

Title & Authors:

**African Leadership in Brain Diplomacy: The Yaoundé Declaration Advances the Global Brain Economy Playbook for Better Brain Health**

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**Abstract** (Word count: 250)

Africa, the world's second-largest continent is home to 1.5 billion people, accounting for nearly 20% of the global population, (60% under age 25). By 2050, Africa's population will be 2.5 billion, and by 2035, [more young Africans will be entering the workforce](#) each year than in the rest of the world combined. Africa also hosts a rich social, cultural, and geopolitical diversity across its 5 geopolitical zones covering 54 countries. It is the most genetically, culturally, and linguistically diverse region on the planet. However, Africa's contribution to the global economy could be more significant if it urgently embraces the brain economy and leads in the development of new methodologies and approaches which can be exported around the world.

In this paper, we explain our strategy to advance the Yaoundé Declaration for the Brain Economy, Brain Health, and Brain Capital. The Declaration has been endorsed by Cameroon's President, His Excellency Paul Biya, and demonstrates African leadership in global brain and society innovations, laying out a roadmap for how Africa can outcompete other economies by deftly deploying brain science-inspired policies and investments. We outline a new economic approach for African jobs, economic growth, sustainability, resilience, health, and well-being.

The brain economy offers a broader framework than the current sustainable development goals (SDG) agenda. The Yaoundé Declaration is trans-disciplinary and cross-cutting across sectors: 32 sitting members of government from different sectors having co-authored this paper. It aligns with many aspects of the [United Nations Pact for the Future](#) and can accelerate the SDG.

## **Introduction**

Economists and central banks around the world are struggling to navigate our modern economy. Christine Lagard, president of the European Central Bank, noted at the 2023 US Reserve Bank's symposium that there is no playbook for the changing and complex global economy [1]. One year later, Jerome Powell, US Federal Reserve Bank Board Chair, noted at the same symposium, that global bankers and economists are at the limits of their knowledge and he called for humility and a questioning spirit focused on learning lessons from the past and applying them flexibly to current societal challenges [2].

We believe the brain-positive economic transformation, aka brain economy, provides a constructive model for global economies and societies [3]. We highlight in this paper the passage of the Yaoundé Declaration for the Brain Economy, Brain Health, and Brain Capital (henceforth referred to as "The Yaoundé Declaration") through the first African High-Level Summit on the Brain Economy, Brain Health, and Brain Capital, under the patronage of the President of Cameroon, His Excellency Paul Biya [4]. Importantly, Cameroon has assumed the presidency of the 79<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

The Yaoundé Declaration is a call on global, regional and national stakeholders to engage in the urgent journey of transitioning from a brain-unhealthy to a brain-healthy economic paradigm, that would promote brain health and thus build brain capital, for a healthier world and its populations, as well as a healthier planet.

Further, the Yaoundé Declaration is timely given the recent adoption by consensus on September 22, 2024, of the Pact for the Future (which includes a Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations) by the 193 member countries of the UNGA during the Summit of the Future [5]. The Yaoundé Declaration is cross-cutting across sectors and can integrate and align to many aspects of the Pact for the Future and can accelerate sustainable development goal (SDG) progress [6]. The brain economy offers a broader framework than that of the current SDG agenda and can orchestrate a socioeconomic transformation. It brings together several policy fields with the objective of focusing on cognitive and emotional skills, as well as brain health, encompassing mental health. Brain capital connects and fuses disciplines (i.e., it is transdisciplinary) and, hence, offers them a unique common goal for collaboration. The Yaoundé Declaration cuts across various sectors such as the economy, health, education, energy, climate crisis, digital transitions and artificial intelligence, policy, and diplomacy, just to name a few. The Yaoundé Declaration is about the future of humanity and our planet and highlights that the future begins now, suggesting urgency in the actionable derivatives of the Declaration, such as the Pact for the Future.

Finally, an example of how Africa could out-compete other economies using brain science-inspired policies as proposed in The Declaration could be found in a number of core areas: 1) it places our brains as central drivers of economic productivity, wellbeing, and social cohesion and prioritizes investment in them, 2) it emphasizes non-price interactions such as social relationships and trust, which typical economies don't value, 3) it centralizes technological and social innovations as key to economic growth and change versus typical economies which view these as mysterious, unpredictable and external forces.

