



In Search of Better Health

PRESS RELEASE

TO: News Editors & Reporters

SUBJECT: President William Ruto & Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida sign MoU on Laboratory Expansion Project in KEMRI

DATE: Thursday, 8th, February 2024

President William Ruto has put pen to paper on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between KEMRI and Japan during his visit in Japan.

The MoU follows a new Japan grant of KES 3 billion to KEMRI to aid in construction of a high-level facility for training for scientists in research and development of biotechnology products that can quickly be used by the country in the event of a biothreat or a new pandemic. The facility will contain high biocontainment laboratories with state-of the art equipment for use in disease surveillance, pathogen identification, drugs, vaccines and diagnostic kits design, discovery and development.

This is critical to the attainment of the Government's Universal Health Coverage (UHC) agenda. By designing, developing, and producing local drugs, vaccines and diagnostics, especially those Point of Care diagnostics, KEMRI will be able support accelerated implementation of UHC.

The grant aid continues the Japan support for establishment and expansion of research facilities at KEMRI. The construction of the facility is also in response to the current Kenya Government initiative for building capacity in local manufacturing of medical products.

Japan, through JICA, has been KEMRI's key partner in her capacity building efforts, and recently marked the 60th Anniversary celebrations of the Japan-Kenya Partnership in Health Sector, through JICA. It is arguable that KEMRI has received the lion's share of Japan's generosity in the health sector collaborative engagement with Kenya since its inception some 44 years ago which has resulted to partnership in Technical Cooperation & Capacity Building and Grant-in-Aid.

The lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic have accelerated Kenya's effort to build local capacity to combat emerging epidemics and biothreat pathogens including capabilities to develop novel and

effective medical products for the response. In the GoK Initiative, KEMRI has been identified as an Institution of national strategic importance to lead in biotech research and development.

KEMRI's Acting Director General and Chief Executive Officer, Prof. Elijah Songok lauded the signing of the MoU citing that this investment cement KEMRI's forefront position in leading other Kenyan and Regional Institutions in enhancing Research and Development for the improved health and wellbeing.

"We thank our President and the Japan Government through this new initiative. With the construction of this new facility at KEMRI, we shall be able to support the country and the region in training a new cadre of scientist that will immensely contribute to the required expertise for research and local development of medical products," stated Prof. Songok, who accompanied President Ruto on the Japan trip.

The Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) is a State Corporation established in Kenya in 1979 through the Science and Technology (Repealed) Act, Cap 250 of the Laws of Kenya operated under the Science Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 as the national body responsible for carrying out research in human health in Kenya. Currently, KEMRI operates under Legal Notice No. 35 of March 2021 KEMRI has grown from its humble beginning over 40 years ago to become a regional leader in human health research. The Institute currently ranks as one of the leading Centres of excellence in health research both in Africa as well as globally.

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