

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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Statement of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention on the Potential Clinical Trial of a Tuberculosis Vaccine Protective Against COVID-19 in Africa

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) strongly condemns the detestable comments made by Professors Jean-Paul Mira and Camille Lotch on French Television in which they proposed using Africans as subjects for testing a tuberculosis vaccine in clinical trials to gauge its effectiveness against COVID-19. These racist and condescending comments must be condemned by all decent human beings. Indeed, COVID-19 is a global humanitarian crisis that requires global actions and global solidarity.

Africa CDC will continue to work very closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) to ensure that only ethically and scientifically sound clinical trials for vaccines and therapies will be conducted in Africa, using exactly the same standards and principles as those employed elsewhere in the world. These principles will be guided by respect for the dignity of Africans, beneficence and non-maleficence and justice.

As such Africa CDC will ensure the following:

- First, only studies that are scientifically valid shall be endorsed.
- Second, we shall ensure that there is appropriate balance between the predictable risks and foreseeable benefits, with the proviso that the interests of subjects are not subordinate to those of science and society.
- Third, we shall ensure that all individuals consent to participate in any trials; a decision that must be made without duress or coercion and only after details of the study are provided.
- Fourthly, Africa CDC will ensure that if multi-country clinical trials in Africa are conducted, they hold the promise of direct, tangible and significant benefit to the continent.

Professors Mira and Lotch have no lessons to teach Africa on the conduct of scientifically sound clinical trials. Africans have extremely capable world-renowned scientists who have played critical leadership roles in conducting clinical trials that have benefited the continent and beyond. Some examples include the leadership of African scientists in conducting an effective Ebola Virus Disease ring vaccine trial in West Africa in 2014, which proved a game changer in ending the outbreak. Similarly, in 2019, experts from the Democratic Republic of Congo, alongside international collaborators, successfully carried out a clinical trial of Mab 114 monoclonal antibody therapy for Ebola Virus Disease

As we have also seen with this COVID-19 pandemic, only collective international cooperation through a collaborative and respectful approach can succeed in the conduct of sound research that will benefit the whole of humanity.

The African Union Commission, through the Africa CDC will continue to work with all partners in the framework of the continent-wide joint strategy and the African Taskforce for Novel Coronavirus to support preparedness and response by African Union Member States to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr John Nkengasong
Director, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

For further information please contact:

Mrs. Wynne Musabayana, Head of Communication, Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: MUSABAYANAW@africa-union.org

Mr. James Ayodele, Africa CDC | E-mail: ayodelej@africa-union.org

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | **E-mail:** DIC@africa-union.org | **Website:** www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia Follow Us: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#)