### **Brain Health is Essential for Smooth Economic Transitions**

Optimal brain health is essential to enabling major global skill-intensive economic transitions, such as the bio-economy, green, care economy, and digital transitions [7]. The care economy transition focuses on recognizing and investing in care services and care work as essential for economic growth and social well-being. The green transition involves shifting towards environmentally sustainable and fairer societies to combat climate change and environmental degradation. The digital transition aims to unlock digital growth potential and deploy innovative solutions for businesses and citizens, and to improve the accessibility and efficiency of services. The bioeconomy transition refers to the shift towards an economy based on products, services and processes derived from biological resources, such as plants and microorganisms. Brain capital is a critical economic asset for the success of economies of the future; it encompasses brain health and brain skills. The brain economy transformation from a brain-negative (brain-unhealthy) economy, which depletes brain capital, to a brain-positive (brain-healthy) economy, which arrests and reverses the loss of brain capital, will be foundational to these major transitions.

Advancing the brain economy is urgent. One in three people will experience a neurological disorder, and nearly one in two will face a mental disorder at some point in their lives [11, 12].

Women and those in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) are disproportionately affected [13, 14]. Nearly two trillion US dollars are spent annually on brain and mental disorders globally, increasing by approximately five percent each year [15]. This all comes at a time when the workplace demands analytical thinking, creativity, and resilience [16], and our nations urgently need more advanced skills to push vital economic transitions - such as the digital and green transitions [7].

In this paper, we explain our strategy to advance the Yaoundé Declaration for the Brain Economy, Brain Health, and Brain Capital. This is a timely opportunity to advance African and Global South leadership on a major global public policy stage.

### **Scientific Technical Meeting:**

On World Brain Day 2024, July 22nd, the Scientific Technical Meeting of the African High-Level Science Summit was held and the Yaoundé Declaration on Brain Economy, Brain Health & Brain Capital was approved and launched. See figure 1.

Figure 1: The Scientific Technical Meeting, 22 July 2024 (World Brain Day), Yaoundé



The Scientific Technical Meeting of the African High-level Science Summit was organized by the Brain Research Africa Initiative and was part of the Brain Week in Cameroon & Africa [4, 17].

Co-organizers included the Brain Capital Alliance, the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association, the Neuro-Policy Program of Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, Rice University, the Neuroscience Institute at The University of Cape Town, the Continental Association of African Neurosurgical Societies, The African Academy of Sciences, The Society of Cameroonian Neurologists and The Cameroon Academy of Sciences. In Appendix 1 we note members of the Scientific Technical Committee.

The event was hybrid with diverse national, regional, and global stakeholders from health, economics, and policy. Virtual stakeholders were representatives from major neuroscience/brain health associations, universities, and companies. See Box 1 for an overview of the agenda for the Scientific Technical Meeting.

