

Addis Ababa, 1 February 2018

## **OAFLA and Roche Partner to Tackle Women's Reproductive Cancers**

- **Public-private partnership aims to mobilise support for the prevention, early detection, and care of women's reproductive cancers**
- **Building on success in HIV, agreement marks first comprehensive program from OAFLA on behalf of women with cancer**

The Organization of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) and Roche have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to advocate for the prioritization of women's reproductive cancers in Africa. OAFLA, the First Ladies of Africa and Roche will work to ensure that the burden of women's reproductive cancers is understood and acted on.

The public-private partnership has three key aims: 1) to mobilize policymakers' support in OAFLA member countries for the creation of a supportive national policy environment for the prevention, early diagnosis, cure and care of women reproductive system cancers, 2) to mobilize support of the African Union in prioritizing women reproductive system cancers as a regional healthcare policy priority, and 3) to enhance OAFLA's visibility, organisational learning and sustainability on cancer.

"Today in Africa, the health of our women is threatened by the growing burden of cancer, and in particular women's reproductive cancers. We cannot afford to needlessly lose women who are the bedrock of our families and communities to these diseases," said OAFLA President and First Lady of Ethiopia, Her Excellency Roman Tesfaye. "OAFLA and the First Ladies of Africa have a unique opportunity to use our voices to advocate for the prioritisation of women's reproductive cancers to help to stem the tide of these diseases that threaten the lives of women in our countries. This inaugural partnership with Roche demonstrates that we all must play our part to ensure that our mothers, sisters and daughters have the opportunity to fight and win the battle against these cancers."

The agreement reflects an important step to ensure cancer care for women in Africa is prioritised and funded. Despite advances in management, breast and cervical cancers remain the leading causes of cancer death among women worldwide. The burden of breast cancer disproportionately affects African countries with 5-year survival rates as low as 12% in parts of Africa, compared with almost 90% in the United States, Australia and Canada.<sup>1</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> DR Youlden, SM Cramb, NA Dunn, et al: The descriptive epidemiology of female breast cancer: An international comparison of screening,

addition, as many as 80% of patients in SSA are diagnosed with late-to-end stage disease when very little can be achieved in terms of curative treatment.<sup>2</sup> Ensuring that women are aware of cancer and have access to quality and affordable care is critical.

“This partnership with OAFLA reflects an important step to ensure cancer care for women in Africa is prioritised and funded. The increasing burden of women’s reproductive cancers in Africa cannot be ignored – 75% of cancer patients in Africa are diagnosed with late stage disease – so the time to act is now,” said Markus Gemuend, Head, Sub-Saharan Africa, Roche. “As a company, we aim to improve every step of a patient’s journey. This is accomplished with partners who share our long-term view for investment in healthcare. We are very proud to partner with OAFLA and the First Ladies of Africa on this endeavor.”

### **About OAFLA**

The Organization of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) was established by African First Ladies in 2002 as a collective voice for Africa's most vulnerable people, women and children infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. Since its beginning, OAFLA has transformed itself from a forum of ideas to an institution capable of providing the continent wide leadership needed to bring about change in peoples’ lives. OAFLA provides continent wide leadership advocating for policy and social change, engage in resource mobilization efforts from the global, continental and national levels. OAFLA thrives to facilitate African First Ladies campaigns for effective policies and strategies towards ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat, reducing maternal and child mortality and empowering women and children, through strategic partnership in the spirit of solidarity. For more information about OAFLA visit: [www.oafla.org](http://www.oafla.org)

### **Update on Roche Efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa**

In sub-Saharan Africa, Roche aims to improve every step of a patient’s journey by removing barriers to access quality healthcare from diagnosis through treatment. The company develops comprehensive and sustainable programs that are tailored to the specific needs of each country. Ensuring these patients have access to innovative medicines is accomplished through partnerships with key stakeholders such as governments, who share a long-term view for investment in healthcare infrastructure.

Key progress from 2017 includes:

In East Africa, a partnership between Roche and the Kenya Ministry of Health includes a comprehensive access program that now supports women with access to breast cancer care. The program includes screening, state-of-the-art diagnostics, healthcare infrastructure building, including the training of new oncologists and oncology nurses, and access to innovative medicine for breast cancer – all free of charge to the patient. A similar program in Sudan has also commenced.

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incidence, survival and mortality Cancer Epidemiol 36: 237– 248,2012

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ipccr.net/pdfs/Kenya-National-Cancer-Control-strategy.pdf>

In French West Africa, significant progress has been made to broaden access in multiple countries. Notably, in Côte d'Ivoire, a landmark agreement with the Ministry of Health now includes access to three innovative cancer medicines with Roche and the government covering the costs of the medicines for patients. New agreements have also been signed in Burkina Faso and Republic of Congo. While these are in the early stages, they are important first steps for patients in these countries.

In Nigeria, partnerships with six oncology centers of excellence across the country are now in place to facilitate access to care for breast cancer patients and increase the chances patients will start and complete treatment.

### **About Roche**

Roche is a global pioneer in pharmaceuticals and diagnostics focused on advancing science to improve people's lives. The combined strengths of pharmaceuticals and diagnostics under one roof have made Roche the leader in personalised healthcare – a strategy that aims to fit the right treatment to each patient in the best way possible.

Roche is the world's largest biotech company, with truly differentiated medicines in oncology, immunology, infectious diseases, ophthalmology and diseases of the central nervous system. Roche is also the world leader in in vitro diagnostics and tissue-based cancer diagnostics, and a frontrunner in diabetes management.

Founded in 1896, Roche continues to search for better ways to prevent, diagnose and treat diseases and make a sustainable contribution to society.

The company also aims to improve patient access to medical innovations by working with all relevant stakeholders. Thirty medicines developed by Roche are included in the World Health Organization Model Lists of Essential Medicines, among them life-saving antibiotics, antimalarials and cancer medicines. Roche has been recognised as the Group Leader in sustainability within the Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology & Life Sciences Industry nine years in a row by the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices (DJSI). For more information, please visit [www.roche.com](http://www.roche.com).

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