



Background Information

The South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS) was launched in Pretoria on Tuesday, 27 September 2011. The Deputy Minister of Science and Technology, Mr Derek Hanekom, inaugurated twenty leading young scientists as Founder Members of SAYAS. The group was selected from among the best scientific minds in South Africa and represents a diverse range of talent in terms of race, gender and scientific discipline.

SAYAS was borne out of the need for young scientists to contribute towards solutions to the important national and global challenges facing society. It will represent the voice of young scientists on national and international issues and give them a platform to influence policy decisions. It is envisaged that SAYAS would become one of the apex advisory structures to government on science and policy matters, along with the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), the SA National Council on Innovation and the Council for Higher Education, amongst other national institutions.

SAYAS also aims to contribute towards the development of scientific capacity in South Africa through mentoring and role-modeling of future scientists, and by fostering opportunities for interdisciplinary collaborations between young scientists. In particular, it will bridge the gap between the more senior and well-established ASSAf and the younger scientists who represent future leaders in their fields, but are not part of ASSAf. SAYAS will further promote science awareness among learners, young scientists and society in general. At a global level, SAYAS will link up with the Global Young Academy of sciences to provide opportunities for South African young scientists to interact internationally with other young scientists.

Recognising the importance of establishing a forum for younger scientists, ASSAf and the Department of Science and Technology approved the formation of SAYAS and have provided support for turning the concept into a reality.