**Box 1: Agenda for the Scientific Technical Meeting**

**African High-Level Science Summit on Brain Economy, Brain Health & Brain Capital**

**Agenda: 22/07/2024**

<b>Opening Ceremony</b>		
Welcome and presentation of meeting agenda	Dr. Leonard Ngarka	(5 min)
National Anthem of Cameroon (Saxophone performance)	Dr Wepnyu Yembe	(3 min)
Welcome Greetings: BRAIN Founder-CEO (Cameroon/Switzerland)	Prof. Alfred K. Njamnshi	(6 min)
<b>Presentations from BRAIN Partners (Chairs: Prof. Alfred K. Njamnshi &amp; Prof. Harris A. Eyre)</b>		
President: World Federation of Neurology (Austria)	Prof Wolfgang Grisold	(3 min)
Emeritus President: World Federation of Neurology (Canada)	Prof. Vladimir Hachinski	(3 min)
Executive Director: International Brain Research Organisation (France)	Dr. Lars Kristiansen	(3 min)
President: International League Against Epilepsy (UK)	Prof. Helen Cross	(3 min)
Founder-Chairman: Davos Alzheimer's Collaborative (Switzerland)	Mr. George Vradsenburg	(3 min)
Head of Mental Health, Wellcome Trust (UK)	Prof. Miranda Wolpert	(3 min)
Fellow: Malaysian Academy of Sciences (Malaysia)	Prof. Jafri Malin Abdullah	(3 min)
Head: National Task Force on Brain Health (India)	Prof. Rajinder K. Dhamija	(3 min)
President: Institute of Cognitive Neurology & Foundation INECO (Argentina)	Prof. Facundo Manes	(3 min)
Secretary General: Society of Neuroscientists of Africa (Kenya)	Prof. Sadiq Yusuf	(3 min)
Institute for Health Metrics & Evaluation-University of Washington (USA/Ghana)	Dr. Angela Esi Apeagyei	(3 min)
Founder-President: Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (Spain/Morocco)	Prof. Rym Ayadi	(3 min)
President: Continental Association of African Neurosurgical Societies (Nigeria)	Prof. Bello B. Shehu	(3 min)
Director: Neuroscience Institute, University of Cape Town (South Africa)	Prof. Graham Fieggen	(3 min)
President: Cameroon Academy of Sciences (Cameroon):	Prof. B. Sammy Chumbow	(3 min)
<b>Plenary presentations (Moderators: Prof. Bello Shehu &amp; Prof. Graham Fieggen)</b>		
Brain Health: "Out of Africa – for the World"	Prof. Alfred K. Njamnshi (CMR)	(15 min)
The Brain Economy and Brain Capital	Prof. Harris A. Eyre (USA/Australia)	(15 min)
Discussions	Plenary	(10 min)
Presentation of Draft & Discussions:	Prof. Alfred K. Njamnshi	(45 min)

The Yaoundé Declaration on Brain Economy, Brain Health & Brain Capital	& Prof. Harris A. Eyre	
Closing Remarks	Prof. Alfred K. Njamnshi	(5 min)

## Diplomatic Meeting

On August 22, 2024, Brain Research Africa Initiative and the Government of Cameroon organized the Diplomatic Meeting of the First African High-level Science Summit on Brain Economy, Brain Health and Brain Capital at the Yaoundé Conference Centre [4] (See figure 2). This meeting was presided over by the [Prime Minister, Head of Government, Chief Dr. Joseph DION NGUTE](#), and Representative of the President of The Republic of Cameroon, His Excellency Paul BIYA. The main highlights of this meeting were recognition awards and the annual [Monekosso-Muna BRAIN Award](#). The two champions of The Yaoundé Declaration (HAE & AKN) were awarded each the Certificate of Recognition in Neuroscience, following nomination by BRAIN Board of Directors and endorsement by the Cameroon government, for leading “the innovative global initiative of the *First High-level African Science Summit on Brain Economy, Brain Health and Brain Capital*”. Chief Dr. DION NGUTE, speaking on this occasion declared, “On behalf of the Head of State, the Government of Cameroon extends its congratulations to BRAIN and all its global, regional and national partner organisations, as well as the leaders and experts who have tirelessly contributed over the past few months to the creation of this historical document. Professors Harris EYRE and Alfred NJAMNSHI, both of you have shown that race, culture, distance and age differences are not obstacles but assets for connecting minds for the wellbeing of humanity.” The Monekosso-Muna BRAIN Award was awarded to Professor Jacques FAME NDONGO, [Minister of State, Minister of Higher Education of Cameroon](#), for significantly promoting neuroscience and brain health in Cameroon and Africa. The presentation of the Yaoundé Declaration to the Cameroon Government resulted in the commitment of the latter to move it further to the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly.

Figure 2: The Diplomatic Meeting, 22 August 2024, at the Yaoundé Conference Centre



## Global Showcase

On September 18, 2024, Brain Research Africa Initiative co-organized The Brain Economy Summit of the Brain Days of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Science Summit [18, 19]. See figure 3. This meeting was co-organized by the Brain Capital Alliance, the European Brain Council, Rice University's Baker Institute Center for Health and Bioscience, the Euro-Mediterranean Economists' Association, HKS and NeuroCentury. The Brain Days encompassed the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> also. These days brought together diverse stakeholders to advance the brain economy systems change model. On October 24, 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier de Schutter presented his latest report to the UNGA on the Burnout Economy, suggesting ways to break the vicious cycle of poor mental health and poverty, inequality, precarious work, [20] highlighting the urgency of the brain economy transition. Furthermore, we have recently proposed that optimal brain health is essential for smooth economic transitions such as the bioeconomy, green, care economy and digital transitions towards socio-economic sustainability, productivity and wellbeing [7].

