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21 October 2025

UCT in landmark collaboration with CISA to advance cybersecurity and AI research in Africa

The University of Cape Town (UCT) and the CISA Helmholtz Center for Information Security have signed a landmark agreement that will see the two organisations collaborate on cutting-edge research and capacity building in cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed on 18 September 2025 in Saarbrücken, Germany, will create new opportunities for joint projects, student exchanges and the co-development of innovative solutions to global digital challenges.

The MoU, signed by Faith Blakemore, head of International Affairs and Science Relations at CISA on behalf of the institute, brings together one of Africa's leading academic institutions and one of Europe's foremost institutes in information security. The partnership will enable cross-institutional exchange between researchers and students, facilitate mutual visits and drive research and innovation in cybersecurity and trustworthy AI.

Associate Professor Jonathan Shock, director of the UCT [AI Initiative](#), said: "The MoU underscores UCT's commitment to building international collaborations that strengthen both fundamental research and the application of secure, trustworthy technologies in African and global contexts."

Professor Wallace Chigona, director of the [Cybersecurity Capacity Centre for Southern Africa \(C3SA\)](#) at UCT, said: "The partnership brings together two research centres with a strong passion of contributing to making the world a safe place for all. C3SA seeks to address cybersecurity capacity deficit in Africa. This collaboration will contribute towards that goal through facilitating mobility of researchers and students between Africa and Germany, thereby contributing to capacity development. Further, C3SA will tap into the research of CISA to inform the capacity development initiatives in Africa."

Commenting on the significance of the partnership, Blakemore said: "When CISA signed the Africa Charter earlier this year, we were keen to take the next step through the development of partnerships such as these: Partnerships that not only create opportunities for CISA researchers to engage with the scientific community in Africa, but that also open up new international research perspectives and trajectories to all partners involved. The

MoU will now act as the foundation for further exciting and equally beneficial activities, including research opportunities for members of all our institutions."

The MoU was signed during a three-day Knowledge Exchange Workshop with cybersecurity researchers from CISPA and UCT at the CISPA main site in Saarbrücken. The workshop, supported by the Strengthening the Europe-Africa Digital Ecosystem (SEADE) Through Increased R&I Cooperation Twinning Programme funded through the European Union's Horizon Europe programme, brought together researchers to share insights and discuss perspectives in cybersecurity, machine learning and trustworthy AI.

The partnership has already had an auspicious start. One UCT master's student, Tswelopele Moshe, is currently writing his thesis in a co-supervision model with researchers from both UCT and CISPA.

The key objectives of the partnership include:

- enabling cross-institutional exchange between researchers and students
- facilitating mutual visits and joint research projects in cybersecurity and trustworthy AI
- advancing cutting-edge research and capacity building in cybersecurity and artificial intelligence
- addressing the cybersecurity capacity deficit in Africa through researcher and student mobility
- leveraging CISPA's research expertise to inform capacity development initiatives in Africa
- strengthening international collaborations that support both fundamental research and the application of secure, trustworthy technologies.

ENDS

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