

John Nkengasong Appointed Ambassador and Spokesperson for the Virchow Prize Laureates

Berlin, September 19, 2025 – The Virchow Foundation is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. John N. Nkengasong as Ambassador and Spokesperson for the Virchow Prize Laureates. Dr. Nkengasong is the inaugural Virchow Prize Laureate (2022), awarded under the High Patronage of the President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier. In this role, he will champion and amplify the work and voices of current and future Laureates, promoting the shared mission of ‘health for all’ and advancing the Foundation’s commitment to global health and equity.

Dr. Nkengasong brings a distinguished career dedicated to strengthening pandemic preparedness, building resilient health systems, and expanding equitable healthcare access across Africa and worldwide. He previously served as the Founding Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), led the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) as Ambassador at large, and acted as Senior Bureau Official for Global Health Security and Diplomacy at the U.S. Department of State. Since March, he has been Executive Director for Higher Education, Collaboratives, and Strategic Initiatives at the Mastercard Foundation. His leadership places a focus on science-driven, collaborative action as a transformative force in global health.

As Spokesperson, Dr. Nkengasong will be the primary contact for Virchow Prize Laureates, helping to publicize their achievements, strengthen their collective advocacy, and highlight the essential role of health in sustainable development, aligned with the vision of the Virchow Foundation and Prize.

“The Virchow Prize Laureates embody a shared vision of advancing health as a human right and global good,” said Nkengasong. “It is a privilege to serve as their spokesperson and to support the Virchow Foundation’s mission of fostering lasting health impact worldwide.”

Since its establishment in 2022, the Virchow Prize has recognized four exceptional individuals for contributions to global health. The Virchow Prize Ceremony 2025 will be held October 11 at Berlin City Hall, honouring Laureates Quarraisha Abdool Karim and Zulfiqar A. Bhutta. Key speakers will include Governing Mayor of Berlin and High Patron Kai Wegner, German Federal Minister of Health Nina Warken, CEO of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance Dr. Sania Nishtar, and WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

About the Virchow Prize and Foundation:

The non-profit Virchow Foundation annually awards the Virchow Prize, supporting UN efforts to protect the health of people and the planet and highlighting health’s central role in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The €500,000 Prize honors outstanding contributions and lifelong achievements in global health. Established in 2021, the Foundation operates with support from scientific academies, parliamentarians, and civil society, commemorating the legacy of Berlin physician Rudolf Virchow.

Media representatives may apply for accreditation to attend the Virchow Prize Ceremony 2025 until October 10, 2025 using the form at virchowprize.org/communications-kit/

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