Figure 3: Brains Days at the UNGA Science Summit, 18, 19, 20 September 2024, New York City



## Declaration

We, leaders of global, regional or national neuroscience, brain health, brain economy and brain capital institutions and organisations, together with resident diplomatic and consular representations meeting here in Yaoundé, Cameroon during the African High-Level Science Summit, in person or virtually, under the highly distinguished patronage and aegis of The President & Head of State of The Republic of Cameroon, in the presence of The Representation of The African Union, Members of Government and of Parliament of Cameroon, initiated by Brain Research Africa Initiative, with support from Brain Capital Alliance, Neuro-Policy Program of Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association and the Government of Cameroon:

1. Recognising the convergence of global factors and conditions including an escalation in environmental extremes, emerging public health threats, weak economic productivity, increases in global economic instability, and further weakening in the integrity of global democracy, which constitute a real threat to the right to life, liberty and security of persons;
2. Recognising that our current socio-economic paradigm is insufficient for addressing these complex challenges, let alone sustaining human development and well-being, perpetuating the impact of the current brain-unhealthy (i.e., brain-negative) economy and revealing the need for a more brain-healthy (i.e., brain-positive) economy;
3. Recognising the role of Africa and other regions of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) of the Global South with rapidly growing economies in that new brain-positive economy (i.e., brain economy);
4. Recognising the importance of science and innovation, particularly brain science and innovation in the human developmental process as well as the misuse/abuse of scientific innovation (e.g., brain-computer interfaces, artificial intelligence) with significant risks to life, liberty and human security;
5. Recognising the global burden of brain disease, particularly high in LMICs and the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s response with the [Brain Health Initiative](#): "Brain health is the state of brain functioning across cognitive, sensory, social-emotional, behavioural and motor domains, allowing a person to realize their full potential over the life course, irrespective of the presence or absence of disorders."
6. Recognising the WHO's involvement in the [One Health](#) approach: "One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems" with other international agencies ([One Health High Level Expert Panel \(OHHLEP\)](#));
7. Recognising the essential relationship between planetary and human health, including brain health and the impact of the current global industrialized food system on both;
8. Recognising [UN Climate Change's Action for Climate Empowerment \(ACE\)](#) to build brain skills especially green brain skills amongst the youth of the world, and the "[WEF Future of Work](#)" report which notes creativity, analytical thinking and adaptability as key skills for the future;
9. Recognising UNESCO's vision: "Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that peace must be built. UNESCO uses education,

science, culture, communication and information to foster mutual understanding and respect for our planet. We work to strengthen the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind and bring out the best in our shared humanity” and mission: “UNESCO has main priorities for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the improvement of the human condition”;

10. Recognising the central role of the human brain in education, science, culture, communication, conflict/problem resolution and innovation for the promotion of brain capital considered as a framework that explains why human brains, both individually and collectively, are at the center of society’s future and prosperity;
11. Recognising the growing importance of neuroethics as highlighted by the outcome document of the first meeting of the UNESCO Adhoc Expert Group ([AHEG](#)) recommendation on the ethics of neurotechnology;
12. Recognising the importance of women’s brain health especially considerations of sex and gender as relating to translational medicine, from basic science to clinical care to population health to novel technologies;

### Affirm

Our commitment to working together in a unified and focused effort to preserve the rich diversity of humanity and our planet and reduce disparities, by fostering the brain economy, brain health and brain capital, for the wellbeing and security of all humans and our planet.

### Call

We therefore:

13. Call for international frameworks for the transition into a brain-positive economy and for country governments and stakeholders to develop and implement national Brain Economy plans. Lessons must be learned from clean energy transition and digital-artificial intelligence transition plans;
14. Call for international data creation, curation, tools and frameworks to support and sustain the promotion of brain health and for country governments and stakeholders to develop and implement national/subnational Brain Health plans;
15. Call for the establishment of the Global Brain Council (“The Council”): Establish a council of leaders across the brain health space (e.g., researchers, philanthropists, funders, designers, and implementers), creating a potential charter and membership. The Council will identify and curate brain health innovations ripe for investment;
16. Call for the creation and sustainable funding of a Global Brain Capital Centre/Institute of Excellence in Africa to build brain capital through research, innovation, capacity building and evidence-informed policy content development on education, science, culture, communication, built environment, economics, and information to foster mutual understanding and respect for our planet; and country governments and stakeholders to develop and implement Brain Capital plans;
17. Call on high-income countries (HICs) to work together with LMICs in the spirit of UNGA79 theme [“Unity in Diversity”](#) within the above and other frameworks to reduce global, regional, and local disparities while preserving our rich human and planetary diversity;

