



Africa Week 2025

Global Security, Global Africa

25–27 May 2025
Future Africa
University of Pretoria



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA



**FUTURE
AFRICA**

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1 Foreword



It is with great pride that I present this synthesis report on Africa Week 2025, capturing the key discussions, insights, and outcomes of the week.

Africa Week is the University of Pretoria's (UP) biennial science leadership summit, hosted by the Future Africa platform. More than a gathering, it is a living expression of UP's mission to convene diverse voices across disciplines and sectors to engage with Africa's most urgent and complex challenges.

Hosted in May to coincide with Africa Day celebrations, this year's summit was organised with the support of the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF) and the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI). It brought together African and global science leaders and stakeholders for a series of high-level discussions under the theme **'Global Security, Global Africa'**.

The deliberations were both sobering and inspiring. We were reminded that Africa stands at the centre of global security debates, holding the resources, knowledge systems, and youthful population that the world cannot ignore. Yet we also acknowledged the obstacles that

persist in corruption, underinvestment, exclusion, and the ongoing dominance of external interests in shaping our futures.

At Future Africa, we believe that research and dialogue are not ends in themselves, but catalysts for action. That conviction was evident throughout the week, in conversations about climate adaptation, food sovereignty, One Health, digital futures, and the politics of justice. Again and again, participants called not only for bold ideas but also for the courage to act on them.

This report captures the essence of those conversations. It is both a record of what was said and a call to all of us: academics, policymakers, industry leaders, and citizens, to take responsibility for shaping Africa's future.

As we look ahead, let us not lose momentum. The true measure of Africa Week 2025 will be in the partnerships we forge, the systems we reform, and the futures we create together. As I said at the opening of the summit:

'The challenges we face are shared, and what brings us together is far greater than what divides us.'

I thank all who contributed to this milestone event, and I invite you to engage with the insights in this report, not only as ideas to reflect on, but as imperatives to act upon.

Professor Wanda Markotter
Interim Director of Future Africa
University of Pretoria



Overview

Africa Week is the University of Pretoria's (UP) biennial science leadership summit hosted by the Future Africa platform. Held in May to coincide with Africa Day celebrations, this strategic gathering brings together higher education institution (HEI) leaders from across Africa and beyond, alongside key stakeholders from government, business, civil society, and the media. The summit provides a high-level platform for meaningful dialogue and collaboration, aimed at strengthening African research, enhancing its global visibility, and amplifying its influence, particularly through the role of HEIs.

AFRICA WEEK 2025 THEME

'Whatever is driving policy, it is not security, at least security of the population. That is at best a marginal concern. That holds for existential threats as well. We have to look elsewhere.'

Noam Chomsky (in Chomsky, N. and Polychroniou, C.J. 2023. *Illegitimate Authority: Facing the challenges of our time*. Penguin Random House, UK)

The complexity of today's security challenges calls for fresh perspectives. These must capture multiple threats and concerns and strategies to address them. The world has become more insecure, despite large investments in security infrastructure and efforts to 'police the world'.

Security issues go beyond military operations. They demand an understanding of the links between social, cultural, economic, environmental, and political processes, and how these unfold in an unequal world.

Globally, the link between the environment and security has received growing attention, due to concerns such as environmental refugees and terrorism funded through environmental proceeds. However, these examples do not fully capture the scope of current security challenges.

The 2025 edition of Africa Week was convened under the theme **'Global Security, Global Africa'**. The gathering sought to reframe and broaden the notion of global security beyond its traditional militarist focus, exploring its multiple—both visible and hidden—dimensions and how these manifest across all levels of society.

The summit called for a reimagining of global security frameworks, positioning Africa's role and agency within these complexes. While the imperative to "silence the guns" remains, there is equal urgency in addressing diverse security threats, including pandemics, digital technologies, environmental and human degradation, climate change, economic shocks, geopolitics, and vulnerabilities in food systems. This reflects the recognition that security encompasses far more than military strength.

The main summit was held from 25–27 May 2025, followed by a series of side events from 28–30 May 2025.

3 Future Africa's role

As UP's pan-African platform for collaborative research, Future Africa works across the sciences and with societal partners to address Africa's most urgent contemporary challenges. Its fundamental purpose is to develop and unleash the transformative potential of African sciences to inform and inspire a future of thriving African societies. Among its key objectives is to stimulate bold ideas and disruptive thinking on how research can address real-world problems.

Africa Week 2025 embodied this mission, demonstrating the power of dialogue to catalyse change, and reminding us that Africa's future will be authored not by others, but by Africans themselves.

This report captures the insights, debates, and outcomes of Africa Week 2025, distilling them into key messages, big ideas, and calls to action.



4 Executive summary

Africa Week 2025, hosted by the University of Pretoria's Future Africa, convened more than 300 scholars, policymakers, practitioners, and leaders from across Africa and the world under the theme: 'Global Security, Global Africa'. Over three days of keynote addresses, panels, and roundtables, participants examined climate, food, health, knowledge, economic, and socio-political security through distinctly African perspectives.

The discussions carried a clear message:

Africa is not a passive victim of global crises. With its critical minerals, and the world's youngest population, the continent is indispensable to global stability. Yet these assets will only translate into leverage if Africa develops the political will, collective agency, and accountability to act decisively.

Key insights

- **From victim to victor:** Africa must reposition itself as a solutions leader, not simply the most affected continent.
- **Collective agency:** Real progress requires coalitions of states, civil society, and institutions with the weight to act, not fragmented responses.
- **Youth as a demographic driver:** With the fastest-growing youth population globally, inclusion in jobs, innovation, and governance is urgent.
- **Indigenous knowledge as innovation:** African cosmologies and traditions must be integrated with modern science to create unique solutions.
- **Accountability with consequences:** Reporting is not enough; leaders must face real consequences for corruption and underperformance.
- **Research as action:** Universities must move beyond producing graduates to producing solutions that improve lives and inform policy.
- **Implementation, not repetition:** Africa must scale tested models and avoid repeating the same debates year after year.

Stakeholder imperatives

- **Policymakers:** Prioritise catalytic reforms, mobilise domestic resources, and leverage Africa's assets in global negotiations.
- **Academia:** Co-create solutions with industry and communities; internationalise equitably; foster innovation ecosystems.
- **Civil society:** Amplify grassroots voices, hold leaders accountable, and ensure inclusion of women, youth, and vulnerable groups.
- **Private sector:** Invest in startups and research commercialisation; build sustainable models that retain value in Africa.
- **Youth and diaspora:** Engage as co-creators of Africa's future, not bystanders.
- **Regional and global bodies:** Champion Africa's common interests in trade, climate, and digital sovereignty.
- **Media:** Shift Africa's narrative from deficit to agency, highlighting leadership and solutions.

