



PROGRAMME

FUTURE AFRICA, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA'S LAUNCH OF THE LANCET COUNTDOWN AFRICA REGIONAL CENTRE

Date: 16 March 2026

Venue: Auditorium, Future Africa Campus, University of Pretoria

Time: 14h00-17h00

13:15 – 14:00 | Welcome and Registration

14:00 – 16:00 | Main programme

<i>Opening and Welcome</i>	Prof Wanda Markotter	Interim Director, Future Africa, University of Pretoria (<i>Programme director</i>)
<i>Remarks</i>	Prof Francis Petersen	Vice Chancellor and Principal, University of Pretoria
	Dr Marina Romanello	Executive Director, Lancet Countdown (<i>Virtual</i>)
	Dr Nana Boaduo	Director, Research Chairs and Centres of Excellence: National Research Foundation of South Africa
	Prof Brama Koné	Technical Officer, Climate Change and Health, World Health Organisation African Regional Office (<i>Virtual</i>)
	Dr Githinji Gitahi	Group Chief Executive Officer, Amref Health Africa. Board Member, Lancet Countdown (<i>Virtual</i>)
<i>Keynote</i>	Prof Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi	Director, Lancet Countdown Africa Regional Centre
<i>Closing Remarks</i>	Prof Sunil Maharaj	Vice Principal: Research Innovation and Postgraduate Education, University of Pretoria

16:00 – 17:00 | Networking Cocktail | Outside the Auditorium

SPEAKERS

(Listed in order of appearance in the programme)



Professor Wanda Markotter is the Interim Director and Research Chair: People, Health, and Places (One Health) at Future Africa, University of Pretoria. She also serves as Director of the Centre for Viral Zoonoses (UP-CVZ) in the Faculty of Health Sciences and holds the DSTI-NRF South African Research Chair in Infectious Diseases of Animals (Zoonoses). Her inter and transdisciplinary research focuses on bat pathogens and predicting and preventing spillover risks in Africa. Prof Markotter is Co-Chair of the One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP), advising the WHO, WOAHA, FAO, and UNEP and part of The Lancet Commission on Prevention of Spillover. Outputs include over 100 publications, keynote presentations at prominent international conferences, several popular press and education contributions and articles, and appearances on radio and television. She contributes significantly to capacity building; more than 75 post-graduate students have graduated under her supervision.



Professor Francis Petersen is a visionary leader in the South African higher education sector and the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria. He has previously held esteemed positions as Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the Free State and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Cape Town. Prof Petersen holds a PhD in Engineering from Stellenbosch University. His international speaking engagements include prominent conferences worldwide, contributing to the global discourse on higher education and research. Currently, he is the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Universities South Africa (USAf).



Dr Marina Romanello is an Associate Professor at University College London and the Executive Director of the Lancet Countdown: Tracking Progress on Health and Climate Change. The Lancet Countdown is an independent and multi-disciplinary research collaboration between over 100 academic centres and UN organisations from around the world, in strategic partnership with WHO, and headquartered at University College London's Institute for Global Health. Dr Romanello is a member of the UK's Climate Change Adaptation Committee and is one of the seven global experts selected to refine the Global Goal on Adaptation indicators for health under the Paris Agreement. In 2025, she was appointed an honorary member of the UK Faculty of Public Health. Dr Romanello trained as a clinical biochemist at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and holds a PhD in biomedical sciences from the University of Cambridge. Her research background spans from toxicology through to environmental health and climate change, and before joining the Lancet Countdown, she carried out her research in the Instituto Tecnológico de Buenos Aires at the University of Cambridge, and the Francis Crick Institute in London, UK.



Dr Nana Boaduo is the Director of the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) at the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa. He is a natural scientist with extensive training in biological sciences. He has worked with international funding agencies, including the British Academy, the British Council, the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, and the German Aerospace Centre, on various funding initiatives. Dr Boaduo joined the National Research Foundation in 2014 as a Professional Officer in the Strategic Investments, Innovation and Impact Department, formerly the Research Chairs and Centres of Excellence Directorate. In this role, he was responsible for managing the Centres of Excellence and aligned centres. Before joining the NRF, Dr Boaduo served as a senior technical officer and lecturer in the Biology Department at the former University of Limpopo, Medunsa Campus, now Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. He is a member of several professional bodies and obtained his master's degree with distinction in Paraclinical Sciences from the University of Pretoria, where he was also conferred with a PhD in 2014.



