



DRAFT ABBC 2025 LUSAKA DECLARATION AND CALL TO ACTION

Africa Biennial Biosciences Communication Symposium
(ABBC 2025) - 6th Edition

August 26 - 28, 2025

Lusaka, Zambia

*The War on Science: How Can We Overcome the Burden of
Misinformation and Disinformation?*

We, the delegates of the 6th Africa Biennial Biosciences Communication Symposium (ABBC 2025), gathered in Lusaka, Zambia, from August 26-28, 2025 marking the 10th year since inception. The ABBC symposium is an African-led, Africa-based platform enabling the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and solutions to advance effective communication on bio-innovations across the continent and globally.

Drawn from crops and livestock research, environment and ecosystem health, public health, One Health, communication, media, information technology, academia, policy and legislation, regional economic blocs, the private sector and grassroots communities, we came together to deliberate the urgent and complex challenge of misinformation and disinformation in science. Under the theme '*The War on Science: How Can We Overcome the Burden of Misinformation and Disinformation?*', we examined how this challenge continues to impact Africa's development trajectory.

We hereby:

1. *Note with deep concern* that falsehoods continue to undermine public trust, delaying innovation uptake, and compromising livelihoods. Africa's progress in climate-smart agriculture, livestock improvement, pandemic prevention and response, and One Health interventions is at risk if the spread of misinformation and disinformation remains unchecked.
2. *Recognize* that scientific facts alone are insufficient to change perceptions. Proactively leveraging culturally sensitive messaging and platforms, digital and AI tools, as well as anchoring science within lived experiences through storytelling are indispensable strategies to bridge the gap between evidence and public understanding.
3. *Acknowledge* that existence of silos among researchers, policymakers, communicators and community leaders hinders coordinated approach to tackling misinformation and disinformation, often resulting in conflicting messages and lack of a unified voice. Overcoming this divide requires intentional collaboration and shared responsibility.
4. *Note with concern* the slow pace in which cutting-edge communication tools are integrated within science communication efforts in research and academia.
5. *Further recognize* the pressing challenges of population pressure, low yields, pest and disease pressures, climate change, high input costs, and misuse of crop protection products and antimicrobials. Misinformation and disinformation continue to obstruct access to effective solutions. We affirm that innovations, that are context-specific and

grounded in local ownership, provide the most credible and sustainable pathway to adoption, trust-building, and transformation.

6. *Observe* that African scientists who record breakthroughs in vaccine discovery and other innovations in agriculture and human health are increasingly subjected to public attacks, and reputational harm driven by misperceptions and disinformation campaigns. This is a serious issue requiring urgent measures to safeguard these scientists and uphold the integrity of their work.
7. *Affirm* the media as a vital partner in addressing misinformation and disinformation, and in strengthening public confidence in innovations that shape agriculture, environmental sustainability, and human health.
8. *Commend* the efforts of member states and regional bodies such as the East African Legislative Assembly and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and other relevant sector players in the fight against misinformation and disinformation. The establishment of the COMESA Panel of Experts on Biotechnology and Biosafety, for example is a significant step towards ensuring evidence-based decision making.

CALL TO ACTION

9. We call for collective action as follows:
 - 9.1. We urge the strengthening of **African-led engagement initiatives and dialogue platforms** to enhance science outreach, foster trust in science, technology and innovation (ST&I), and adopt a more robust approach to combating entrenched misinformation and disinformation within communities.
 - 9.2. We call on African research institutions to **mainstream science communication** as a core function in research and innovation to ensure messages are clear, culturally relevant and accessible through the most current communication platforms.
 - 9.3. We further call upon institutions of higher learning to **incorporate science communication modules** that support effective science reporting and strategic science communication.
 - 9.4. We advocate for strengthening of **existing multi-stakeholder, trans-disciplinary, multi-sectoral dialogue platforms** to break silos, foster regular inter-institutional dialogue, and implement joint communication strategies.

- 9.5. We commit to work with member states, regional bodies, including COMESA, SADC, ECOWAS, EAC to **establish a think-tank** that rapidly responds to contentious issues by upholding harmonized scientific guidance.
- 9.6. We recommend co-development of a **digital reference point** for commonly used scientific terminologies to improve clarity, policy coherence, and public understanding.
- 9.7. We propose development of **communication toolkits for misinformation and disinformation sensing** that incorporate storytelling, visuals, culturally sensitive messaging to make science relatable and actionable.
- 9.8. We call for establishment of **clear protocols to safeguard breakthroughs** by African scientists and protect them (our scientists) from victimization and discrimination.
- 9.9. We call upon African governments to **increase investment in ST&I** by leveraging the Kampala Declaration and other regional and global protocols and initiatives that promote sustainable financing and self-reliance.
- 9.10. Further, we call on partners to **invest in advanced fact-checking systems** powered by natural language processing and artificial intelligence to counter misinformation and disinformation in real-time.

Adopted on the 28th day of August 2025, in Lusaka, Zambia, by **150** delegates representing **21** countries participating in the 6th Africa Biennial Biosciences Communication Symposium (ABBC 2025).