

PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES INFORMATION SHEET

Name of the Partnership/Initiative

Establishment of an African Regional Centre for Infectious Diseases

Expected date of initiation: 2003

Expected date of completion: 2006

Partners Involved:

Governments: Italy (DGCS), Algeria, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania and Tunisia (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Intergovernmental organizations: ICGEB, WHO, UNAIDS, IVI

Major groups:

- African Agency on Biotechnology, Algiers, Algeria;
- University of Buea, Buea, Cameroon;
- Egyptian Academy of Scientific Research, Cairo, Egypt;
- National Research Centre, Giza, Egypt;
- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Accra, Ghana;
- Department of Medicine, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya;
- Centre National de Coordination et de Planification de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique, Rabat, Morocco;
- National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB), Ibadan, Nigeria;
- Institute for Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine (IDDMM) at the University of Cape Town (South Africa);
- Commission for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering, Khartoum, Sudan;
- Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COST), Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania;
- Centre of Biotechnology, University of Sfax, Sfax, Tunisia.

Leading Partner: Italy - DGCS

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Main objectives of the Partnership/Initiative

Since 1987, the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), an autonomous intergovernmental organisation that has been originally established by UNIDO, operates in close contact with the UN Common System as a centre of excellence for research and training in genetic engineering and biotechnology, with special attention to the needs of the developing countries. The Instruments of Action of the Centre include research programmes, implemented in its two laboratories of Trieste, Italy, and New Delhi, India, training programmes, collaborative research with its Affiliated Centres located in Member States, as well as scientific and institutional assistance on themes of major impact related to biotechnology.

Since inception, ICGEB has placed a major emphasis on health-related research activities, with major focus on HIV/AIDS, various hepatitis, rotavirus, human papilloma virus, malaria, tuberculosis and, more recently, dengue. Its research, aimed at determining the mechanisms related to the infection and the insurgence of diseases at the molecular level, are presently leading to important breakthroughs in the understanding of these diseases and, possibly, to the identification of diagnostics and specific drugs if not vaccines. The initiative intends to set-up a global research and training programme, specifically directed to African scientists, in collaboration with the Institute for Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine (IDDMM) at the University of Cape Town (South Africa), with the aim of finalising a feasibility study for the set-up of an African Regional Centre for Infectious Diseases.

The initiative is also in line with the “Cape Town Declaration” and the “Cape Town Initiative”, endorsed by the Governments of South Africa and Italy, in March 2002, during the State Visit to South Africa of the President of the Italian Republic, which identifies the essential role of science and technology for sustainable development.

Please also provide a brief description of the relationship of the Partnership/Initiative with the objectives of Agenda 21 as well as relevant goals and objectives of the United Nation Millennium Declaration:

The initiative meets several of the objectives set by Chapter 6 of Agenda 21 “Protecting and Promoting Human Health”, through activities aimed at fulfilling the objectives set by Programme Area B (control of Communicable Diseases) and in particular:

- a) to reduce the number of deaths from childhood diarrhoea in developing countries by 50 to 70 per cent;

- b) to institute anti-malaria programmes in all countries where malaria presents a significant health problem and maintain the transmission-free status of areas freed from endemic malaria;
- c) to implement control programmes in countries where major human parasitic infections;
- d) to mobilize and unify national and international efforts against AIDS to prevent infection and to reduce the personal and social impact of HIV infection;
- e) to contain the resurgence of tuberculosis, with particular emphasis on multiple antibiotic resistant forms;
- f) to accelerate research on improved vaccines and implement to the fullest extent possible the use of vaccines in the prevention of disease.

The initiative is also in compliance with Chapter 16 of Agenda 21 “Environmentally Sound Management of Biotechnology” and its Programme Area (b), “improving human health”.

The initiative contributes to the achievement of the Millennium Goals:

- to have, by the year 2015, halted and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, the scourge of malaria and other major diseases that afflict humanity;
- to encourage the pharmaceutical industry to make essential drugs more widely available and affordable by all who need them in developing countries..