AFRICA WEEK IN NUMBERS



337

in-person
delegates



347

virtual participants

41

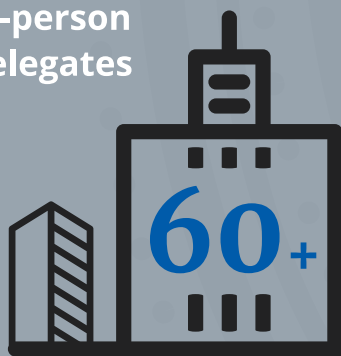
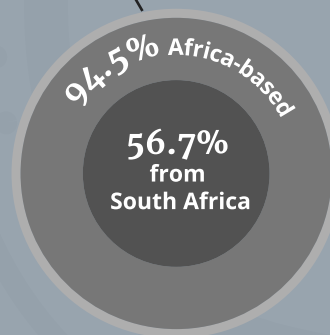
speakers &
moderators



from

18

countries



institutions represented,
including universities,
multilateral organisations,
think tanks, and policy bodies

Gender balance



DIVERSITY OF VOICES

61%

of speakers
Africa-based

39%

from
international
institutions

Representation from



18

countries

including South Africa,
Malawi, Ghana, Cameroon,
Mozambique, UK, US, India,
Japan, and more



Vice-Chancellors and
Rectors from leading
universities across
Africa, Europe, Asia,
and Oceania

25 May

Welcome Ceremony

On Africa Day, 25 May 2025, the Africa Week summit opened at Future Africa, University of Pretoria, with a resounding call for bold, cross-sectoral collaboration to reimagine the continent's future.

Setting the stage: A call to unity

Professor Wanda Markotter, Interim Director of Future Africa, reflected on the summit's significance in her opening remarks:

'Throughout the week we will engage in critical conversations that transcend disciplines, regions and sectors... Because the challenges we face are shared, and what brings us together is far greater than what divides us.'



Her message of unity set the collaborative tone that would guide the week's deliberations.

A continental perspective

His Excellency Salih Omar Abdu, Ambassador of the State of Eritrea to South Africa and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, described Africa Day as “a moment to reflect on our shared past, assess the challenges of our present, and collectively reimagine the future of dignity, resilience and unity.” He applauded the framing of global security beyond weapons and warfare, emphasising interconnected challenges such as climate change, economic stability, and knowledge integrity.

H.E. Omar Abdu also urged Africa to safeguard its intellectual sovereignty, resist disinformation, and strengthen both scientific and traditional knowledge systems. Stressing economic sovereignty through bold reforms and equitable trade, he connected the week's discussions to the African Union's designation of 2025 as 'The Year of Reparations', framing reparatory justice as a catalyst for healing and restoring dignity.

Strategy, science and solidarity

Representing the South African government, Ms Anneline Morgan from the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) reaffirmed the country's commitment to advancing Africa's development through science and innovation. She emphasised Africa's agricultural potential and called for investment in technologies to ensure food security and sustainable livelihoods.

Dr Sepo Hachigonta of the National Research Foundation (NRF) provided a candid reflection on Africa's underfunded science landscape, urging greater private sector engagement to unlock transformative potential. “We are evolving into innovation players within the ecosystem... contributing to policy, driving partnerships, and co-creating instruments for change,” he said.

Ms Myranda Lutempo of the African Union (AU) Southern Africa Regional Office highlighted Africa's resilience, its fast-

growing economies, and the rising influence of its intellectual and cultural capital. Linking the summit to the AU's Agenda 2063, she called for continued pursuit of inclusive prosperity underpinned by peace and unity.

“Let us continue to work towards inclusive and shared prosperity, underpinned by peace, integration and unity,” she said.

The role of universities in Africa's future

Professor Francis Petersen, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria, underscored higher education's transformative power:

‘From the vantage point of a university, or the higher education sector, knowledge is the single most powerful force for understanding life, but also, importantly, for changing it.’

He reminded delegates that universities are uniquely positioned to drive solutions for Africa's urgent challenges, not only through knowledge production but by leveraging cultural, environmental, and human capital. Declaring Africa Week 2025 officially open, Prof Petersen invoked the spirit of Ubuntu: “Let us unite as, together, we find meaningful solutions to help our continent thrive into the future.”

Africa Week 2025: Day 1



Welcoming Ceremony

26 May

Official opening address

Prof Francis Petersen, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of Pretoria

'Africa Week is designed to foreground African thought leadership on pressing global challenges, offering a singular voice to shape and provoke high-level dialogue.'

Opening Africa Week 2025, Professor Francis Petersen, UP Vice-Chancellor and Principal, welcomed delegates to the Future Africa campus with a call to broaden how global security is understood. He stressed that Africa must move beyond militarist definitions to confront interconnected threats, including pandemics, digital disruption, environmental degradation, and climate change.

Prof Petersen reminded participants that Future Africa was established to bring together diverse actors across science, policy, and society to inspire transformative solutions. He framed the week's programme around four guiding questions: "Where are we at? What is at stake? What will it take? What about Africa?" and positioned the summit as a framework to guide action and reflection.

He also linked Africa Week to the African Union's 2025 theme on reparatory justice, underlining the responsibility of HEIs to address historical injustices and contribute to a more equitable global future. His remarks set the stage for the inaugural Future Africa Global Lecture, delivered by Professor Adam Habib.



Plenary Session I: Keynote address

'Where are we at? South Africa and Africa's role in the contemporary world'

Professor Adam Habib, Vice-Chancellor, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, United Kingdom

The Africa Week 2025 main summit opened with the Future Africa Global Lecture, delivered by Professor Adam Habib. His address provided a rigorous analysis of Africa's position within an increasingly unstable global order. He described the present as "a dangerous historical juncture" marked by Western hypocrisy, the unilateralism of the United States, and the rise of new global powers such as China. These dynamics, he argued, are producing a more volatile bipolar or multipolar world in which Africa's agency will depend on its capacity for unity, governance reform, and strategic leverage.

A changing global context

Prof Habib noted that the post-Cold War dominance of the United States is eroding, challenged by China's rapid economic and technological ascent. At the same time, multilateral institutions are weakened, and successive global crises, from climate change to pandemics, have revealed the fragility of international governance. Western double standards in trade, climate policy, and conflict have further undermined trust, leaving space for new alignments but also heightening instability.

Africa Week 2025: Day 2



Future Africa Global Lecture
delivered by Prof. Adam Habib



Africa is home to 1.5 billion people, a number projected to double by 2070, yet accounts for less than 3% of global trade.





Africa's strategic dilemma

Although Africa holds immense demographic and natural resource potential, its global influence remains marginal. Prof Habib identified three interrelated weaknesses:

- **Fragmentation** – Regional and continental cooperation is often undermined by narrow national interests.
- **Governance deficits** – Weak bureaucratic capability, corruption, and cadre deployment limit the ability of states to deliver on policy and negotiate effectively.
- **Insufficient leverage** – Overdependence on commodity exports and external financing constrains Africa's negotiating power.

Priorities for action

To reposition Africa in this shifting order, Prof Habib highlighted three strategic imperatives:

1. Harness the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

AfCFTA is Africa's most significant opportunity to build economic sovereignty. By strengthening intra-African trade and value chains, the continent can reduce dependency on external actors and expand its global influence.

