Guiding Philosophy is about mutual respect and quality, stated clearly as “*Mutual respect and equality is important because my humanity is bound up with yours*”. This is buttressed by the core values of Innovativeness, Integrity, Professionalism, Reliability, Institutional Independence, Respect and Ethics.

The ZAS Strategic Plan (2021-2025) is informed by an environmental scan which is informed by the national vision, sustainable development goals (SDGs), SWOT and PESTEL analysis. The Zimbabwe National Vision 2030 is “*Towards a Prosperous and Empowered Upper Middle Income Society by 2030, with Job Opportunities and a High Quality of Life for its Citizens*”. Vision 2030 seeks to fundamentally transform Zimbabwe to an upper middle income economy, with a per capita Gross National Income of over US\$5000 in real terms by 2030, from the current US\$1 440. This is realizable through the implementation of the National Development Strategy (2021-2025) (NDS1).

The five key Strategic Themes for the Strategic Plan (2021-2025) which guide the goals, strategies, Balanced Score Card and Action Plan are:

1. Stakeholder Engagement and Satisfaction
2. Financial Sustainability and Partnerships
3. Capacity Building and Human Capital Development
4. Productivity and Growth
5. Research Advancement and Innovation.

It is envisaged that Monitoring and Review would be done annually and then through an independent Mid-Term Review process to assess performance against the Strategic Plan Action Deliverables.

**About NASAC**

The Network of African Science Academies (NASAC) was established on 13 December 2001 in Nairobi, Kenya and is currently the affiliate Network for InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) in Africa.

NASAC is a consortium of merit-based science academies in Africa that aspires to make the “voice of science” heard by policy and decision makers within and outside the continent. NASAC is dedicated to enhancing the capacity of existing national science academies and champions in the cause for creation of new academies where none exist

As at November 2019, NASAC comprised of the following twenty-eight members:

1. **African** Academy of Sciences (AAS)
2. **Algerian** Academy of Science and Technology (AAST)
3. Académie Nationale des Sciences, Arts et Lettres du **Bénin** (ANSALB)
4. **Botswana** Academy of Sciences (BAS)
5. Académie Nationale des Sciences du **Burkina** (ANSB)
6. **Burundi** Academy of Sciences and Technology (BAST)
7. **Cameroon** Academy of Sciences (CAS)
8. Académie Nationale des Sciences et Technologies du **Congo** (ANSTC)
9. Académie des sciences, des arts, des cultures d'Afrique et des diasporas africaines, **Cote d'Ivoire** (ASCAD)
10. Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, **Egypt** (ASRT) – *Provisional Member*
11. **Ethiopian** Academy of Science (EAS)
12. **Ghana** Academy of Arts and Sciences (GAAS)
13. **Kenya** National Academy of Sciences (KNAS)
14. **Madagascar's** National Academy of Arts Letters and Sciences
15. **Mauritius** Academy of Science and Technology (MAST)
16. Hassan II Academy of Science and Technology in **Morocco**
17. Academy of Sciences of **Mozambique** (ASM)
18. **Nigerian** Academy of Science (NAS)
19. **Rwanda** Academy of Sciences (RAS)
20. Académie des Sciences et Techniques du **Sénégal** (ANSTS)
21. Academy of **Science of South** Africa (ASSAf)
22. **Sudanese** National Academy of Science (SNAS)
23. **Tanzania** Academy of Sciences (TAS)
24. Académie Nationale Des Sciences, Arts Et Lettres Du **Togo** (ANSALT)
25. **Tunisia** Academy of Sciences Arts and Letters
26. **Uganda** National Academy of Sciences (UNAS)
27. **Zambia** Academy of Sciences (ZaAS)
28. **Zimbabwe** Academy of Sciences (ZAS)

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