18. Call on the United Nations General Assembly to consider formalizing this Declaration to raise awareness for these issues across member states and the private and non-government sectors;
19. Call on major policy fora to advance this agenda in the coming years such as the United Nations Summit of the Future, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP), World Economic Forum (WEF), the High-Level Meeting of the UNGA on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, G7, and G20;
20. Congratulate and thank His Excellency Paul Biya, President of The Republic of Cameroon - Head of State, and his Government for the full support and facilitation of the African High-Level Science Summit on Brain Economy, Brain Health and Brain Capital in Yaoundé, August 20-23, 2024, as a prelude to the 79<sup>th</sup> UNGA (September 2024).

### **Major foundational works considered in this Declaration**

- The United Nations (UN) [Universal Declaration on Human Rights and Freedoms](#) (particularly Art 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security);
- The UNGA79 Science Summit Brain Days, September 18, 19, and 20, focused on reimagining the world with brain science, and the [UNGA78 Science Summit Brain Days Report](#);
- The World Health Assembly [Special Resolution A77/A/CONF./2 Economics of Health for All](#), focused on structuring global economies to prioritize health and well-being for all;
- The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation's [Brain Health Atlas](#), providing the world's first global brain health data repository and analytic engine;
- The Global Brain Health Institute's [Brain Health Diplomacy Toolkit](#), providing a tools for emerging brain health leaders, to equip them with essential concepts and practical resources to apply in their professional work and collaborations;
- The OECD Systemic Recovery book chapter "[Build Back Brainier: Base Policies on Brain Science](#)";
- The [Global Brain Capital Dashboard](#), providing the world's first global brain capital data repository and analytic engine;
- The WHO [Intersectoral Global Action Plan](#) (IGAP), setting out the actions needed to improve access to care and treatment for people living with neurological disorders through a comprehensive and coordinated response across sectors;
- The [WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013 - 2030](#), aiming to promote mental health and well-being for all, to prevent mental health conditions for those at-risk and to achieve universal coverage for mental health services;
- The WHO "[Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases](#)";
- The WHO's "[COP28 UAE Declaration on climate and health](#)", emphasizing the critical role of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, and underscoring the urgent need to confront the connections between climate change and health;

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s [Gen-AI Report: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work](#), providing a comprehensive analysis of this narrative, focusing on how AI could enhance productivity while also disrupting traditional job roles;
- The United for Global Mental Health report '[Financing of Mental Health: The Current Situation and Ways Forward](#)', provides a macro analysis of government and donor mental health finance to understand what is the global finance gap and what is required to ensure widespread provision of mental health services;
- The African Union's 2063 Agenda on "[The Africa We Want](#)", presenting the Vision of the African Union to become an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.

### **The Yaoundé Declaration: From Yaoundé to New York and Beyond**

Following the uptake of The Yaoundé Declaration by the Cameroon Government on August 22, 2024, it was presented and discussed at the meetings listed below:

