Correspondence

Dual-use research needs international oversight

There is a worldwide deficit in expertise and training of ethical-review personnel (see, for example, go.nature.com/3rkpt1b). This is of particular concern for 'dual-use' research that could have both beneficial and harmful consequences.

In many universities, institutional review boards and ethics committees oversee research. These bodies ensure that it is conducted safely and in a socially responsible manner, in accordance with regulations and laws, and that it complies with ethical guidelines and standards. Those standards should include scrutiny of dual-use research to safeguard against the misapplication of information, products or technologies that could threaten public health and safety, agricultural crops or national security, for example (see go.nature.com/3s4m4yb).

An international system of oversight for dual-use research could usefully be introduced. It could be incorporated, for instance, into the Tianjin Biosecurity Guidelines for Codes of Conduct for Scientists, to be considered at the upcoming Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (see L. Wang *et al. J. Biosaf. Biosecurity* **3**, 82–83; 2021).

The post-pandemic period offers a timely opportunity to raise awareness of dual-use research and for training personnel in ethical reviewing.

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Nigeria's energy policy requires state-of-the-art modelling tools

Nigeria has launched its Energy Transition Plan towards ending energy poverty in the country by 2030 and attaining net-zero emissions by 2060 (www.seforall.org). But the nation's researchers must first have access to the latest resources and tools needed to collect, simulate and model energy data. They will also require training in how to use these and determine their cost-effectiveness for energy sustainability.

The United Nations Development Programme, and energy-policy organizations and funders based in high-income countries, support Nigeria's transition plan. These include the US Rockefeller Foundation, Sustainable Energy for All, the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet, the World Bank and Power Africa (an initiative coordinated by the US Agency for International Development). But even with such endorsement, Nigeria's researchers do not have access to the software necessary to simulate and model energy data.

Standard dynamic energy-simulation tools include Transient System Simulation, RETScreen and IDA Indoor Climate and Energy, but Nigeria-based researchers are restricted to old versions of these packages because of their high purchase costs. Moreover, few know how to use them.

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Save the world's forest giants from infernos

Gigantic trees occur in only a few regions on Earth. Some of the world's largest eucalypts, for example, are on the island of Tasmania, off southeastern Australia. As wildfires increase in severity and frequency as a result of climate change, we urge the authorities to protect these trees by adopting measures similar to those applied to safeguard California's redwood forests.

Giant eucalypts in Tasmania's temperate rainforest can be more than 100 metres tall. They are of enormous conservation value, representing just a small fraction of the tree population that existed before 200 years of clearing and logging. Wildfires in 2003, 2010, 2012, 2016 and 2019, mostly ignited by lightning storms under drought conditions, destroyed 17 of the world's 33 largest eucalypts.

Management interventions to protect giant trees in the western United States include routine removal of understorey fuels, irrigating stands during droughts and wrapping foil around trunks in fire emergencies (see go.nature.com/3dgnadd and go.nature.com/3dk2pkw). Such strategies could save Tasmania's giant eucalypts as well.

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