



UCT ready to host the world's third ICGB

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Following the recent announcement that South Africa won the bid to host the world's third International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), and that the ICGEB will be hosted by UCT's Institute for Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine, our University's preparations in this regard are in full swing.

There had only been two ICGEB components in the world in laboratories in Trieste, Italy and New Delhi, India, until the recent announcement (in December); this establishment is now the third international component centre in the world and Africa's first. The Department of Science and Technology, through which the South African government bid, has committed R40-million over the next four years in support of the establishment.

The ICGEB places major emphasis on health-related research as well as on projects towards the sustainable application of biotechnology in agriculture. The main focus is currently on HIV and AIDS, hepatitis, rotavirus, human papilloma virus, malaria, tuberculosis and more recently, dengue. The ICGEB's research is expected to help scientists throughout the world to determine the mechanisms related to infections and the insurgence of diseases at the molecular level. This will lead to breakthroughs in the understanding of these diseases and possibly to the identification of diagnostic and specific drugs or vaccines.

In his announcement, the national minister for Science and Technology, Mosibudi Mangena remarked that UCT's incredible team and their 'sterling efforts' contributed to South Africa being awarded the bid.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UCT, Professor Njabulo S. Ndebele praised the team of researchers and management of the IIDMM, and pronounced UCT's committed to the success of this project.

"This is a great achievement for the university. It meets our vision of a leading African university. UCT's strategic objective to be research-led necessitates ongoing examination of our research support systems and procedures, as well as continual review of UCT's research signature themes. So, we are proud that this project sits with us and we are working hard to make it successful," Prof Ndebele said.