2. Professionalise governance

Political will must be matched by professional excellence. From municipal administration to diplomatic negotiations, African states require strong, capable institutions to convert vision into delivery.

3. Anticipate and manage reprisals

Africa must prepare for economic and political pushback if it asserts greater independence in global forums. Diversifying partnerships, investing in South-South cooperation, and building collective resilience will be essential.

Conclusion

Prof Habib concluded with a call for courage and political decisiveness, stressing that Africa's future will not be secured by rhetoric but by unity, professional governance, and strategic agency.

'We can be the architects of our own collective future, but it will require collective courage and political decisiveness.'

Plenary Session II: Thematic sessions

Plenary Session II formed the core of Africa Week 2025, with six themed panel discussions examining security through climate and environmental, economic, knowledge, socio-political, health, and food lenses. Each offered unique insights, but together they revealed the systemic nature of Africa's challenges and the urgent need for collective, coordinated action.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

SPEAKERS

Prof David M Lodge, Francis J. DiSalvo Director of the Atkinson Center for Sustainability, Cornell University, United States

Prof Tafadzwa Mabhaudhi, Professor of Climate Change, Food Systems, and Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, United Kingdom, and Director of the Lancet Countdown Africa Regional Centre, Future Africa, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Respondent: Prof Nkechi S. Owoo, Associate Professor of Economics, University of Ghana, Ghana

Moderator: Prof Barend Erasmus, Dean, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, University of Pretoria, South Africa

This panel discussion addressed one of the most pressing issues of our time: climate and environmental security. The session explored how climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource scarcity threaten Africa's stability. The discussions explored ways to strengthen resilience through adaptation, sustainable resource use, and global cooperation.



Africa Week 2025: Day 2



Climate and Environmental Security Discussion

'As Africans, we have to own our own development, with dignity, pride, and authority.'

– Prof Tafadzwa Mabhaudhi

Professor David Lodge set the stage by urging universities to translate “little acts of love and humility” into structures that drive societal change. He defined impact as influence on public opinion, corporate practice, and policy—not just academic output. Emphasising cross-disciplinary collaboration and partnerships beyond academia, he called for sustained investment in R&D to build capacity and inform action. Without “vigorous investment in R&D in Africa by Africans”, he warned, climate and development challenges will intensify. Universities must act collectively and humbly to turn knowledge into solutions.

Professor Tafadzwa Mabhaudhi deepened this call by framing climate challenges as opportunities. He urged Africa to move “from crisis to opportunity”, arguing that the continent must protect itself from global shocks through collective action, investment in local capacity, and policies that ensure no one is left behind. Echoing his point, Professor Nkechi Owoo described climate change as a “threat multiplier” that heightens competition over land, water, and resources. She advocated for inclusive, Africa-led adaptation strategies that merge indigenous knowledge with modern science to build resilience and safeguard livelihoods.

The discussion repeatedly returned to inequities in global climate finance. Ninety percent of funding currently flows to mitigation projects, leaving adaptation severely underfunded. Yet adaptation is precisely what African communities need most. From relocating families displaced by floods to managing water scarcity and safeguarding livelihoods, adaptation defines Africa’s climate security challenge.

Speakers also raised questions about justice and hypocrisy. Why, participants asked, are countries in the Global North still using coal despite their rhetoric on climate responsibility? And how can Africa ensure its energy transitions are “just”, that is, moving away from coal without throwing workers into unemployment?

The session concluded with a set of concrete calls: Africa must advocate for adaptation at the global level, not simply follow the mitigation

agenda of wealthier nations. Scientists should sit at negotiation tables alongside politicians. Universities should contribute more actively to society by diagnosing problems and co-designing solutions. And partnerships, across governments, civil society, development organisations, and the private sector, are essential to building resilience.

'The change in the global order has not changed the urgency with which we need to respond to climate and environmental security. That urgency still remains.'

– Prof Barend Erasmus

Africa is home to the world’s largest potential carbon market, yet institutional barriers prevent the continent from fully benefiting. Unlocking this opportunity could provide both revenue and incentives for sustainable transitions.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Africa is the climate change hotspot—least responsible, most affected.
- Invest in R&D—build Africa’s own research and innovation capacity.
- Urgency remains—action cannot wait in a shifting global order.

CALL TO ACTION



Africa must develop its own adaptation strategies and advocate for adaptation funding on the global stage.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

SPEAKERS

Prof Rajiv Kumar, Chairman, Pahle India Foundation, Delhi, India

Dr Albert G. Zeufack, World Bank Country Director for Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sao Tome and Principe

Respondent: Dr Jessika Bohlmann, Research Specialist, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Moderator: Dr Farai Kapfudzaruwa, Deputy Director of Team Science for the African Synthesis Centre for Climate Change, Environment and Development (ASCEND), University of Cape Town, South Africa



The panel discussion on economic security opened with a stark reminder: by 2030, 80% of the world's poor will reside in Africa. Poverty and youth unemployment, participants warned, represent not only humanitarian concerns but direct threats to peace and stability. The session explored how inclusive growth, job creation, and resilience are fundamental to Africa's future prosperity.

Professor Rajiv Kumar framed the challenge as a dual imperative: the Global South must simultaneously increase per capita incomes and reduce carbon footprints. He argued that outdated post-World War II institutions no longer serve African interests. Instead, new groups such as BRICS and the G20 should play a more prominent role in shaping financial and trade systems. As a reference point, he pointed to India's success in financial inclusion and infrastructure as a model for innovative development paradigms.

Dr Albert Zeufack delivered one of the session's most urgent warnings: poverty and unemployment are Africa's ticking time bombs. Unless agriculture is transformed, trade barriers reduced, and investment scaled up in energy and digital infrastructure, the continent's demographic dividend could turn into a liability. "We import almost everything from everywhere," he cautioned. "It's a matter of survival." His remarks underscored the paradox of a continent rich in resources yet dependent on imports for basic food security.

Africa Week 2025: Day 2



Economic Security Panel Discussion

'For the first time in human history, countries of the Global South will have the dual, simultaneous challenge of growing their per-capita incomes and reducing their carbon footprint. We have to take our future in our own hands.'

– Prof Rajiv Kumar

Dr Jessika Bohlmann's response highlighted the International Labour Organization's framework of economic security, which links access to basic needs and work-related stability. Using South Africa's reliance on coal as a cautionary example, she emphasised the need to diversify energy sources while creating reliable pathways for job creation. The transition to renewable energy, she noted, cannot simply copy Northern models but must be designed around Africa's economic and industrial realities.

'By 2030, 80% of the world's poor will live in Africa. Poverty and unemployment are the continent's greatest threats.'

– Dr Albert Zeufack

The session also exposed deeper frustrations. Audience members questioned why African governments have not prioritised decolonising education or integrating indigenous knowledge into agricultural and economic systems. Others asked why Africa continues to import 80% of its food instead of leveraging the AfCFTA to boost intra-African trade and food security.

