

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **FORMATION OF A PRIVATE SECTOR BRICS HEALTH AND PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION CAN PLAY HUGE ROLE IN MAKING QUALITY HEALTHCARE ACCESSIBLE TO AFRICA**

**For Immediate Release**

**22 August 2023**

On Thursday, 17 August 2023, the Numolux Group held an event to commemorate the culmination of their series of Health Seminars titled: BRICS and Africa: African Solutions to Africa's Health Challenges.

The purpose of these seminars was to bring together stakeholders, namely businesses, governments, academics, civil society and interested individuals and institutions, to focus on health challenges faced by the people of BRICS and African Countries and find solutions to said challenges.

Findings from these seminars, which focused on malaria, non – communicable diseases (oncology and diabetes), regulatory harmonisation and mental health and wellness – clearly emphasised that there is a need for:

- greater collaboration between the private and public sectors to improve the quality of health and promote wellness,
- the harmonisation of the regulatory authorities within the SADC, the African continent and BRICS countries,
- BRICS investment in the pharmaceutical and medical equipment space, from research and development through to manufacturing,
- these products are to be made available to the continent of Africa.

There is a need for greater collaboration between regulatory authorities within SADC, Africa, and the BRICS to facilitate ease of trade and to increase access to affordable medicines, pharmaceuticals and vaccines, preferably manufactured locally.

Dr Owen KALUWA, WHO Representative for South Africa, was present at the event and cited challenges in global healthcare as follows:

- Around 30% of the global population cannot access essential health services (2019).
- Almost 2 billion people face catastrophic or impoverishing health spending, with significant inequalities affecting those most vulnerable (2017).
- Many other health-related SDG targets are also, of course:
- An estimated 5 million under-5 children died in 2021.
- Global MMR is 223 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births (2020), against the SDG global target of 70.
- Globally we are off course for SDG targets on infectious and non-communicable diseases.

With all of the above in mind, Col (Ret) Hilton Klein, Chairperson of the Numolux Group fiercely advocated for the formal formation of a private sector BRICS Health and Pharmaceutical Association. He said: "As the private sector, we can no longer stand by as Africa and her people get the short end of the stick in healthcare. Within our space of BRICS and African countries, we can work alongside governments and produce life-saving medicines, vaccines and medical-related products – which are easily accessible and more affordable to the most underserved populations of the globe.

Member of SA BRICS Business Council, Stavros Nicolaou, spoke at the Numolux event and echoed Col. Klein's sentiment, saying Africa needs financial support to strengthen the health infrastructure and be able to procure medicines and vaccines to help fight against pandemics which hit the continent. Nicolaou insisted that "Africa should be given an equal opportunity to equality of resources, pharmaceutical interventions, medicines, and vaccines."

The Deputy Minister of Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, emphasised that South Africa is committed to building a partnership between BRICS and Africa in a bid to unlock mutually beneficial opportunities for increased trade, investment, and infrastructure development.

One positive event, which could lead to creating jobs at a crucial time in South Africa's economy, was the announcement of a new partnership between COVIRIX Medical from Melbourne, Australia and the Numolux Group.

Prof Kumud Dhital, CEO of COVIRIX Medical, was present at the event and said he was excited about their new venture with Numolux: "COVIRIX Medical is delighted to announce a partnership with the South African Numolux Group towards further developing and introducing our repurposed, and now patented inhalational antiviral therapy to the African continent and ultimately to the BRICS + Alliance, and beyond. Extensive pre-clinical studies demonstrate effectiveness against several SARS-CoV-2 variants. In addition, due to its unique mechanism of action, we believe that it will provide broad-spectrum effectiveness against a wide range of viral respiratory diseases."

"I believe that the power of this partnership will go well beyond this immediate remit and that it will provide a sustainable platform to accelerate the development of additional therapies for other diseases, whenever possible, through our repurposing strategy that significantly shortens the standard timeline of product discovery to prescription.

We are confident that this strategic global relationship between our Australian company and the Numolux Group will eventually permit us to jointly deliver a wider portfolio of healthcare solutions beyond therapeutic and prophylactic pharmaceuticals, including diagnostic solutions."

Richard Li, Executive Director and Head of Corporate Development at COVIRIX Medical, added: "We are proud to be the first Australian pharmaceutical company to have partnered with the dynamic Numolux Group of South Africa to leverage on the business and investment opportunities available from the African continent and the BRICS Alliance."

For more information on the outcomes of the Series of International Health Seminars (Malaria, Non-Communicable Diseases, Regulatory Harmonisation and Mental Health and Wellness)

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