kENUP initiates Joint Communiqué: BioNTech evaluates mRNA vaccine manufacturing solutions in Rwanda and Senegal to improve long-term vaccine supply

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Today, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, President Macky Sall of Senegal, and President Ursula von der Leyen of the European Commission met Uğur Şahin, CEO and Co-Founder of BioNTech in Berlin at the Barenboim-Said-Akademie to discuss the development of sustainable vaccine production for Africa.

The meeting, which was convened by the kENUP Foundation on behalf of BioNTech, took place on the margins of the G20 Compact with Africa Summit hosted by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Also in attendance were Dr John Nkengasong, Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Africa Regional Director, and Werner Hoyer, President of the European Investment Bank (EIB).

The meeting resulted in a joint communiqué affirming BioNTech’s intention to manufacture mRNA vaccines arising from its Malaria and Tuberculosis vaccine development programs on the African continent. The company started the evaluation of manufacturing options in Rwanda and Senegal following the guidance of the African Union, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and the African Medical Agency under formation. The prospective locations of the necessary manufacturing sites are expected to co-locate with the World Health Organization’s (WHO) upcoming Vaccine Hubs. In principle, BioNTech’s COVID-19 vaccine could potentially also be manufactured in the local facilities for distribution in Africa. Other vaccine and pharmaceutical production facilities may also be established in these hubs to ensure a sustainable commercial and scientific ecosystem.

About “eradicateMalaria”

BioNTech’s malaria project is part of the ‘eradicateMalaria’ initiative, led by the kENUP Foundation, to accelerate the eradication of Malaria. kENUP Foundation is a non-profit public benefit foundation supporting research-based innovation in the wider health industries for societal benefit. Following the guidance of WHO and the eradicateMalaria Scientific Advisory Board, further projects by various companies may be considered under the eradicateMalaria scheme.
Collaboration with Africa CDC under the Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing programme will ensure that the enabling factors such as regulatory alignment and policy transfer, as well as country coordination are in place to get the vaccines from factories into the arms of African citizens, and beyond.

“We would like to thank all participants for today’s discussion and for the support and trust they put in us. Our goal is to develop vaccines in Africa and set-up sustainable vaccine production capabilities to jointly improve medical care,” said Prof. Dr. Ugur Sahin, CEO and Co-founder of BioNTech. “We are committed to invest in cutting-edge research and innovation to support vaccine development in addition to the establishment of manufacturing facilities and build-up of manufacturing expertise on the African continent.”

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: “This cooperation is an important moment for Africa and a great step towards vaccine equity. mRNA vaccines are cutting-edge technology. And it’s a powerful sign that we all join forces to make it possible to produce them in Africa. Team Europe is investing at least 1 billion euros to facilitate manufacturing and access to vaccines in Africa. And we are proud to be a partner in this endeavor.”

Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda: “We are on the path to bringing vaccine manufacturing to Africa sooner rather than later. The technology to make it possible is available. Most importantly, there is a sense of urgency. Rwanda looks forward to working on this initiative in close collaboration with BioNTech and other partners in Africa and beyond.”

Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal: “This initiative is a very good step toward self-reliance in vaccines including in covid vaccine launched with the MADIBA – Institut Pasteur de Dakar project. Supporting such initiatives to materialize quickly in Africa, would contribute to boosting covid vaccine access and to building a sustainable health security for a stronger and more equitable economic recovery globally.”
John Nkengasong, Director of Africa CDC: “Africa CDC, in its role leading the AU Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing (PAVM) welcomes this demonstration of the commitment of kENUP, BioNTech and the European Union to expanding vaccine manufacturing capacity on the African continent. The PAVM aims to increase vaccine manufacturing across Africa from 1% to 60% by 2040, prioritising endemic and outbreak prone diseases, and also focusing on conditions that disproportionately affect our continent such as HIV and Malaria. The ambition is to leverage new technology in support of a sustainable manufacturing industry on the continent. This initiative joins others across the continent in pushing forward this vision. We encourage other partners, manufacturers, financiers, and others to join us to realise this ambition.”

Werner Hoyer, President European Investment Bank: “Scaling up local vaccine production is crucial to beat COVID and strengthen resilience to future pandemics. Since the start of the COVID pandemic the European Investment Bank has worked closely with African and international partners to support private and public investment to improve health and ensure that businesses can invest. We welcome this new initiative and stand ready to provide technical experience and financial backing in the coming months.”

Reeta Roy, President & CEO of Mastercard Foundation: “The Africa Union has set a bold goal: to ensure that 60 percent of Africa’s vaccine demand will be met through production in Africa by 2040. This collaboration between the governments of Rwanda and Senegal and BioNTech is a positive step towards that vision. Manufacturing vaccines in Africa will increase health security and create jobs for young people in the future. As part of our Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative, the Mastercard Foundation will continue to support the efforts of the African Union, Africa CDC, and other leaders to develop the talent across Africa for vaccine manufacturing.”

Holm Keller, Executive Chairman of kENUP Foundation: “Vaccine Equity cannot be achieved without Africa joining the global manufacturing platforms for essential biologicals. Today’s move by the Republic of Rwanda, the Republic of Senegal and BioNTech is an important step for achieving this. kENUP Foundation is grateful to President Kagame, President Sall and Prof. Dr. Şahin for their vision and courage, as well as to Africa CDC’s Dr. John Nkengasong for his invaluable guidance. Many thanks to Team Europe, led by President von der Leyen and EIB President Hoyer, for their continuous engagement and meaningful support.”
More information can be found on https://www.eradicateMalaria.eu

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