The discussions circled back to governance and reform. To secure its economic future, Africa must tackle corruption, incentivise private-sector engagement, and strengthen fiscal systems. Infrastructure investment, in transport, digital networks, and clean energy, was described as an urgent enabler of job creation and resilience. Equally, speakers emphasised the need to integrate African identity and indigenous knowledge into economic transformation, ensuring development is not only efficient but authentic and sustainable.

'Economic security is about access to basic needs and work-related stability. Without reliable energy, jobs and growth are impossible.'

– Dr Jessika Bohlmann

Africa imports roughly 80% of its food, a dependence that undermines food security and economic resilience in the face of global supply shocks.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Youth unemployment is a “ticking time bomb” – urgent investment in skills, agriculture, and digital industries is required.
- AfCFTA holds the potential to transform trade, reduce reliance on imports, and create jobs.
- Clean energy transitions must balance climate goals with economic realities.

CALL TO ACTION



Reform governance, invest in enablers (energy, infrastructure, digital), and leverage regional trade to drive Africa's prosperity.



SPEAKERS

Dr Flavia Schlegel, Inaugural Fellow: International Science Council (ISC) and Visiting Fellow: Future Africa, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Prof Vukosi Marivate, ABSA Chair of Data Science, Professor of Data Science for Social Impact Research Group, University of Pretoria (UP), South Africa

Dr Ronald Tombe, Lecturer, Kiisi University, Kenya and Research Fellow, Future Africa, University of Pretoria.

Moderator: Mr Desmond Thompson, Journalist

The digital age has brought extraordinary opportunities for science, but it has also introduced new vulnerabilities. This session laid bare the fragile position of Africa in the global knowledge ecosystem, where reliance on external funding, geopolitical restrictions, and inequities in data access threaten to marginalise the continent further.

Dr Schlegel opened with examples of how politics and censorship undermine scientific collaboration. She cited sanctions that have stalled Arctic research and the destruction of infrastructure in Ukraine, warning that similar dynamics could easily affect African science. She also pointed to terminology bans at U.S. universities as evidence of how academic freedom is under siege, insisting that universities cannot remain passive. “Silence means complicity,” she declared, urging institutions to resist the erosion of academic freedoms and to mobilise from the bottom up.

‘Silence means complicity. Universities must resist threats to academic freedom actively.’

– Dr Flavia Schlegel

Professor Vukosi Marivate shifted the discussion towards artificial intelligence (AI) and the pressing issue of data sovereignty. He noted that South Africa invests only 0.98% of its GDP in research and development, far below the global average. This underinvestment, coupled with heavy dependence on foreign funding, leaves Africa on the margins of the AI revolution. Prof Marivate called for a new wave of African-led AI systems and grassroots capacity-building initiatives. He advocated for equitable data licensing, to ensure that communities retain control of their data, and that Africa’s realities shape global technologies.



Africa Week 2025: Day 2



Knowledge Security and Research Integrity Panel Discussion

'How do we make sure Africans have agency during this AI revolution?'

– Prof Vukosi Marivate

Dr Ronald Tombe reinforced this point, stressing that African datasets are consistently absent in the development of AI models. The result, he warned, is not only technical bias but the exclusion of African experiences from the knowledge frameworks that increasingly drive policy and economic decision-making. Collecting and safeguarding African data, he argued, is essential for sovereignty and representation.

The discussion also included different perspectives from audience members who proposed integrating indigenous and ancestral intelligence into AI. Far from being outdated, these knowledge systems could redefine what counts as intelligence and open space for culturally grounded innovation. The idea was both provocative and energising, suggesting a future in which Africa does not merely catch up but redefines the very terms of technological progress.

The session concluded with calls for open data systems, innovative solutions modelled on African successes such as M-PESA, and stronger regional governance by entities like the African Union. Reforming the United Nations may be an uphill battle, several speakers noted, but Africa need not wait—it can begin by mobilising its own networks and institutions to articulate research and data needs with confidence and authority.

'It's time for Africa and the Global South to do it for themselves.'

– Mr Desmond Thompson

African datasets are underrepresented in global AI models.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Knowledge sovereignty is central to Africa's security and must be defended.
- Universities must shift from prestige to impact, embedding activism and community-driven priorities.
- African-led AI and data systems can empower local communities and reshape global narratives.
- Indigenous and ancestral knowledge can enrich AI frameworks and restore cultural relevance.

CALL TO ACTION



Invest in African-led R&D, assert data sovereignty, and integrate indigenous knowledge to build a research ecosystem that serves Africa first.



Speakers

Prof Wanda Markotter, Future Africa Research Chair: People, Health and Places (One Health), Director: Centre for Viral Zoonoses, DSI-NRF South African Research Chair in Infectious Diseases of Animals (Zoonoses), University of Pretoria, South Africa

Dr Yewande Alimi, One Health Unit Lead and co-lead for the Africa Union Task Force on AMR, Africa CDC, Addis Ababa

Respondent: Dr Tedson Nkoana, Researcher, Future Africa Research Chair: People, Health and Places (One Health), University of Pretoria, South Africa

Moderator: Prof Chris Isike, Professor and Head of Department, Political Sciences and Director of the African Centre for the Study of the United States, University of Pretoria, South Africa



The panel session on health security reminded participants that global stability begins with public health. Drawing on the painful lessons of COVID-19, speakers stressed that health crises are not isolated medical events but systemic disruptions that affect economies, politics, and societies alike. In Africa, where health systems remain uneven and often underfunded, the stakes are especially high.

Professor Wanda Markotter, emphasised that robust national health systems are the bedrock of security. Surveillance systems, she argued, must be real-time and cross-sectoral, integrating human, animal, and environmental health. She welcomed the newly negotiated WHO Pandemic Agreement but warned that equitable responses, not merely reactive measures, are the only path forward. “Health is an investment in the future,” she reminded participants, “and we must keep investing beyond crises.”

‘Health is an investment in the future; we must keep investing beyond crises.’

– Prof Wanda Markotter

Dr Yewande Alimi expanded on Africa’s vulnerabilities, particularly the rising threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Without urgent action, she cautioned, AMR could undermine decades of medical progress. Alimi argued for a holistic One Health approach to zoonotic diseases, grounded in domestic financing, local manufacturing, and resilient institutions. Dependency on external resources, she stressed, has left Africa exposed and must be replaced with self-sufficiency.

Africa Week 2025: Day 2



Health Security Discussion

'Africa must position itself for respectful, action-oriented partnerships, not dependency.'

– Dr Yewande Alimi

Dr Tedson Nkoana's response underscored the importance of collaboration across disciplines and sectors. Too often, he observed, African health security efforts are siloed, preventing meaningful coordination. Community-level resilience, informed by indigenous knowledge and local innovation, he argued, is as important as high-level policy frameworks.

The session raised critical questions: Are African governments adequately prepared for future pandemics? How effective have past strategies been, and what lessons must be carried forward? Can traditional medicine and indigenous knowledge be integrated into mainstream health frameworks? Above all, how can academic research—especially from early-career scholars, be translated into actionable policy?