- August 27, 2024: Rice University addressed 'one of the most pressing issues of our time': The brain's role in America's future' with Congressman Morgan Luttrell (R-TX) and State Representative Greg Bonnen MD (R) (see <https://news.rice.edu/news/2024/rice-addressing-one-most-pressing-issues-our-time-brains-role-americas-future> )
- September 3, 2024: EMEA Webinar: Brain Health is Essential for Smooth Economic Transitions – Toward Socio-Economic Sustainability, Productivity, and Wellbeing (see <https://euromed-economists.org/emea-webinar-brain-health-is-essential-for-smooth-economic-transitions-toward-socio-economic-sustainability-productivity-and-wellbeing/> )
- September 5, 2024: EMEA President, Prof Rym Ayadi and Advisor Harris Eyre participated at the 1st webinar on the EU Coordination Plan for the Brain (see <https://euromed-economists.org/emea-president-prof-rym-ayadi-and-advisor-harris-eyre-participate-at-the-1st-webinar-on-the-eu-coordination-plan-for-the-brain/> )
- September 11-12, 2024: BRAIN Founder-CEO, Prof. Alfred K. Njamnshi, presented the Yaoundé Declaration at the First Nature Conference held on the African Continent: The Future of Dementia (see <https://www.nature.com/naturecareers/event/12817574/the-future-of-dementia-in-africa-advancing-global-partnerships/> )
- September 18-20, 2024: BRAIN Founder-CEO, Prof. Alfred K. Njamnshi, presented the Yaoundé Declaration at the United Nations General Assembly Science Summit Brain Days (see <https://sciencesummitunga.com/> )
- October 1-2, 2024: Discussion of The Yaoundé Declaration with the Cameroon Ambassador to the UN Office, New York.
- October 14, 2024: The Permanent Representative of the Government of Cameroon in the United Nations (UN), H E Michel Tommo Monthe, receives in audience in New York, the BRAIN Founder-CEO to discuss the strategy for incorporating The Yaoundé Declaration into the implementation instruments of the UN's Pact for the Future.
- October 17, 2024: [European Brain Commission \(EBC\)](#) invited to address the European Parliament Public Health Committee in Brussels. Prof. Claudio Bassetti, EBC's vice

President addressed the Committee on neurological health and the increased momentum to address brain health and brain capital as a priority. During this address he declared, “This broader understanding of the crucial role played by the brain as the powerhouse of our societies has been recently acknowledged by Cameroon, currently chairing the United Nations General Assembly, through its Yaoundé Declaration, calling for ‘*Brain Health in All Policies*’ ”.

- November 17, 2025: Presentation of the Yaoundé Declaration by the BRAIN CEO at the 2024 World Young Scientist Summit (WYSS) & 5<sup>th</sup> Oujiang International Forum on [Brain Health and Alzheimer’s Disease](#), as part of the International Brain Initiative (IBI) Delegation visit to China, led by IBI Chair, Prof. Judy Illes.
- December 5-6, 2024: Swiss Brain Health Plan 2<sup>nd</sup> Stakeholder Meeting, Bern. Presentation and discussion of The Yaoundé Declaration within the framework of a future Global Brain Health Alliance.
- December 2024: The Lancet Neurology Editorial “**United action is needed to prioritise brain health**” notes the Yaoundé Declaration as a key policy advancement in 2024. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laneur/article/PIIS1474-4422\(24\)00448-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laneur/article/PIIS1474-4422(24)00448-4/fulltext)
- January 20-24, 2025: Presentation and discussion of The Yaoundé Declaration at the World Economic Forum (WEF), The Brain House event (Davos, Switzerland). See video of Scientific Meeting at end of page of Davos Day 3 Dispatch: <https://mailchi.mp/davosalzheimerscollaborative/youre-invited-inaugural-dac-cross-cohort-webinar-18247096>
- Highlighted at [The Brain House Event during the WEF 2025 in Davos](#), and building on The Yaoundé Declaration, an actionable strategy involving the launching of the Davos Alzheimer’s Collaborative’s (DAC) Africa Task Force on Brain Health constituted a major milestone on this roadmap.
- January 28, 2025: Presentation and discussion at the G7 Preparatory workshop in London, Ontario, Canada. This workshop led to the publication: “[The Brain Advantage for a Thriving Economy: A Global Call to Action](#)” and its accompanying [Concept Note](#) by the Canadian Science Policy Centre, builds on and cites The Yaoundé Declaration.
- March 18, 2025: BRAIN Founder was invited by the European Brain Council to present a Keynote Address on The Yaoundé Declaration during [the Brain Awareness Week at the European Parliament in Brussels](#), focused on an [EU thematic network “Towards an EU Coordination Plan for the Brain”](#).
- March 19, 2025: The Yaoundé Declaration was echoed with Delegates at the [European Academy of Neurology Brain Health Summit](#) in Brussels during conversations on “Building a Resilient Europe through Brain Health Promotion”.
- May 9-10, 2025: The BRAIN Founder has been invited as Speaker, following the convening by His Holiness Pope Francis of the upcoming Symposium on – Addressing the Opportunities and Challenges of an Aging Global Population – organized by the Pontifical Academy for Life, AARP, and the Età Grande Foundation to be held on May 9-10, 2025 at the Casina Pio IV in the Vatican City.

