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Bio Usawa Biotechnology and Bioeq AG Partner to Create Widespread Access to Vision-Saving Medicine Across Sub-Saharan Africa

Landmark partnership will democratize access to critical eye treatment for millions facing preventable blindness from diabetes complications

July 1, 2025 – Kigali, Rwanda; San Francisco; and Zug, Switzerland – Bio Usawa Biotechnology Ltd. (Bio Usawa) and Bioeq AG today announced a groundbreaking agreement that will bring a life-changing biosimilar medicine—**ranibizumab**, used to treat serious retinal diseases—within reach for millions across Sub-Saharan Africa. This partnership grants Bio Usawa exclusive rights to register and commercialize Bioeq’s ranibizumab biosimilar under the brand name **BioUcenta™**, marking a critical step forward in democratizing access to essential biologic therapies across the region.

Ranibizumab, a biosimilar to Lucentis®, is a monoclonal antibody used to treat **diabetic macular edema (DME)**, **wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD)**, and other blinding retinal diseases. While this breakthrough therapy has been transforming lives in higher-income countries for nearly 20 years, patients across Africa have been denied access due to prohibitive costs and limited availability. This partnership aims to end that disparity, bringing hope to millions who face preventable vision loss.

“By making ranibizumab accessible in Sub-Saharan Africa, we are empowering doctors to save the vision of millions, particularly those suffering complications from diabetes—a disease that is quietly but rapidly becoming one of Africa’s greatest health threats,” said Dr. Menghis Bairu, Co-founder, President and CEO of Bio Usawa.

"Our partnership with Bio Usawa is core to our commitment to expanding global access to essential medicines," said Martin Huber, Managing Director of Bioeq AG. "Together, we are breaking down the barriers that have denied effective treatment for serious retinal diseases to patients across Sub-Saharan Africa for too long. Bringing a high-quality, affordable ranibizumab biosimilar to this region is a significant step towards health justice."

Africa is at the front line of a growing diabetes crisis. According to the International Diabetes Federation, **more than 24 million Africans were living with diabetes in 2024**, with that number projected to **double by 2050**. Diabetic retinopathy, a leading complication, threatens the sight of up to one-third of these patients. Without timely intervention, many will face blindness—an outcome that is both preventable and tragic.

BioUcenta™, administered via intravitreal injection, works by blocking abnormal blood vessel growth in the retina and preventing fluid leakage—two key causes of vision loss. The biosimilar has already been approved in both Europe and the United States and will now be registered and distributed across Sub-Saharan Africa by Bio Usawa.

“This collaboration is about equity,” added Dr. Bairu. “Access to advanced biologic therapies should not be a privilege of geography or income. We are proud to work with Bioeq to make this a reality for Africa—ensuring that patients, regardless of where they live, can receive the care they deserve.”

The agreement marks the initial fulfillment of Bio Usawa's mission to democratize access to high-quality, affordable, and proven biotherapies in low-middle income countries. By establishing local capabilities and partnerships, the initiative creates a foundation for broader access to essential medicines across the continent.

The partnership also represents a new model for global health equity, demonstrating how innovative collaborations can bridge the gap between life-saving medical advances and the patients who need them most. Rather than accepting that cutting-edge treatments remain exclusive to wealthy nations, this agreement shows how strategic partnerships can extend medical breakthroughs to underserved populations.

About Bio Usawa

Bio Usawa is an African biotechnology company with a mission to **expand access to affordable, high-quality biosimilars** across the continent. By combining deep industry experience with regional partnerships, Bio Usawa is building a future where **life-saving biomedicines are made in Africa, by Africans, for Africans—and beyond**. For more information, visit www.biOUSAWA.com.

About Bioeq AG

Bioeq AG is a Swiss biopharmaceutical joint venture between Polpharma Biologics Group and Formycon AG. Bioeq develops and licenses biosimilars for global markets, combining innovation and quality to improve patient access to vital therapies. Learn more at www.bioeq.ch.

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