The answers pointed towards systemic reform. Africa must invest in infrastructure and surveillance, reduce reliance on imports by manufacturing its own medical supplies, and embed indigenous knowledge into solutions. The discussion echoed a clear message: collective action, within and beyond borders, is indispensable.

'African health security depends on breaking down silos and enhancing community resilience.'

– Dr Tedson Nkoana

Africa remains one of the world's most vulnerable regions to pandemics, yet it allocates only a fraction of what is required for resilient public health systems.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Strong, well-funded public health systems are essential for pandemic preparedness.
- The One Health approach, integrating human, animal, and environmental health, must guide Africa's future.
- Domestic financing and local innovation reduce dependency on external aid.
- Indigenous knowledge and early-career researchers can enrich policy and health solutions.

CALL TO ACTION



Invest in resilient health infrastructure, embed One Health strategies, and ensure Africa leads in shaping its own health security agenda.

SOCIO-POLITICAL SECURITY

Speakers

Prof David Mickler, Dean Global, Africa, Founding Director, Centre for Australia-Africa Relations in the office of the DVC Global and Associate Professor of International Relations, Curtin University, Australia and Visiting Fellow at Future Africa, University of Pretoria (UP), South Africa

Prof Wisdom Tettey, President and Vice-Chancellor, Carleton University, Canada

Respondent: Ms Kolosa Ntombini, Doctoral Researcher at University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa

Moderator: Prof Maano Ramutsindela, Future Africa Research Chair in Sustainability Transformations, University of Pretoria (UP) and University of Cape Town (UCT) and Professor of Geography, UCT, South Africa



Few sessions captured the complexity of Africa's challenges as vividly as the discussion on socio-political security. The speakers argued that justice in Africa cannot be reduced to courts or constitutions; it must be understood in its social, political, economic, and environmental dimensions.

'Our collective security is dependent on looking out for one another.'

– Prof Wisdom Tettey

Professor David Mickler spoke about the erosion of trust in democratic processes across the continent and beyond. In many societies, he noted, democracy has come to polarise rather than unite, leaving many young people feeling disillusioned and excluded. Corruption, inequality, and weak institutions deepen this alienation. Globally, the rise of authoritarian governance models and shifting Western foreign policies further complicate Africa's socio-political landscape. Yet, Prof Mickler stressed, Africa's diaspora remains an untapped resource of knowledge, finance, and political engagement. Harnessing this potential, requires intentional transformation of institutions to foster inclusion and dignity.

Professor Wisdom Tettey echoed these concerns, calling for internal reflection within African societies. Who is considered “deserving” of dignity, equity, and belonging?

Africa Week 2025: Day 3



Socio-political Security Discussion

'Our collective security depends on how we see and treat one another—with dignity, equity, and shared responsibility.'

– Prof David Mickler

How do hierarchies of religion, class, and gender continue to exclude large groups of the population? Without addressing these questions, he warned, cohesion will remain elusive. Justice, Prof Tettey emphasised, must extend to building institutions that intentionally promote inclusivity and equity.

Ms Kolosa Ntombini's response offered a poignant reminder that justice is the foundation of political identity. Where justice is absent, belonging is fractured. As global insecurities mount, from climate shocks to migration crises, African societies must interrogate who is embraced and who is left out.

Audience members raised searching questions: To what extent do we see genuine justice in our communities? Who benefits from collaboration, and are partnerships built on symmetry or exploitation? How much of our perception of identity and belonging is grounded in reality versus inherited prejudice? These questions underscored the session's central theme: the need for deep introspection.

Cross-cutting issues resonated strongly. Migration and xenophobia highlight global inequalities even as Africa's youth seek opportunities abroad. Environmental degradation erodes livelihoods, exacerbating vulnerabilities in rural communities. Higher education institutions, speakers agreed, must take a central role not only in research but in reshaping values, curricula, and opportunities for inclusion.

Professor Tettey concluded with a call to build intentional communities rooted in fairness. Empowering young people, reforming education to support entrepreneurship and innovation, and strengthening institutions for transparency are not optional—they are prerequisites for justice and resilience.

'Justice is the foundation of inclusive political systems and the sense of belonging within communities.'

– Ms Kolosa Ntombini

By 2030, youth will make up over 40% of Africa's population, yet many remain excluded from governance and opportunity.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Justice must be multidimensional—social, political, economic, and environmental.
- Exclusion, corruption, and polarization erode democracy and weaken cohesion.
- Africa's diaspora is an underutilised source of knowledge, capital, and political influence.
- Higher education institutions are critical to building inclusive, values-based institutions and empowering youth.

CALL TO ACTION



Reinvest in democratic renewal, embrace inclusive citizenship, empower young people as agents of change, and embed justice in the stewardship of Africa's resources and communities.



Speakers

Prof Patrick Caron, Chair of Agropolis International and Vice-Chair of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Integrated Partnership Board, France

Prof Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, Chair of the CGIAR System Board; Extraordinary Professor, University of Pretoria (UP), South Africa

Respondent: Dr Selorm Yaotse Dorvlo, Senior Lecturer of Agricultural Mechanization, University of Ghana, Ghana

Moderator: Prof Claire Quinn, Professor in Natural Resource Management at the Sustainability Research Institute at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom; and Visiting Fellow at Future Africa, UP, South Africa



'Food insecurity is not just a consequence of conflict, it is also a driver of it.'

– Prof Patrick Canon

If health is the foundation of security, food is its lifeblood. The session on food security captured the urgency of a continent where one in five people go hungry and where climate change, conflict, and political instability converge to deepen vulnerability.

Professor Claire Quinn opened with a stark reminder from recent Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) assessments: hunger in Africa is worsening, driven by cascading crises that reinforce one another. Food insecurity not only reflects poverty but also fuels instability, creating a vicious cycle where conflict disrupts supply chains and hunger drives further unrest. Without peace, she argued, food security cannot be achieved.

Professor Patrick Caron traced the evolution of food security thinking since 1974. Once defined narrowly in terms of calories and market access, food security must now be understood as a holistic systems issue shaped by climate, governance, conflict, and knowledge. He warned that forecasts suggest food availability could decline by as much as 21% due to environmental shifts, unless radical change is embraced. Breaking the cycle, Prof Caron argued, requires investing in agriculture, strengthening governance, and building resilient rural economies that move beyond short-term aid.

Africa Week 2025: Day 3



Food Security Discussion

'Africa must move from being seen as a museum of poverty to a beacon of resilience through science, research, and innovation.'

– Prof Lindiwe Majele Sibanda

Professor Lindiwe Majele Sibanda brought the conversation home with an impassioned plea to rewrite Africa's narrative. Too often, she said, Africa is cast as a "museum of poverty." Yet with science, innovation, and political will, this story can change. "You cannot talk about peace without talking about food," she declared, urging participants to see food security not merely as an agricultural issue but as a matter of human security and resilience. She highlighted the tangible impacts of CGIAR centres across Africa, from New Rice for Africa (NERICA) rice benefiting millions, to re-greening efforts, to improved livestock management.

