Meetings and visits
Visit of the European Union Commissioner to EDCTP Africa Office

On 30 November 2007, European Union Commissioner Janez Potocnik paid a visit to EDCTP Africa Office (AO) in Cape Town. He was accompanied by Mr Ludwening Brié (EU Ambassador in South Africa), Mr Kristina Bole (Member of Commissioner’s Cabinet), Mr Hadjia Boughameni (DG Research International Cooperation Programme) and Mr Daan du Toit (Senior Science and Technology Representative South African Mission to the European Union). The Commissioner was received by the EDCTP High Representative, Dr Pascal Mocumbi, the President of the Medical Research Council of South Africa, Professor Anthony Mbewu and EDCTP’s Africa Office staff.

During the visit, Commissioner Potocnik was updated on the activities of the Africa Office and had a guided tour of the facilities. He applauded EDCTP for its good performance and the very important role of the Africa Office in pushing the agenda of EDCTP in Africa. He added that EDCTP has a great potential to do more and that the EC will continue to support it.

EU Commissioner Janez Potocnik with EDCTP High Representative Pascal Mocumbi and MRC Cape Town President Professor Anthony Mbewu
Focused on EDCTP grantees

Regional training on HIV viral load assay

Following the successful completion of a two year EDCTP Senior Fellowship awarded in 2004 to Dr Abraham Alabi of the Viral Disease Research Programme, a further one year extension of the fellowship was approved earlier this year. A major thrust of this one year extension is capacity building and multicentre evaluation of a commercialized HIV viral load assay developed by Dr Alabi and his team. To this end, some members of the team, Dr Alabi, Mr Pa Saisiou Chew and Modou Camara organised a one week training (24-28 September) on the assay for scientists from Central, Eastern and Southern Africa.

The training offered participants the opportunity of sharing experiences on the different commercial HIV-1 viral load assays being used at their centres. There were hands-on sessions during which participants were put through the entire process of viral load assay, which includes HIV RNA extraction from patients’ plasma, reverse transcription and amplification of the RNA and detection of the target DNA product by enzyme oligonucleotide assay (ELONA).

The training was hosted by the HIV Laboratory, Centre for Virus Research, Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) in Nairobi. Although more than 50 scientists applied for the course, it was possible to take nine participants only. These were from Ethiopia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Kenya.

Financial training course for EDCTP grantees

A two week financial training course was held between 3 and 14 December. The course was attended by 16 invited participants directly involved in producing budgets and annual reports on EDCTP grants from 12 different sub-Saharan countries.

The course was designed and taught by Deloitte at their offices based in the Gambia and focused on:

- Practical elements of producing financial and management information
- Introduction and use of automated accounting systems
- Monthly management of accounts
- Internal control and tracking systems of grant expenditure.

Meetings and visits

Site visits to Ethiopia and Gabon

From 17-21 September 2007, EDCTP visited some of the EDCTP-supported institutions in Ethiopia. The EDCTP team consisted of Dr Simon Belcher (Director of Finance and Administration) and Dr Michael Makunga (Capacity Development Manager). The team had meetings with the scientists and management of various institutions.

- Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI) and Pan African Bioethics Initiative (PABIN) Secretariat
- Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute (EHNRI)
- Addis Ababa University
-Regional training on artemisinin-based combinations for treating malaria in African children; Evaluation of optimal combinations and product formulations, and sub-studies on the pharmacokinetics of drug combinations.

Site visits to Ethiopia were to the University of Health Science in Addis Ababa and to the Lambarene Hospital in Libreville.

EDCTP site visit team meets with Dr Kouyate Amara Bintou, Chair of Lambarene Ethics Institutional Review Committee (CERIL)

- MBU-ASH
- The medical research unit, Albert Schweitzer Hospital, Lambarene is involved in several projects including Artemesia for severe malaria in African children; Evaluation of 4 Artemis-based combinations for treating uncomplicated malaria in African children; Establishing and support of a National Ethics Committees in Gabon; Ethics research training for members of African national ethics committees, physicians and investigator, (conducted with the Vienna School of Clinical Research); and in a networking project involving Ifakara, Lambarene and Manhiça.
News about calls and grants

**Calls open for application**

In the effort to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic, EDCTP is announcing funding opportunities for HIV/AIDS researchers. In December 2007, three calls for proposals on HIV/AIDS treatment were launched. Please find below an overview of all calls that are currently open for application:

### HIV Treatment

**Call for the support of clinical trials, capacity building and networking for HIV/AIDS treatment in sub-Saharan Africa**

The objectives of this call are:

- To support the conduct of clinical trials that evaluate second line treatment strategies, with a focus on products to switch to when changing from first to second line treatment and when to stop ART in children, with a specific focus on using more optimal combinations and product formulations, and sub-studies on the pharmacokinetics of drug combinations.

Available funds: A minimum of €6,500,000

Deadline of application: 1 April 2008

### HIV Microbicides

**Call for the support of clinical trials, capacity building and networking for HIV/AIDS microbicides in sub-Saharan Africa**

The objectives of this call are to support the conduct of clinical trials on microbicides that will yield data on safety, surrogate end-points of biological activity and surrogate markers that might correlate with safety or efficacy. In addition, proposals that evaluate the effect of barriers, concurrent sexually transmitted infections, frequency of microbicide use and stage of menstrual cycle on safety and efficacy are invited.

Innovative products or approaches are particularly encouraged.

Available funds: A minimum of €6,100,000

Deadline of application: 1 May 2008

### HIV Vaccines

**Call for the support of clinical trials, capacity building and networking in HIV/AIDS vaccines development**

The main objective of this call is to support the conduct of phase III clinical trials of HIV candidate vaccines in African countries. Such studies should include safety and immunogenicity parameters and ideally be designed to enable comparison of outcomes.

Available funds: A minimum of €7,000,000

Letter of Intent due: 1 February 2008

Deadline of application: 30 May 2008

For more information about these calls and how to apply, please visit our website at www.edctp.org.

Focus on EDCTP grantees

#### Regional training on HIV viral load assay

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The training offered participants the opportunity of sharing experiences on the different commercial HIV-1 viral load assays being used at their centres. There were hands-on sessions during which participants were put through the entire process of viral load assay, which includes HIV RNA extraction from patients’ plasma, reverse transcription and amplification of the RNA and detection of the target DNA product by enzyme-linked immunoassay (ELONA).

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- Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI) and Pan African Bioethics Initiative (PABIN) Secretariat
- Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute (EHNRI) 

AHRI besides hosting the PABIN Secretariat manages several EDCTP projects including capacity building for conducting TB vaccine trials in high risk populations in East Africa; networking for strengthening the National Tuberculosis Research Network in Ethiopia (NTNRE) and establishing an African coordinating office for ethics through PABIN.

- Addis Ababa University

Addis Ababa University is involved in optimisation of tuberculosis and HIV co-treatment focusing on pharmacokinetic and pharmacogenetic aspects of drug-drug interactions between rifampicin and efavirenz. This is a multinational study involving Ethiopia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Sweden. Another project is on hepatotoxicity and interactions of ART and TB drugs on CYP 450 metabolisms.

- PhD project of Dr Yimer Getnet, which is a sandwich programme at Addis Ababa University and Karolinska Institute.

EHNRI is involved in the strengthening the national tuberculosis research network in Ethiopia. EHNRI is one of the major partners of African Regional Capacity Building Network for HIV/AIDS prevention, Treatment and care project (ARCAN), sponsored by the World Bank.

**The site visits in Gabon took place between 8 and 12 October 2007.**

The site visits included the Medical Research Unit, Albert Schweitzer Hospital (MUSH-ASH), Lambaréné and The University of Health Sciences in Libreville. The site visit site team meets with Dr Kouyate Amara Bintro, Chair of Lambaréné Ethics Institutional Review Committee (CERIL)

- MUSH-ASH

The medical research unit, Albert Schweitzer Hospital, Lambaréné is involved in several projects including Artemisin for severe malaria in African children; Evaluation of 4 artemisinin-based combinations for treating uncomplicated malaria in African children; Establishing and support of a National Ethics Committee in Gabon; Ethics research training for members of African national ethics committees, physicians and investigator, (conducted with the Vienna School of Clinical Research); and in a networking project involving Dakara, Lambarene and Maniara.

#### Current status of EDCTP calls for proposals 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calls</th>
<th>EDCTP funding (£)</th>
<th>Launch date</th>
<th>Number of eligible applications received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TB Vaccine</td>
<td>11,000,000</td>
<td>5 July 2007</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>450,000</td>
<td>1 August 2007</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Fellowships</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>5 July 2007</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaria Vaccine</td>
<td>14,000,000</td>
<td>5 July 2007</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaria Treatment</td>
<td>9,000,000</td>
<td>1 August 2007</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks of Excellence</td>
<td>10,000,000</td>
<td>1 August 2007</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaria in Pregnancy</td>
<td>9,000,000</td>
<td>1 August 2007</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TB Treatment Brokerage</td>
<td>14,000,000</td>
<td>4 December 2008*</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV Treatment</td>
<td>6,500,000</td>
<td>1 December 2007</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV Microbicides</td>
<td>6,000,000</td>
<td>1 December 2007</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV Vaccine</td>
<td>7,000,000</td>
<td>5 December 2007</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Brokering meeting

#### Funded projects

**EDCTP is pleased to announce funding of the following projects:**

**Career Development Fellowship**

Dr Jennifer Serwanga: “Patterns of HIV-1 specific CD8+ T-cell epitope recognition determining plasma viral load trajectory and set point following HIV-1 infection”

**Capacity building in preparation for the conduct of preventive HIV vaccine trials**

Dr Pentiano Kalebulo: “Strengthening of long-term clinical and laboratory research capacity, cohort development, and collection of epidemiological and social science baseline data in Uganda and Malawi to prepare for future HIV vaccine trials”

**EDCTP site visit team meets with Dr Kouyate Amara Bintro, Chair of Lambaréné Ethics Institutional Review Committee (CERIL)**

**MUSH-ASH**

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News about calls and grants
TB treatment stakeholder meeting and the brokering process

In preparation for the launch of EDCTP’s call for proposals for tuberculosis (TB) treatment, EDCTP held a stakeholder meeting on TB treatment in Dublin, Ireland. The meeting recommended to focus on shortening and simplifying the treatment of drug sensitive TB. Following this call for expression of interest was launched on 1 August 2007, with a deadline of 17 September 2007. The applications received in response to this TB Treatment brokering call were considered by EDCTP’s Partnership Board (scientific board). Of the eight eligible applications received, it was recommended that five successful applicants (consortia working on TB trials for shortening or simplifying treatment) should be invited to participate in the EDCTP’s TB Treatment brokering meeting and that the remaining three should be excluded.

The main objectives of the meeting were to develop a “grand plan for TB drugs development” in order to progress towards clinical trials aimed at simplifying and shortening first line treatment of drug sensitive tuberculosis, to understand opportunities provided by potential participating clinical trial ideas and to understand trial needs of potential participating drug development programmes. At the end of the meeting, EDCTP produce a detailed clinical development plan defining three drugs in short order with clear milestones for advancement into subsequent studies. The studies will be phase II trials of moxifloxacin and phase III trials of high dose rifampicin, rifapentine and SQ109 respectively. The proposal, which will be written by a small group of key stakeholders, is expected to be ready for submission to EDCTP by 3 March 2007.