
FP-ICGLR and ACRN establish landmark regional partnership to strengthen parliamentary leadership on clinical research and health innovation

The three-year agreement creates the first regional parliamentary framework dedicated to advancing evidence-informed clinical research policy, health innovation and stronger health systems across the Great Lakes Region.

KINSHASA, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and HARARE, Zimbabwe, July 16, 2026 — The Forum of Parliamentarians of the Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR) and the Africa Clinical Research Network (ACRN) have signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishing a strategic framework for parliamentary cooperation on clinical research, health innovation and evidence-informed policymaking.

Signed by Ambassador Dr. Deo Mwapinga, Secretary General of FP-ICGLR, and Dr. Tariro Makadzange, Chief Executive Officer of ACRN, the partnership represents one of the first structured regional parliamentary initiatives in Africa dedicated specifically to strengthening legislative engagement on clinical research governance and health innovation.

The agreement establishes mechanisms for parliamentary dialogue, technical cooperation, peer learning and country-level initiatives that will support Member Parliaments in developing legislative and policy environments that enable responsible clinical research while protecting research participants and strengthening public accountability.

Clinical research is increasingly recognised as a strategic pillar for resilient health systems, pharmaceutical manufacturing, regulatory development, health security and sustainable economic growth. Yet despite carrying a significant share of the global disease burden, Africa remains underrepresented in clinical research, limiting opportunities to generate locally relevant evidence and health innovations.

Building sustainable research ecosystems therefore requires more than scientific excellence. It also depends on strong legislative frameworks, effective public oversight, ethical governance and sustained public investment—all areas in which parliaments play a fundamental constitutional role.

As the parliamentary institution of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), FP-ICGLR is uniquely positioned to facilitate regional cooperation among its twelve Member Parliaments, promoting the exchange of experience and encouraging evidence-informed approaches to legislation, oversight and public policy while fully respecting national constitutional processes.

"Parliamentary leadership is indispensable in creating the legislative and policy environments that allow responsible clinical research to flourish while protecting participants and ensuring accountability for public resources," said Ambassador Dr. Deo Mwapinga, Secretary General of FP-ICGLR. "Through this cooperation, our Member Parliaments will gain greater access to technical expertise, comparative regional experience and practical tools that strengthen evidence-informed policymaking, while continuing to exercise their constitutional responsibilities according to their respective national legislative processes."

Areas of Cooperation

The Memorandum of Understanding establishes a comprehensive framework for collaboration centred on strengthening parliamentary capacity and regional cooperation.

A key feature of the partnership is the establishment of a Joint Clinical Research and Health Innovation Task Force, anchored under the FP-ICGLR Committee on Humanitarian and Social Issues. The Task Force will bring together parliamentary leaders and technical experts to identify emerging legislative and policy challenges affecting clinical research and to develop practical resources for consideration by FP-ICGLR and Member Parliaments.

The partners will also establish a Parliamentary Awareness, Champions and Peer Learning Platform to provide structured capacity-building for parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and FP-ICGLR personnel. The platform

will facilitate exchanges with clinical research institutions, medicines regulatory authorities, ethics committees, universities, industry representatives and other stakeholders involved in health innovation across Africa.

Recognising the importance of translating regional cooperation into practical outcomes, FP-ICGLR and ACRN will jointly identify two initial country-level pilot initiatives. These pilots will test innovative parliamentary approaches, generate practical lessons and inform future regional policy engagement.

“Scientific expertise alone is not sufficient to build a sustainable research ecosystem,” Makadzange said. “Countries also need institutions, policies and public decisions that are informed by evidence. Parliamentarians have an important role through legislation, oversight and budget scrutiny. This regional cooperation creates a practical way to connect technical knowledge with parliamentary processes and strengthen the institutions that support health innovation over time.”

The cooperation will consider a broad range of policy issues affecting responsible clinical research, including regulatory and ethics governance, participant protection and informed consent, research financing, governance of health data and biological samples, post-trial access, local manufacturing, pandemic preparedness and broader health system resilience.

The Memorandum of Understanding establishes a framework for long-term cooperation. Financial arrangements for individual activities will be agreed separately by the parties.

About ACRN

The Africa Clinical Research Network (ACRN) is an African-led organisation dedicated to strengthening the continent's clinical research ecosystem. Working with healthcare institutions, investigators, regulators, industry and public-sector partners, ACRN builds capacity for high-quality clinical trials through workforce development, site readiness, regulatory coordination and data-driven research delivery. Its mission is to expand access to clinical research while accelerating the development of medicines and health innovations that respond to Africa's health priorities.

About FP-ICGLR

The Forum of Parliaments of the Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR) is the inter-parliamentary institution of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, comprising the national parliaments of Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Headquartered in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, FP-ICGLR promotes parliamentary cooperation in support of the implementation of the ICGLR Pact on Peace, Security, Stability and Development. The Forum advances harmonised legislative action, parliamentary oversight, regional integration and dialogue to foster peace, democratic governance, sustainable development and resilience throughout the Great Lakes Region.

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