Dr Selorm Dorvlo's response echoed the call that Africa must define its own food identity—rooted in sovereignty, indigenous knowledge, and resilience. He described how CGIAR's multi-sectoral partnerships are helping to operationalise this vision, but insisted that collective action across governments, academia, and communities remains critical.

The audience reflections emphasised the need to modernise outdated terms like "rural," embrace technology, and better package research for wider uptake. Many stressed that youth must be at the forefront of this transformation, building on successful innovations like mobile money to create new ecosystems of food resilience.

The overarching message was clear: food security in Africa is inseparable from conflict, governance, and climate change. The path forward requires redefining security itself—seeing food not just as a commodity, but as the foundation of dignity, stability, and peace.

'Africa must define its own food identity, rooted in indigenous knowledge, resilience, and sovereignty.'

– Dr Selorm Yaotse Dorvlo

One in five Africans face hunger, with climate change projected to cut food availability by 21%.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Food security must be defined through a systems approach, integrating climate, governance, and peacebuilding.
- Food insecurity is both a driver and consequence of conflict.
- CGIAR's science and partnerships are vital for scaling innovations like NERICA rice and climate-resilient farming.
- Africa must create a collective food identity that is sovereign, inclusive, and forward-looking.

CALL TO ACTION



Redefine food security as human security, operationalise food sovereignty, and invest in resilient agricultural systems that break the cycle of conflict and hunger.



VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ROUNDTABLE: COLLABORATION IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Speakers

Prof Francis Petersen, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Prof Harlene Hayne, Vice-Chancellor: Curtin University, Australia

Prof Manuel Guilherme Junior, Rector: Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique

Prof Wisdom Tettey, President and Vice-Chancellor: Carleton University, Canada

Prof Claire Quinn, representing Leeds University, United Kingdom

Prof Daiji Kawaguchi, representing the University of Tokyo, Japan

Moderator: Prof Peter Lennie, Executive Director, Worldwide Universities Network



The Vice-Chancellor's Roundtable brought together university leaders from Africa, Europe, Asia, and North America to explore how higher education can sustain impact and drive transformative change in a volatile world. Moderated by Professor Peter Lennie, the conversation grappled with the paradox of universities as both competitors for global talent and collaborators in the pursuit of solutions.

Prof Lennie opened the discussion by framing it around the necessity and complexity of collaboration in higher education. He noted that while global universities have historically been competitive, collaboration has become indispensable, not only for affordability and access to rare expertise, but also for addressing global challenges like climate change.

Professor Francis Petersen emphasised that collaboration is no longer optional but a necessity for impact. Reflecting on lessons from shifting global funding flows, he called for partnerships that are purpose-driven, equitable, and transdisciplinary. He noted that UP's strategy renewal offers an opportunity to rethink partnerships—with an emphasis on quality, focus, and co-creation rather than extractive relationships.

Professor Harlene Hayne reflected on what she described as Curtin University's "grandmother's secret recipe" for global engagement. She highlighted four key ingredients that have contributed to Curtin's success in global partnerships: adopting a global mindset that recognises Africa's importance; taking a holistic approach by fostering impactful collaborations across education, research, and policy advocacy with diverse stakeholders; prioritising long-term partnerships that build capacity for all parties; and ensuring sustained institutional support.

Africa Week 2025: Day 3



**Vice-Chancellor's Roundtable on
Collaboration in challenging times**

Professor Claire Quinn echoed this sentiment, reflecting on the collaboration between the University of Leeds and University of Pretoria as a model of how challenge-led, bottom-up and top-down approaches can combine to create resilient networks. Similarly, Professor Manuel Guillermo Junior emphasised the importance of regional centres of excellence and multi-stakeholder partnerships that include not just academia but also government, industry, and communities.

‘Challenge-led, bottom-up and top-down collaborative approaches, emphasizing networks, capacity-building, and institutional support.’

– Prof Claire Quinn

Professor Wisdom Tetey emphasised that authentic motivations are critical to enduring partnerships, in contrast to transactional relationships driven by short-term funding opportunities. He called for a thorough re-evaluation of what constitutes an asset in global networks, noting that non-quantifiable assets, often contributed by Southern partners, are frequently undervalued and marginalised. Lastly, Professor Daiji Kawaguchi shared perspectives from a developing-country context, stressing that collaboration should address the asymmetry in global knowledge production. He argued that African institutions must be recognised as equal contributors, not junior partners, in research networks.

Prof Kawaguchi highlighted the growing potential for Asia–Africa partnerships to redefine research collaboration beyond traditional Western centres. He pointed to opportunities in digital innovation, sustainable technology, and student mobility between Japan and Africa.

Throughout the dialogue, common themes emerged: the need to embed indigenous knowledge into academic practices, to balance competition with cooperation, and to strengthen financial self-reliance within African universities. Institutions must find ways to resource themselves locally, reducing vulnerability to fluctuating international funding. The roundtable concluded with a reaffirmation that universities cannot remain on the sidelines—they must lead, convene, and innovate for societies in flux.

‘The future of higher education will be defined not by competition, but by the capacity to collaborate—equitably, creatively, and across borders.’

– Prof Daiji Kawaguchi

African universities remain heavily reliant on international funding, raising concerns of dependency.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Partnerships must be equitable, purpose-driven, and long-term.
- Universities must strengthen institutional capacity and financial self-reliance.
- Indigenous knowledge should be embedded within research and policy frameworks.
- The higher education sector must regain public trust by demonstrating its relevance to societal challenges.

CALL TO ACTION



Foster authentic, inclusive collaborations that empower African institutions, value indigenous knowledge, and build financial sustainability for universities to remain impactful in a rapidly changing world.



Plenary Session III: What Will it Take?

Speakers

Prof Loretta Feris, Vice-Principal: Academic, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Dr Phil Mjwara, Former Director-General, Department of Science and Innovation (South Africa), and Ambassador Designate of South Africa at UNESCO

Prof Steven Friedman, Research Professor, Faculty of Humanities, Politics Department, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Prof Baniyelme David Zoogah, Associate Professor, DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University, Canada

Moderator: Dr Heide Hackmann, Chair in Science Futures, Centre for Research in Evaluation, Science and Technology, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa



The plenary session titled ‘What Will it Take?’ challenged participants to confront the fundamental question that framed the entire week: what is required, both globally and in Africa, to address the interconnected crises and chart a path forward? Moderated by Dr Heide Hackmann, the panel focused on the foundational enablers—human rights, diplomacy, democracy, and cultural understanding.

Professor Loretta Feris examined the international human rights framework, noting that while the ideals are meant to hold the social fabric of society together, definitions and interpretations vary across regions. She cautioned that the United Nations’ political neutrality risks weakening this framework and allowing violations to go unchallenged. Prof Feris emphasised that civil society, researchers, and youth must play a stronger role in advancing evidence-based, accountable human rights governance.