Professor Brama Koné is a Technical Officer for Climate Change and Health at the World Health Organization (WHO) African Regional Office in Brazzaville. With postgraduate training in Sanitary Engineering, a university diploma in Epidemiology, and a PhD in Environmental Epidemiology with a focus on water and health, he has over twenty years of experience spanning policy development, research, training, and programme implementation across Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), public health, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. He has served as an Associate Professor in Sanitary Engineering within the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) and has taught and conducted research at universities in Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Mauritania, Togo, and Senegal. His professional background also includes leading research projects at the Swiss Centre for Scientific Research in Côte d'Ivoire and serving as Deputy Director for Research Development and Programmes at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Côte d'Ivoire. Prof Koné's areas of interest include public health and WASH, climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, and the epidemiology of waterborne and vector-borne diseases. His technical expertise spans policy support and advisory services, research and programme management, monitoring and evaluation, epidemiological study design and implementation, environmental and social impact assessments, waste management, drinking water supply, and GPS-based geographic surveys.



Dr Githinji Gitahi, MBS, joined Amref Health Africa in 2015 and has held various roles across the health, media, and private sectors. Prior to joining Amref, he served as Vice President and Regional Director for Africa at Smile Train International. Dr Gitahi is a renowned leader on both global and regional fronts, with notable achievements, including co-chairing the global UHC2030 movement and serving on the Commission on Africa's COVID-19 Response. He previously served on the Governing Board of Africa CDC and the Board of the National Cancer Institute. Additionally, he is the Co-Chair of the Strategic Advocacy Committee for PMNCH and serves on the Board of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the Board of Trustees of the Safaricom Foundation, the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement Lead Group, and the Board of Food for Education. He also serves on the Independent Board of the Lancet Countdown. Dr Gitahi is a vocal advocate for pro-poor Universal Health Coverage and leads the largest thought leadership convening on the African health agenda.



Professor Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi is a globally recognised researcher, boundary spanner, and science advocate working at the interface of science, policy, and society to address complex climate and sustainability challenges. He serves as Director of the Lancet Countdown Africa Regional Centre, where he leads efforts to strengthen the evidence base on climate change and health across Africa and advance policy-relevant research to support climate-resilient development. His work applies systems approaches to interconnected water, energy, food, environmental, and health systems, generating actionable evidence to inform decision-making and practical solutions for climate and development challenges. Professor Mabhaudhi is Professor of Climate Change, Food Systems and Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Lead for the Water–Energy–Food–Environment Nexus at the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH). He is also Director of the Institute of Natural Resources in South Africa and holds extraordinary professorships at the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Pretoria and the University of KwaZulu-Natal.



Professor Sunil Maharaj has served as the Vice-Principal for Research, Innovation, and Postgraduate Education at the University of Pretoria since August 2022. Prior to this, he was the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment, and Information Technology from 2014 to 2022. With over 33 years of experience spanning industry, academia, and consulting, Prof Maharaj is a registered professional engineer with the Engineering Council of South Africa. He is a distinguished fellow of several prestigious institutions, including the South African Academy of Engineering. In 2021, he was elected Chair of the Global Engineering Deans Council, becoming the first African to hold this position. Prof Maharaj's research expertise lies in 5G cognitive radio sensor networks, OFDM-MIMO systems, and edge computing. His significant contributions to rural broadband and fifth-generation communication technologies earned him the distinction of being the first African to receive an Honorary Doctorate of Philosophy from Malmö University, Sweden. This honour recognises his ground-breaking work on reliable communication technologies for underserved, remote regions in sub-Saharan Africa.

FUTURE AFRICA – A unique pan African platform

Who We Are

Future Africa is the University of Pretoria's collaborative research platform. Established in 2019, our purpose is to develop and unleash the transformative potential of all sciences to inform and support a future of thriving African societies. We are committed to driving profound systemic transformations of societies towards equitable and sustainable futures, and of the role of science in securing those futures.

The Future Africa campus provides a dynamic living and learning environment with research, conferencing, and accommodation facilities that foster interaction and engagement.

What We Focus On

Future Africa acts in broadly defined Challenge Domains, where our Research Chairs lead programmes aligned with four strategic objectives:

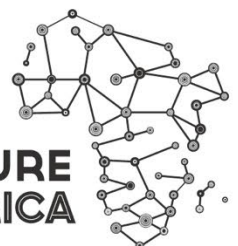
1. Leading transformative research in and for Africa
2. Developing Africa's transformative research leadership capacities
3. Building transformative global partnerships for African research
4. Fostering a culture of dialogue and action for change in African research



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