## **Expected Impact**

As nations, regions, and global communities progressively buy into the call in this Declaration and begin to formulate and implement proposed policies, we expect an increased awareness of the strategic importance of brain health and brain capital in shaping future economies. This will result in projects and programmes at various levels that focus more on promoting brain health over the life course and in all sectors, thus building brain capital, rather than the current focus on simply fighting brain disease in the health sector only. Furthermore, this paradigm shift is expected to reflect in the investment strategies and practices of national, regional and global agencies and institutions, with more innovative and collaborative mechanisms, leading to a more rational and equitable development and deployment of technological innovations that will guarantee sustainable development for all.

## **Potential Challenges**

We note a number of potential challenges with the further advancement of this Declaration. Firstly, more work is required to achieve consensus on the definition of subcomponents such as brain health. There are currently dozens of definitions of brain health being utilized in the field and this can lead to confusion in building major policy outcomes. Secondly, this Declaration requires deft transdisciplinary collaboration among radically different stakeholder groups. It is clear that a new workforce will ultimately be required to advance these types of activities, and to this end, we recently articulated a [brain health diplomat](#) profile that may be useful in workforce development. Fourth and significantly, funding will be required to continue to execute the recommendations laid out in the Declaration, and this may require philanthropic support given the novelty and intensive transdisciplinarity of this work which is not typically funded by government grants. Nevertheless, we expect that as the impact of this movement becomes felt in nations and regions of the world, more government agencies will buy in and commit financially through bilateral and multilateral as well as global collaborations including public-private partnerships, to back up their administrative and diplomatic commitment to the cause.

## **Conclusion**

Africa is the world's second-largest continent and is home to 1.5 billion people, accounting for nearly 20% of the global population, the majority being young. It also hosts a rich panoply of natural, social, cultural, and geopolitical diversity across its 5 geopolitical zones covering 54 countries. It is the most genetically, culturally, and linguistically diverse region on the planet. These factors make Africa the most suitable to lead the brain economy and to export methodologies, best practices and new workforce models to the rest of the Global North and South.

In this article, we have outlined clear calls to scale up the coordination, skills, tools, and leadership needed to drive this new global economic transformation.

We must rapidly transition from a brain-unhealthy economy to a brain-healthy economy, to unlock greater creativity, productivity, and wellbeing. This transition means investing in the brain capital of nations.

### **Acknowledgments:**

Our sincere acknowledgements to: Professor Grisold Wolfgang, President of the World Federation of Neurology (WFN), Professor Miranda Wolpert, Director of Mental Health (Wellcome) and Dr. Lars Kristiansen, Executive Director of International Research Organisation (IBRO) for each presenting keynote talks during the Technical Scientific Meeting; Dr. Tarun Dua of the Neurology Unit (HQ/UCN/MSD/BRH) of the World Health Organization, Geneva for support

and to ELFA Media for logistical conferencing support during all phases of the First African High-level Science Summit in Yaoundé.

This publication is dedicated to the memory of:

1. HE David Abouem À Tchoyi, emeritus Governor of the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, emeritus Secretary General at the Presidency of The Republic of Cameroon, and Founding Member of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism in Cameroon. Minister Abouem À Tchoyi strongly supported the promotion of brain science and neurodiplomacy, and contributed to the preprint of this paper but the cruelty of death snatched him on 15 January 2025, denying him the appreciation of the final publication and experience of the progress on the road of The Yaoundé Declaration.
2. Professor Johan Arild Aarli, highly respected emeritus President of the World Federation of Neurology, who believed in and worked relentlessly in his very calm and reassuring manner, to create the African Neurology Task force which became the WFN's Africa Initiative, which we (AKN) had the honour of co-chairing under his visionary leadership. The growth of neurology and now brain health in Cameroon (and Africa) owes much Prof. Aarli, who easily convinced the Government of Cameroon in 2008 during his keynote address at the [PAANS congress in Yaoundé](#), to start neurology residency [21]. The rest is history. Johan, Africa will continue to celebrate you after your passing away on March 24, 2023 and your memory fuels our inspiration and drives our energy to continue to build brain capital in Africa and globally as you did.

## Appendix 1: Scientific Technical Committee of the Yaoundé Declaration on Brain Economy, Brain Health and Brain Capital

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