Africa Week 2025: Day 3



**Plenary Session III:
What Will it Take?**

‘Civil society, researchers, and youth must play a stronger role in advancing evidence-based, accountable human rights governance.’

– Prof Loretta Feris

Ambassador Dr Phil Mjwara emphasised that leadership in post-colonial Africa cannot be trivialised—it is deeply intertwined with science, technology, and economic policy. He argued that strong leadership and democracy must coexist to advance Africa’s development, drawing lessons from history such as the Manhattan Project and Japan’s post-war recovery. Dr Mjwara called for Africa to build its own centres of excellence around critical minerals like cobalt, lithium, and manganese, and to strengthen science diplomacy so that scientists and ambassadors work together to shape geopolitical and economic agendas.

‘Leadership in politics, technology, and economics cannot be treated separately—they are interlinked, and we must learn to navigate this complex space.’

– Dr Phil Mjwara

Professor Steven Friedman provided a candid critique of democracy. He rejected the assumption that crises in democratic countries represent the failure of democracy itself. Instead, he said, the problem lies in the dominance of Western interpretations that are ill-fitted to African contexts. “Democracy is not a luxury,” Prof Friedman asserted. “It is essential.” For Africa, he argued, democracy must be redefined in its own terms, giving a voice to vulnerable groups while avoiding the pitfalls of elite capture.

Professor Baniyelme David Zoogah concluded with reflections on cultural understanding and dialogue as a global tool for building inclusive communities and fostering cooperation. He emphasised that genuine dialogue—grounded in empathy, listening, and mutual respect—is essential for global security and good governance. By embracing diversity and creating space for every voice, he argued, societies can transform tension into understanding and build bridges that allow people and nations to flourish together.

The closing discussion explored how Africa can strengthen self-determination and collective action. Audience questions centred on the continent’s dependence on external funding despite its natural wealth, and whether democracy should be tailored to African contexts. The panel responses highlighted leadership, governance reform, and investment in research, science, and education as critical enablers of sustainable development. The discussion also underscored the value of integrating African cultural systems into policy and decision-making.

In her closing remarks, Dr Hackmann reminded participants that past lessons are invaluable for navigating present challenges. The path forward, she argued, lies in collectivism, inclusive knowledge sharing, and leadership that bridges, not deepens, divides.

‘Past lessons and knowledge are key in understanding current challenges and their solutions.’

– Dr Heide Hackmann

Democracy in Africa is often misinterpreted through Western lenses, leading to rejection or distortion



KEY TAKEAWAYS



- The multilateral human rights system must be reinforced with impartial, evidence-driven institutions.
- Science diplomacy plays a crucial role in knowledge synthesis and national development.
- Democracy must be reclaimed as an African necessity, not a Western import.
- Cultural understanding and dialogue foster trust, cooperation, and inclusive societies.

CALL TO ACTION



Reclaim democracy’s true meaning, embed cultural dialogue in governance, and harness science and rights-based frameworks to drive Africa’s transformation.

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Plenary Session IV: What About Africa?

Speakers

Dr Thokozile Lewanika, Founder of DML45 Consulting and Executive Education Faculty at Henley Business School, South Africa

Prof Adam Habib, Vice-Chancellor, SOAS University of London (School of Oriental and African Studies), United Kingdom

Moderator: Ms Elma Akob, International MC and CEO of Elevate Africa Academy, South Africa

The final plenary of the Africa Week 2025 main summit brought the three-day-long conversations full circle, posing the most direct question of all: 'What about Africa?'. Moderated as an open dialogue between the audience and panellists, the session featured Professor Adam Habib and Dr Thokozile Lewanika.

Dr Lewanika opened with a candid reflection: after two days of rich, evidence-driven debates on health, food, climate, and economic security, everything felt urgent and essential. Yet, she asked, how do policymakers act when all issues are important, but resources are finite? "If I have one hundred rand to spend on security," she argued, "I cannot just put twenty rand everywhere. Where is the one place I can put eighty rand that creates a knock-on effect?" Her intervention challenged participants to think less about isolated domains and more about collective impact.

She also raised a difficult question of identity: what does "Africa" even mean? The continent is not homogenous, and any pan-African agenda must reconcile different starting points and interests. True progress, she insisted, requires that "common interest must supersede self-interest."



Africa Week 2025: Day 3



Plenary Session IV:
What About Africa?

Prof Habib responded by urging Africa to distinguish between grand visions and immediate crises. Picking up on themes from earlier panel discussions, he suggested that African leaders should identify a handful of urgent problems—such as satellite data access, HIV/AIDS clinic closures due to US PEPFAR aid cuts, and unsustainable debt—and develop concrete, time-bound solutions. “The way you change big things,” Prof Habib argued, “is by starting with small things that snowball into systemic change.”

‘We want to imbibe the experiences of the world, bring to it an African cosmological experience, and reinterpret it for humanity.’

– Prof Adam Habib

The conversation then widened to Africa’s leverage in the global system. Prof Habib drew lessons from China and Singapore: both integrated local cosmologies into modern innovation without treating indigenous knowledge as incompatible with nuclear reactors or artificial intelligence. Africa, he suggested, must do the same: blend its cosmologies with cutting-edge science to reimagine universal knowledge.

Dr Lewanika pressed the issue of political agency. While Africa is rich in critical minerals and natural resources, it continues to negotiate from a position of weakness. Too often, she noted, African leaders “show up as beggars” despite holding assets the world cannot do without. The problem, she insisted, is not just resource scarcity but waste, especially corruption. Quantifying and tackling corruption, she argued, could release more funds than Africa loses from shrinking international aid.

‘Africa is not a victim. Africa must tell its own victor story and demand the world respect it.’

– Dr Thokozile Lewanika

The discussion intensified around questions of accountability. Several audience members challenged a perceived “culture of victimhood”, insisting that exploitation persists not only because of external forces but because African leaders permit it—and citizens, in turn, tolerate it. “Africa has a lot of accountability,” one participant observed, “but it often stops at reporting without consequences.”

Youth and employment dominated the later exchanges. Dr Lewanika criticised tokenistic gestures such as 16 June commemorations that engage young people briefly but exclude them from real decision-making. She called for co-created solutions designed with the youth at the centre. Prof Habib echoed this, stressing that Africa’s demographic future could be either a dividend or a disaster: “Youth can be an asset if they have a future. Without it, they will be a liability.” He identified jobs, entrepreneurship, and innovation ecosystems as Africa’s most urgent priorities.

Immigration and brain drain also featured prominently in the discussion. Prof Habib highlighted the billions invested in training professionals like doctors, only to see them leave for work in Europe. He called for mechanisms to retain skills and mobilise resources—such as taxing mineral exports, creating continental levies, and negotiating global pacts to prevent illicit financial outflows.

The plenary closed with hard truths. Compensation from the Global North for Africa’s disproportionate climate burdens, Prof Habib argued, is unlikely: “Nobody is going to compensate us. The only way we get compensated is if we have leverage.” Dr Lewanika challenged universities and civil society to become sparks of transformation, reframing their purpose from knowledge creation to solution-making.

