

One Year Gone ... another one Ahead

AfAS Message for the New Year 2022

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It is one more year for Africa to say farewell to, with its lot of progress and accomplishments, but also its drawbacks and tragedies, the least of which being that so many countries in our continent are in a standstill mode, while the World is advancing at a fast pace. Africa indeed didn't globally fare well in this past year as it witnessed political instability and economical under-performance. It also witnessed a severe drought with its tragic human consequences in vast regions like the Sahel, possibly spurred by climate change inherited from the past industrial revolutions.

Now, the fourth industrial revolution is going on at the World level enabled by extraordinary technology advances which is already transforming business, economics, and society. It gets boosted by AI (Artificial intelligence), VR (Virtual reality) and AR (Augmented reality), IoT (Internet of things), but it will only benefit fully societies which are ready for it. The African footprint in digital economy is still negligible. All this is threatening to leave us and most of the Third World countries behind, and creates an irremediable fracture and a two-speed World.



Nobody knows of what tomorrow will be made of, and what "bright future" some are talking about, but if past and contemporary history is any indication, nothing much will change under the Sun globally save the appearances, and sophisticated hypocrisy that will be put forth by the powerful, be governments or big business. An ominous sign being that while the pandemic is hitting hard and that it is in everyone's best interest that **all** the World be vaccinated, our continent is by far the least vaccinated one with a low 7% rate, people in many countries are selfishly getting their fourth shot. Injustice and large scale oppression of peoples, of linguistic, cultural and religious minorities won't stop. The ever going battle between good and evil, truth and

falsehood will go unabated. Fake news will become more trivialized while increasing in sophistication.

Africa, the second largest region in the World with its 1.4 billion inhabitants, will need to take its destiny in its own hands and connect to the World in the making. We see unshakable forces moving on here and there, youth, women and men, striving to change the reality on the ground. Profound changes will have to take place to face those formidable challenges facing us.

Astronomy, the science of the heavens, is faring relatively well on our continent as it is yearning to be a beacon for science advance. Deciphering the Cosmos while working to play the role of a science enabler and even seeking socio-economical side benefits is the name of the game, and AfAS is endeavoring to be the proud midwife in this process. Big projects like the Square Kilometer Array (SKA), the African VLBI, HESS, SALT (Google them!), the Africa Millimetre Telescope (AMT), and a vision of integrating the various optical facilities are slated to be turned into reality.

And now our wish list for Africa for the New Year 2022:

- More peace and justice, and less conflicts, political instability and poverty
- More sustainable and fair economic development
- More youth involvement, women and men, in the management of public affairs
- More democracy, freedom and good governance at the global level
- Increased awareness of the formidable challenges facing us and the risk of marginalization of our continent
- More feeling of unity for our continent to be translated into common actions for better social, political and economic integration.

