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Welcome & Opening Remarks

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Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear Colleagues and Friends!

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to the B17 OA Conference here at the Harnack-Haus and jointly follow up on recent advances and future perspectives for open access and open science.

At the first Berlin OA Conference in the year 2003, we discussed and issued the Berlin Declaration on Open Access, which has since then been signed by over 800 leading scholarly organizations around the world.

When we met again at the B11 conference in 2013, however, the progress achieved was rather limited. Over a period of ten years, the OA proportion had increased at very low rates around 1% per year to a meager 10% of the annual output of scholarly journal articles. Accordingly, our 2013 Mission Statement said:

“We [therefore] urge research organisations to work together internationally and intensively to formulate a viable, coordinated and transparent strategy to enable a transition to a system where OA publishing is the norm.” and “It is time to return control of scholarly publishing to the scholars.”

In the OA2020 Expression of Interest released in 2016, we became more specific and stated:

“We aim to transform a majority of today’s scholarly journals from subscription to OA publishing in accordance with community-specific publication preferences. At the same time, we continue to support new and improved forms of OA publishing.”

“We will pursue this transformation process by converting resources currently spent on journal subscriptions into funds to support sustainable OA business models. Accordingly, we intend to re-organize the underlying cash flows, to establish transparency with regard to costs and potential savings, and to adopt mechanisms to avoid undue publication barriers.” and

“We see the initiative as one element of a more profound evolution of the academic publishing system that will lead to major improvements in scholarly communication and research evaluation.”

So where do we stand now, in the year 2025?

In many organizations, consortia, and countries around the world, we have made great progress and converted up to 90% or more of our publication output from subscription to open access by pursuing two complementary pathways: the so-called transformative or publish-and-read agreements with traditional publishers, and pure OA publishing agreements with pure OA

publishers. In this regard, we have good reasons to celebrate and enjoy what we achieved during recent years.

At the global scale, however, we have not yet completed the long-planned transition to Open Access more than half-way, because there are still numerous scholarly organizations, consortia, and countries where the publishing industry has missed to provide and implement appropriate OA agreements and services.

Thus, I would like to call upon the publishing industry representatives in this room to build on our meeting today and move from a half-complete to a full transition to open access publishing in scholarly journals in the very near future.

Completing the OA transition and moving forward with other elements of open science will pay off for all parties interested in scholarly and societal progress: It will advance scholarly and societal collaboration around the globe, and it will benefit the scholarly community and publishers interested in maintaining high quality by reducing the voids and niches currently infiltrated by predatory publishers.

In summary, I see two important tasks and immediate next steps ahead of us:

- 1) Complete the global OA transition as soon as possible by rolling out the successful existing blueprints of transformative and pure OA publishing agreements in a globally equitable and sustainable way.
- 2) Improve scientific publishing and quality assurance by integration of other elements of open science, including open data, open source, open peer review, research integrity, and AI/ML tools. In doing so, we can build on successful role models from different scientific communities – for example from the Earth science community, where open data, open source and open peer review are being widely and successfully applied since more than a couple of decades.

When we pursue these two tasks and steps, let's keep in mind what we already outlined in the OA2020 Expression of Interest: to respect and take care of different needs and traditions in different scholarly communities.

Open access to scholarly publications should be easy for everyone, because the Latin root of the word “publishing” essentially means making things available to the public, and thus to people and society at large. Open data and open source, on the other hand, can be a delicate matter in sensitive areas of technology development and intellectual property rights etc.

Thus, let's do both: complete the long overdue transition to open access and move on to more challenging tasks in the unended quest for scholarly progress and open scholarship.

With this, I would like to hand over to my colleagues.

Thanks again for joining us and enjoy the meeting!