The session ended with a sense of urgency. As one audience member remarked, the week had yielded profound analyses of Africa’s challenges—but without concrete action involving governments, industry, and communities, the continent risks revisiting the same discussions year after year.

Africa spends only 0.5% of GDP on R&D.



Conclusion

Across the two main plenary days, 41 speakers and moderators from 18 countries shaped discussions on Africa's role in global security.



The Africa Week 2025 main summit concluded with a question that underpinned every dialogue: 'What about Africa?' Over three days of debate and reflection, leaders and experts outlined both the challenges and the opportunities that will define the continent's future.

- **Where are we at?** Africa faces intersecting insecurities: climate disruption, fragile food systems, underfunded health care, weak research sovereignty, economic dependency, and persistent inequality.
- **What is at stake?** The costs of inaction are severe: lost generations of youth, depleted natural resources, greater vulnerability to global crises, and diminished bargaining power in international arenas.
- **What will it take?** Political agency, bold reforms, stronger research and innovation systems, accountable leadership, and the mobilisation of Africa's greatest assets—its people, its knowledge, and its resources.
- **What about Africa?** The future must be authored by Africans themselves, through unapologetic agency, collaboration, and the courage to set priorities that deliver systemic impact.

Africa Week 2025 reaffirmed that dialogue is only powerful when it drives action.

The conversations held provided not just reflection, but direction—a collective mandate to translate commitments into measurable progress. The task ahead is to sustain this momentum and ensure that the outcomes of Africa Week become living frameworks for transformation across the continent.



Stakeholder recommendations: From dialogue to action

Africa Week 2025 called for decisive action. Moving from reflection to implementation requires every sector to act with purpose and accountability. The following tangible actions emerged across the week's discussions:

Policymakers

- Prioritise catalytic reforms in youth employment, anti-corruption, and climate adaptation, directing resources where they yield the greatest systemic impact.
- Establish coalitions of willing states to lead on continental priorities and implement AU frameworks at scale.
- Enforce accountability mechanisms that include real consequences for corruption, mismanagement, and policy inaction.
- Leverage Africa's natural assets—from minerals to markets—as strategic bargaining tools in global negotiations.
- Invest in human capital, ensuring inclusive education, healthcare, and social protection policies that place youth and women at the centre.

Academia

- Reorient research agendas towards solutions-driven, transdisciplinary work co-created with government, industry, and communities.
- Embed implementation pathways into research design to ensure outputs translate into policies, products, and impact.
- Integrate indigenous and local knowledge systems into scientific inquiry and curricula.

- Build innovation ecosystems by supporting incubators, start-ups, and access to risk capital for student entrepreneurs.
- Negotiate equitable international partnerships that strengthen African institutions rather than extract from them.

Civil society and communities

- Mobilise citizens through evidence-based advocacy that links research findings to public demand for accountability.
- Amplify marginalised voices, especially those of women, youth, the elderly, and rural communities.
- Translate policy debates into accessible, locally relevant narratives that inspire action at community level.
- Co-create solutions with academia and government to ensure reforms address lived realities and local priorities.

Private sector and industry

- Invest in commercialising African research and scaling home-grown innovations.
- Partner with universities to co-develop curricula, mentorship programmes, and internships that align skills with industry needs.
- Adopt inclusive business models that create shared value, retain profits in Africa, and promote fair wages and local ownership.
- Expand domestic manufacturing in critical sectors to reduce import dependency and create jobs.
- Channel corporate investment into green technologies and sustainable infrastructure.

Youth and diaspora

- Empower youth as decision-makers, not only programme beneficiaries, through representation in policy design and governance forums.
- Expand youth entrepreneurship funds and mobility programmes across regions.
- Establish structured diaspora networks to transfer expertise, mentorship, and investment back into African systems.
- Champion innovation and leadership programmes that equip youth to address challenges in climate, health, and digital transformation.

Intergovernmental organisations

- Strengthen continental frameworks for climate finance, trade, health security, and digital sovereignty.
- Develop mechanisms to curb illicit financial flows and reinvest recovered funds into science, education, and innovation.
- Enhance coordination between the African Union, regional economic communities, and member states to avoid duplication and ensure alignment with Agenda 2063.
- Negotiate equitable partnerships that prioritise African agency and shared benefit.

Media

- Reframe Africa's narrative around agency, innovation, and leadership rather than deficit and dependency.
- Translate complex policy and research into accessible, engaging storytelling that informs and inspires public action.
- Hold leaders accountable through investigative journalism and consistent reporting on implementation progress.
- Highlight local success stories to shift global perceptions and reinforce Africa's confidence in its capacity to lead.





'BIG IDEAS' FROM THE DIALOGUE

Africa Week 2025 generated bold ideas and transformative insights about Africa's place in the world. The following "big ideas" represent the shifts in mindset needed to drive systemic change:

1. From victim to victor

Africa must move beyond framing itself as disproportionately affected by global crises, to positioning itself as indispensable to global solutions. The Congo Basin, Africa's mineral wealth, and its youthful population are not liabilities, they are leverage.

2. Collective agency, not fragmented action

Continental change will not come from every country working alone. It requires common interests that supersede self-interest, driven by a coalition of states with the political will to lead.

3. Youth at the centre, not the sidelines

With the fastest-growing youth population in the world, Africa's future depends on giving young people not only jobs but agency in shaping economies, democracies, and research agendas.

4. Indigenous knowledge as innovation

African cosmologies and indigenous knowledge systems are not mutually exclusive to modern science. As China has shown, traditional and modern approaches can be integrated to fuel innovation and global competitiveness.

5. Accountability with consequences

Reporting without consequences perpetuates corruption and weak governance. True accountability means citizens must demand results and hold leaders responsible for delivery.

6. Research as action, not abstraction

Universities must shift from producing graduates to producing solutions. Research is not just about knowledge creation but about directly improving lives and shaping policy.

7. Leverage through value, not aid

Africa must stop showing up as a beggar. By asserting the true value of its resources, minerals, markets, and people can negotiate partnerships on equal terms.

8. Implementation, not endless debate

Dialogue is important, but it must lead to action. Industry, government, and academia must co-create case studies, pilots, and models that can be scaled.

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We are deeply grateful to our distinguished speakers, moderators, and panellists—more than 40 leaders from 18 countries—who shared their insights and inspired new ways of thinking about Africa's role in global security.

A special thank you to the Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, and institutional leaders from across Africa and the world who joined the dialogues, reaffirming the power of universities and research institutions to drive transformation.

We thank the delegates and participants, from researchers, academics, policymakers, and diplomats to civil society leaders, media, and students, whose active engagement and contributions enriched every session.

Finally, we acknowledge the dedication of the Future Africa organising and events team and their counterparts at the University of Pretoria for their tireless efforts in planning, hosting, and documenting Africa Week 2025.

To all who contributed, thank you for helping make Africa Week 2025 a platform for bold ideas, collaboration, and change.







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