Expected results

Please provide a brief description:

By the end of the project, the following achievements are expected:

- the feasibility study for the set-up of an African Training and Research Regional Centre for Infectious Diseases;
- the elaboration, for the countries involved, of a strategic plan for the development of environmentally sustainable biotechnologies and their subsequent application to human health;
- the discovery of at least one novel vaccine aimed at one of the diseases investigated, and the identification of suitable industrial partners for its development;
- the strengthening of research institutes located in the countries involved through long-term training programmes and research in collaboration with the ICGEB laboratories;
- the access, through the ICGEB Biotechnology Transfer Unit, to technologies for the production of recombinant bio-pharmaceuticals and other generic drugs.

Specific targets of the Partnership/Initiative and timeframe for their achievement

Tentative timetable:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Timing (months)</u>
Preparatory phase	current
Identification of national counterparts	1 – 3
First Meeting of the Joint Committee	4
Preparation of work-plans at national/regional levels	5 – 6
Implementation of research and training programmes	7 – 24
First Regional Training Course on Molecular Medicine	12
Second Meeting of the Joint Committee	18

First Meeting of the Regional Forum	18
Elaboration of National Strategic Plans for the development of Biotechnologies and their Sustainable use in fighting infectious diseases	18 – 36
Second Regional Training Course on Molecular Medicine	24
Elaboration of a feasibility study for the establishment of an African Regional Centre for Infectious Diseases	24 – 36
Final Meeting of the Joint Committee:	
Adoption of guidelines and future Strategies	36
Second Meeting of the Regional Forum	36
Third Regional Training Course on Molecular Medicine	36

Coordination and Implementation mechanism

Please provide a brief description of expected coordination/implementation mechanism of the Partnership/Initiative:

A Joint Committee, composed by representatives of the IIDMM and of the ICGEB, will be responsible for the overall management of the Project. A Regional Forum, composed by the representatives of the countries covered by the Initiative, will meet twice during its duration and the joint Committee shall provide the Forum with a general report on the progress of the Initiative. The Director, Administration and External relations of ICGEB will be in charge of the implementation of the Initiative and will have the responsibility of the financial transactions performed to that end.

Arrangements for funding

Please describe available and/or expected sources of funding for the implementation of the Partnership/Initiative (e.g. donor government(s); international organization(s)/financial institution(s); foundation(s); private sector; other major groups, etc.):

Italy (DGCS) will contribute with a specific grant of Euro 1.000.000 (expected) for the implementation of this Partnership initiative. Governments of the involved countries will participate through local expenditures and “in kind” contributions. Additional funds (also for a possible extension of the modular training programmes as well as to provide similar activities to other African countries) are also sought from other Governments, international organizations, funding agencies, etc.

Arrangements for capacity building and technology transfer

Please include information if the Partnership/Initiative provides for training, informational support, institutional strengthening and/or other capacity building measures:

Training and technology transfer in biotechnology are among the main objectives of the ICGEB: in the implementation of the project, ICGEB intends to organise three Regional Training Courses on the Molecular Medicine, while at least 9 post-doctoral fellowships will be earmarked for scientists originating from the Region, to participate in the research activities implemented within the laboratories of either ICGEB Component.

Please also provide here a brief description of expected arrangements for technology transfer (if applicable)

Results of the research performed in the national institutes (new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, clinical protocols) will be transferred, on a favourable basis, to other countries participating in the initiative. ICGEB has set-up a mechanism for the transfer of proprietary and non-proprietary technologies, that includes specific technology-related training programmes, that can be easily utilized in the present context, should the need or the occasion arise.

Links of Partnership/Initiative with on-going sustainable development activities at the international and/or regional level (if any)

Please provide a brief description:

Specific links are already in place with the WHO and with the Malaria Vaccine Initiative. Similar links will be necessary with other initiatives, in particular related to training, being implemented by other international organisations (especially WHO), with the UNAIDS initiative and with the International Vaccine Institute (IVI).

Other relevant information:

Web-site: <http://www.icgeb.org>

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