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Open Letter: Maintaining Global Health EDCTP as a stand-alone Joint Undertaking at the center of Europe's investment in R&I

Dear Director-General Mr Lemaître,

On behalf of the German Alliance for Global Health Research (GLOHRA), **we would like to advocate for a stand-alone European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP4) Joint Undertaking under the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2028–2034)**. Our recommendation reacts to the background note for the European Research and Innovation Area Committee (ERAC) plenary meeting in Dublin in October 2026, which outlined preliminary plans to merge EDCTP into a broader Clinical Trials partnership.

Infectious disease threats in Sub-Saharan Africa have become a universal and cross-border health challenge that increasingly affects Europe, caused, amongst others, by climate change. Outbreaks such as Ebola, Mpox, or the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate that the timely and efficient development of vaccines and other medical countermeasures depends on concerted actions and established research partnerships. EDCTP has provided such an exemplary research partnership between European and African countries for more than two decades, **demonstrating Europe's distinctive strengths in global health R&I** by turning shared investment in clinical trials into medical solutions to address pressing global health challenges.

We argue that EDCTP's added value as a stand-alone joint undertaking, compared to other implementation approaches, lies in its unique, partnership-based governance approach. Through its equal governance structure between European and African research institutions, it provides a flagship example of equitable research partnerships that have

significantly increased the pandemic preparedness capacities and capabilities of European and African research institutions. Furthermore, EDCTP has fostered the creation of research networks in Africa that independently drive global health research agendas and innovations, significantly increasing the capacity of African global health institutions to react to local health challenges and prevent future disease outbreaks. And last, EDCTP has created a trusted research network and infrastructure, including the support of early-career researchers in Europe and Africa, that future-proofs Europe's leadership position in global health research and innovation in times of geopolitical instability.

Yet, the value of a partnership like EDCTP lies in its continuity as a stand-alone JU with a unique governance structure and regional focus on Africa. Global health challenges require long-term joint solutions and established trial-ready research networks that cannot be built overnight in the midst of the next disease outbreak. A long-term partnership like EDCTP not only increases our ability to react to health challenges but also establishes Europe as a trusted and reliable partner in times of geopolitical uncertainty. It furthermore upholds the EU's competitiveness in the R&I sector by strengthening our research institutions and industry links, and creates a "double dividend" (see our publication here) in terms of a shared benefit for Europe and its international partners. EDCTP has thus demonstrated the added value of a stand-alone European partnership with low- and middle-income countries that builds the trusted international scientific networks on which global health stability, pandemic preparedness and Europe's scientific leadership depend.

A merger of EDCTP into a broader Clinical Trials Work Programme or JU would risk losing the successful governance architecture and the long-established and trusted research networks that allow rapid responses to shared health challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa. **We argue that time-limited, project-based funding calls alone cannot adequately address shared global health challenges and therefore recommend to sustain a dedicated Global Health EDCTP Joint Undertaking with an EU-Africa focus by securing a stable level of funding.**

Thank you for your consideration. We stand ready to provide further information.

Yours sincerely,

Nora Anton and Paula Roth
GLOHRA Secretariat c/o Charité Center for Global Health

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GLOHRA is an association of 1600+ researchers from 260+ public research institutions in Germany. We are committed to tackling today's global health challenges via interdisciplinary and collaborative global health research. Funded by the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR), GLOHRA is led by an interdisciplinary Steering Committee and coordinated by a Secretariat at Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin.