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Welcome Note: Federal Ministries

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Ladies and Gentleman,

I am delighted to welcome you to this year's International One Health Symposium on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Health as well as the five other Federal Ministries that support the German One Health research Platform –namely the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the Federal Ministry of Defence.

As many of you may know, inter-ministerial research collaboration in Germany has a long tradition in the field of zoonotic diseases. Recent events such as the Ebola out-break in Central Africa, the outbreak of Hantavirus on a cruise ship earlier this year or the wave of Avian Influenza outbreaks affecting wild birds and poultry last autumn vividly demonstrate the ongoing need for research in this field. Those outbreaks were caused by rare or novel strains of the viruses –reminding us that we need to expect the unexpected. New questions regarding the prevention and management of zoonotic diseases continue to emerge. The challenges are far from resolved.

However, in order to promote health, the need for cross-sectoral collaboration extends far beyond the field of zoonoses. More than ever, we are facing a complex web of challenges. The acceleration of climate change, biodiversity loss, habitat changes and the persistent rise of antimicrobial resistance are not isolated crises. They are disruptions of a delicate balance between all living beings. In order to promote health, we therefore need to promote One Health!

To this end, our Federal Ministries joined forces in 2022. Aiming to strengthen bridges between different scientific communities, a research agreement was set up to coordinate and advance scientific research at the intersection of human, animal and environmental health. The annual One Health Symposium which is funded by the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space is part of this initiative. Looking at the agenda, one notices an impressive range of topics including agriculture, environmental pollution, education and artificial intelligence. This diversity is what we need in order to address the complex, interconnected health threats that cannot be solved by one sector alone.

We are delighted that so many participants from different parts of the world have come together to share their expertise. This is especially important, as many of the topics addressed have a strong international dimension.

Earlier this year, the international dimension of One Health was recognised at the highest political level. The president of France, Emmanuel Macron, invited the world to a One Health Summit in Lyon as a contribution to the countries G7 presidency. For the first time ever, the event brought together heads of states, scientists and many other relevant stakeholders under the One Health umbrella. It culminated in several deliverables aimed at cross-sectional governance and proactive risk prevention, which demonstrates that the unifying approach has been adopted by global leaders and politicians.

An initiative of the German government that is directly aimed at fostering international collaboration under the One Health approach is the Global Health Protection Programme, which was launched in 2016 by the Federal Ministry of Health. As an important pillar of the German health and security policy, the programme forms a key interface between policy-making and the scientific community. Earlier this year, more than 30 projects were launched as part of the third programme phase. One Health is one of the three key thematic areas addressed in various projects that are implemented by German institutes such as the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institute and the Robert Koch Institute.

Germany's international engagement in One Health is also driven by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development which promotes cross-sectional preventive and system-oriented approaches in partnerships with institutions in Africa and beyond.

At the EU level, the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space is participating as a funder in two European partnerships embracing the One Health approach. Covering antimicrobial resistance and pandemic preparedness, they will run for the next 7-10 years and centre around yearly transnational calls with varying topics. Starting this year, the researchers among you will be invited to submit suitable project proposals on

an annual basis.

In addition, the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space is currently funding seven national research networks on pandemic prevention and response with a One Health approach. They focus on different topics including influenza, tick-borne diseases, West Nile virus and antimicrobial resistance. On the second day of the symposium, the network coordinators will present their work programme in a dedicated session. Other initiatives at the national level include the German Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy, which coordinates activities across multiple sectors in the fight against AMR. This year, a new action plan was adopted. With the adjusted strategies we aim to achieve the agreed targets on reducing resistance by 2030.

Many people already support the One Health approach. However, translating a theoretical framework into practice remains a challenge. It requires continuous dialogue between scientists, policymakers, other stakeholders and the general public. The previous examples demonstrate that we have already come a long way towards integrating One Health not only into the scientific but also into the political agenda. However, there is still a lot of work ahead of us.

I am grateful for such a strong and vibrant One Health research community that continuously generates critical insights on some of the most pressing questions of our time, and I would like to thank all of you for your invaluable contributions. Last but not least, I would also like to offer special words of thanks to the organisers of this symposium. I am sure the excellent programme will inspire many rewarding discussions in the coming days.

Presented by Parliamentary State Secretary Dr. Georg Kippels

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