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Welcome Note: One Health Platform

Monday, October 5, 2026 1:00 PM (5 minutes)

Dear Parliamentary State Secretary Dr. Kippels
Dear Co-chair of the OHHLEP Prof. Markotter,
Dear Representatives of the six Ministries (BMFTR, BMG, BMVg, BMZ, BMUKN and BMLEH) that signed the One Health research agreement,
Dear OHP Scientific Advisory Board Members,
Dear Scientists, Practitioners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Sascha Knauf, and I head the One Health Platform office at the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut. Together with our partner offices at the University of Muenster and the Helmholtz Institute for One Health, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the International One Health Symposium 2026.

For the first time, and as part of our internationalisation strategy, this year's symposium has a regional focus. So let me extend a special ¡Bienvenidos! and Sejam muito bem-vindos to our guests from Latin America. Five of our six keynote speakers have strong ties to the region, and we are especially proud to welcome ten early-career colleagues from Latin America who received travel grants to join us.

Things are changing quickly. We are living through a time of enormous challenges, but also of opportunities. The challenges are obvious to most of us. Think of the Bundibugyo virus disease epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, with around 8000 confirmed cases and close to 4000 deaths. Think of the ongoing H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b panzootic, which has cost millions of poultry, caused mass mortality in wild birds and, since 2022, killed tens of thousands of marine mammals. And beyond these, we face antimicrobial resistances, climate change, global inequity and, not least, rising nationalism, populism and political tensions that no longer stop at words.

The opportunities come more quietly, but they matter even more if we want sustainable answers to these challenges. The One Health Platform Germany is one of them. Over the past year, we have run 9 workshops and seminars, launched two funding calls, awarded numerous travel and training grants and presented the platform internationally, at the World One Health Congress in Lisbon and at the 1st Congresso Brasileiro de Saude Unica/ Uma Só Saúde.

Have you ever asked yourself what difference this platform makes, at home and abroad? Consider this: six federal ministries, around 2000 members across all sectors and one shared commitment to One Health research. That is rare, and it gives us the opportunity to lead by example.

This year's programme brings together interdisciplinary research built on observation, experimentation and evidence, on ideas that can be tested and revised. In this room, we do not need to explain the One Health concept; that would be carrying coals to Newcastle. Instead, let us go deeper and connect our research across sectors, continents and mindsets, to unlock the full potential of collaboration, communication and capacity strengthening.

Looking beyond Germany, the platform has recently started a discussion on better coordination and alignment of One Health initiatives across Europe. The aim is to break down national silos and to open doors for our young researchers to work across borders.

The One Health Platform is your platform! Our governance is community-driven, which means that all of you, from senior scientists to early-career researchers, are invited to engage, contribute and help shape it. So please join the Members' Assembly and the election of the Scientific Advisory Board. Look at the candidate profiles, and consider standing for election yourself.

Finally, a few announcements:

First, we warmly welcome the newly established research consortia on "Pandemic Prevention and Response within a One Health Framework," funded by the BMFTR under the umbrella of the platform. Please join their session.

Second, as every year, we offer several activities for early-career scientists. Take part in the poster slams and the poster prize and join the One Health Career Get-Together. Most of all: network!

Third, we have scheduled a late-breaking session on the recent emergence of Shamonda virus in Central Europe.

Finally, my sincere thanks to Dana Thal, Friederike Jansen, Sebastian Sprengel, Anett Wagemann and the team at Orgalution GmbH for their tremendous work in keeping the platform and this symposium running.

Thank you all for being here. Enjoy the symposium!

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