

**2009 Meeting  
Geneva, 7-11 December 2009**

**Meeting of Experts  
Geneva, 24-28 August 2009**

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of, with a view to enhancing international  
cooperation, assistance and exchange in biological  
sciences and technology for peaceful purposes, promoting  
capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance,  
detection, diagnosis, and containment of infectious diseases**

## **HEALTH-RELATED RESEARCH COOPERATION WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

Submitted by Germany

### **I. Introduction**

1. On 25 June 2009, the Federal Government responded to a Major Interpellation by the Alliance90/The Greens Parliamentary Group. The Federal Government's reply is published in Bundestag Printed Paper 16/13572. Question 30 of the Interpellation concerns health-related research cooperation with African countries.

### **II. Question 30**

2. What measures has the Federal Government adopted in support of research into diseases which are prevalent in Africa with a view to closing the gap in health research, and with what results? What forms of support has the Federal Government made available to extend health research networks to include health issues which are of interest to Africa, with a view to involving more researchers who are based there?

### **III. Reply from the Federal Government (excerpt)**

3. Since 2002, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has stepped up its work on research issues with a bearing on poverty-related diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in various priority areas of its Biomedical and Health Research

Programme. During the period from 2002 to 2008, about 6 million euro a year was made available from the Federal Government's Health Research and Biotechnology Programme for research into the three main infectious diseases which affect Africa. In 2009, the level of support is expected to reach about 8 million euro.

4. The priority areas "Malaria Initiative" (2002-2005), the disease research groups of the National Genome Research Networks (NGFN) (since 2001) and, increasingly, the research groups of the "European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP)" are the main areas in which African researchers and institutions receive considerable support and are actively being involved. Under the EDCTP Programme, funds totalling 600 million euro are being made available in equal shares by the European Commission, the Member States involved in the Programme, and other public and private donors. The BMBF is supporting the preparations for extending the EDCTP beyond the current support phase, which runs until 2010. EDCTP is a significant tool in the fight against poverty-related diseases and is aimed at promoting clinical trials with a view to developing medicines and vaccines against HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, in genuine partnership between European and African institutions. Other EDCTP priority areas include the creation of regional networks of excellence in Africa and the development of the continent's own capacity in the area of ethics and the implementation of clinical trials. With the assistance of EDCTP, for example, and with additional support from the BMBF, the Institute for Tropical Medicine of the University of Tübingen is leading a clinical trial aimed at improving the treatment of serious cases of malaria in African children, in cooperation with partners from The Gambia, Malawi, Ghana, Kenya and Gabon.

5. The BMBF has been supporting research into other neglected diseases, such as chikungunya and West Nile fever, since 2007, via research groups on zoonotic infectious diseases and in the "Molecular Diagnostics" priority area. In addition to project support measures, corresponding issues are taken up in the context of institutional support. The Bernhard Nocht Institute, the Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology and the Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research deserve special mention in this context. ....

6. In cooperation with the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the Bernhard Nocht Institute operates the Kumasi Centre for Collaborative Research in Tropical Medicine (KCCR) in Kumasi (Ghana). The KCCR provides a platform for collaborative research projects involving Ghanaian scientists and has acquired an international reputation as a teaching and research centre which is open to scientists from around the world.

7. Via its contributions to the EU budget, the Federal Government funds about 20% of the EU's Research Framework Programmes, which are a key instrument for promoting European research and development initiatives with a bearing on health in Africa and which contribute to the creation of research networks which include African scientists and research institutes.

8. During the period from 2002 to 2006, the EU's 6th Research Framework Programme included two major priority areas designed to support African scientists and institutions in the field of health-related research:

- (i) The thematic area "Health, including the EDCTP Platform" - During the period from 2002 to 2006, approximately 457 million euro was provided for research and development and for coordination projects aimed at combating HIV/AIDS, malaria

and tuberculosis under the thematic area “Health” of the 6th Framework Programme.

- (ii) The thematic area “International Cooperation” - Another priority area of relevance to Africa under the 6th Framework Programme was “International Cooperation”, which provided support for project themes which were developed in consultation with developing countries and which were primarily to be implemented there. Health research and public health were two such priority areas. Funding was provided for a number of projects aimed at combating neglected poverty-related communicable diseases and reducing child mortality, and for projects in the field of public health. Several partners from developing countries took part in each of these projects, some of which were led by African researchers. Since 2005, at least 20 collaborative projects have been supported as part of the priority area “Knowledge and technologies to improve control of neglected communicable diseases”, for which community contributions totalling about 35 million euro have been made available.

9. The BMBF is committed to further increasing the involvement of African scientists in network projects carried out under the Framework Programme, which are supported by the EU and aimed at creating African contact points and networking with the European research community. By way of example, the BMBF provides co-financing worth about 50,000 euro to enable the National Contact Point for Bio-Sciences to participate in the EU project “Contact Point Network to attract Young African Scientists to participate in EU-funded research programmes on Poverty-Related Diseases”.

10. African researchers can also take part in any European project carried out under the 7th Framework Programme, which runs from 2007 to 2013, and obtain direct funding for doing so. “International Cooperation” is an integral part of the thematic area “Health”, which has a total budget of 6.1 billion euro, and is of particular significance in areas with a bearing on global health problems, such as resistance to microbicides, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, neglected diseases and international health systems. The calls for proposals and expressions of interest also covered topics of international relevance, which are tailored to the international partners’ R&D needs and which, for example, are specifically intended to be implemented in collaboration with African partners.

11. Following the first two rounds of the call for proposals and expressions of interest for the 7th Framework Programme, 53 partners from 25 African states are currently involved in projects in the thematic area “Health”. African scientists are collaborating with German institutions in 18 of the 25 projects which have an African input. An example is the Poverty Related Diseases College: International Programme on BioMedicine and Development (PRD College) project, which will help to close educational gaps between the bio-sciences and the health and development sector in Africa. The creation of a training and exchange programme for African doctors and young scientists is being supported. The project is coordinated by the University of Yaoundé in Cameroon. The network includes African partners in Cameroon, South Africa, Zambia, Uganda and Tanzania and European institutions, including the Department for Infectious Diseases and Tropical Medicine of the University of Munich and the Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology in Berlin.

12. Since 2007, partnerships between German universities and clinics on the one hand and medical schools and clinics in developing countries on the other have been supported as part of Germany's development cooperation policy. These partnerships have, among other things, facilitated exchanges in the field of applied and clinical research with a view to improving medical treatment for HIV/AIDS sufferers. In Cameroon, for example, the aim is to optimize the treatment of HIV by means of early diagnosis and research into the causes of resistance to treatment, in cooperation with a German research institute. ....

#### **IV. Participation from outside Europe in the 7th Framework Programme**

The website [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/public\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/public_en.html) provides information on participation from outside Europe in projects funded by the 7th Research Framework Programme.

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