

## Alan I. Leshner: “Science in a Changing Global Landscape”

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*[The following is a text of Alan I. Leshner’s opening comments at the first plenary session of the 2011 [World Science Forum](#) in Budapest, Hungary. They were delivered on 17 November 2011 in the Ceremonial Hall at the [Hungarian Academy of Sciences](#). Dr. Leshner is the chief executive officer of AAAS and executive publisher of the journal [Science](#)].*

Mr. Prime Minister, distinguished colleagues, let me say what a tremendous pleasure it is for me to be here with all of you. I’ve been to many World Science Fora so far, and let me say congratulations to President Pálincás [József Pálincás, president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences]. They only get better and better. I’m really impressed and honored, and in fact humbled, to be here with this high-level representation from the world’s scientific community.

We are living in a time of unprecedented challenges and opportunities, and science and technology are embedded in all of them. There is no issue of modern life that doesn’t have a science and technology component to it, whether as a cause or as a potential cure. That fact gives us in the scientific community a great opportunity, but also a great obligation, to contribute to the betterment of humankind in virtually every sphere of modern life. We have great opportunities to directly promote innovation for economic growth, accelerate development of new sources of energy, improve the health and safety of people, achieve greater opportunities and solve major problems in the developing world, and predict and respond to natural and human-induced disasters.

But the centrality of science and technology also poses a great overall challenge to science, both in a substantive way and in an organizational way. The question I find so difficult to answer is: How can we do a better job of mobilizing the full potential power of science and technology to bear on these diverse, poignant, pervasive, and daunting issues?

When I speak about the full power of science, I’m speaking about the way to bring the full resources of a global scientific community, functioning in a truly global way, to bear on these problems. The only way to do that is to strengthen or bolster the coherence and compatibility of science communities across the world so the various national communities can work together easily and with great confidence. This will work best if we can find a way to align the policies that surround the ways to conduct science, including finding ways that foster easy

collaboration and the mobility of both people and money. We also need to be sure that ethical values and standards within scientific communities are consistent around the world.

I believe this question should be underpinning all of our discussions as we think about the changing landscape of science: How can we do a better job of transforming a set of national scientific communities into a truly global one?

We do this of course at a time that, while in some countries science investments are increasing, in other countries the world's economic problems are also playing out onto science. In the U.S., we still don't know where the budgets will go, but it is not likely that they'll increase funding for science, and there's a higher probability that funding will go down to meet economic challenges. If science investments are significantly reduced, we may have to rethink how we have organized and how we fund science. This will be a great challenge to science around the world assuming these problems face other countries, and it will be a great challenge to the organization and function of the global scientific community.

Just as we strengthen the interactions among scientific communities to address today's global challenges and opportunities, we need to better bridge the scientific and international relations, or foreign policy, communities. As science becomes ever more global in the sense that more and more nations have vibrant scientific communities, there is a greater opportunity for science to play a pivotal role in international policy-making, including foreign policy. This translates into a need and a desire to do a better job of bridging the scientific and foreign policy communities.

This desire is a central focus for AAAS and our [Center for Science Diplomacy](#). To build on these efforts, I am pleased to announce this morning that AAAS is launching a new quarterly publication that we're calling Science and Diplomacy. It will be a free-for-everyone, online communication vehicle to bring together the two communities in concrete ways, the communities of science and the community of foreign policy. Although these communities often speak different languages and pursue somewhat different goals, they share a global perspective. And there is much more that we can do for each other than we're doing now. We hope that this publication will also help demonstrate how much each community can learn from each other in efforts to confront some of the grand challenges that we've been talking about.

We look forward very much to working with the attendees of this World Science Forum on these issues and all of the others that are facing us at the intersection of science and the rest of society. We're facing not only a changing landscape of science, but also science in a changing global landscape.

Thank you very much.

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