

THE YOUNG ACADEMY MOVEMENT

CTHB MEMBER PLAYS A LEADING ROLE IN THE GLOBAL YOUNG ACADEMY AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN YOUNG ACADEMY OF SCIENCE (SAYAS)

In tracing the development and establishment of the Global Young Academy (GYA) and South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS), it is necessary to sketch some background leading to the launching of these bodies in 2010 and 2011, respectively.

In 2000 a new type of organization of scientists, Die Junge Akademie (the Young Academy) was created as a joint venture by two German academies. This Young Academy was described as “an organization intended to harness the resources of both academies in ways that would fertilize research fields with new ideas and bolster career pathways, as well as invigorate older academies by involving the young scientific community in critical policy-related work”. In 2005 a similar Young Academy was established in the Netherlands. The success of these two experiments recently inspired six other nations to create their own Young Academies: Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan, Thailand and Uganda, all nations where the tolerance and rationality inherent to science will be invaluable. The Global Young Academy (GYA) was created in 2010, which seeks to provide a voice to young scientists on international issues that interface with science.



Founding members of the Global Young Academy

Bruce Alberts in his Editorial in *Science* (Vol 332, 15 April 2011) says that “I saw this empowerment of young scientists as the next step in the process that began in 1993 when the national academies of sciences from more than 60 nations came together in New Delhi to develop a coherent scientific position on world population issues in preparation for the major 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. This soon created the Inter-Academy Panel (IAP) now a vibrant global network of more than 100 member academies. The IAP functions as a mutual support organization for the existing science academies around the world. But the empowerment of national science academies with distinguished, well-established members can leave a gap between these influential organizations and the young, dynamic scientists who represent the future in each nation. This is precisely the gap that has been filled by the Young Academies: each a group of fewer than 200 scientists, typically selected by their national science academies to serve in 4-year leadership roles. Through its connection to a prestigious national science academy, each Young Academy is empowered to exert national leadership in advancing science through projects that the young scientist themselves determine. These young scientists can often be more effective than their older peers in interactions with society and with politicians. They also bring new energy to these interactions with a better gender balance due to the advances that women scientists have made in recent decades”.

In 2010 Prof Bernard Slippers represented the young scientists of South Africa at the inaugural meeting in Berlin of the new international Global Young Academy. He was elected as an executive committee member at this meeting, and subsequently in 2011 as co-chair of the GYA. The GYA is described as “an organisation intended to harness the resources in ways that will fertilize research

fields with new ideas and bolster career pathways, as well as invigorate older academies by involving the young scientific community in critical policy-related work”.

South African scientists had been represented by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), which was inaugurated in May 1996 and formed in response to the need for an Academy of Science consonant with the dawn of democracy in South Africa. Its mission is to use science for the benefit of society, with a mandate encompassing all fields of scientific enquiry in a seamless way, and including in its ranks the full diversity of South Africa’s distinguished scientists. An act of parliament (Act 67 of 2001), which came into operation on 15 May 2002, made ASSAf the official Academy of Science of South Africa, recognised by government and representing South Africa in the international community of science academies.

With support from GYA members and a group of South African young scientists, ASSAf also started working on the establishment of a Young Academy of Science for South Africa in 2010. On 27 September 2011 a group of 20 founding members of the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS) were inaugurated by the Deputy Minister of Science and Technology, Mr Derek Hanekom during the launch of SAYAS. Prof Bernard Slippers of FABI is to be congratulated on being one of the young scientists chosen to be one of the 20 founding members of this new Academy. He serves as an ad-hoc member of the executive committee of SAYAS. Bernard is also a Young Affiliate of TWAS (Academy of Science of the Developing World) and was awarded the inaugural AU-TWAS Young Scientist’s National Award by ASSAf in 2011.



Founding members of the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS).