



# ICGEB

International Centre for Genetic  
Engineering and Biotechnology

Developing  
Knowledge



**Suzanne Kerbavcic, MBA**  
**Head, Communications and Outreach, External Relations**  
**Statement at the UNIDO 17<sup>th</sup> General Conference, 29 November 2017**

Chair, Director General,  
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to attend the General Conference on behalf of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology with which I have been associated since 1987, when it was still a project of UNIDO. This year, the ICGEB celebrates its 30th year of research, training and technology transfer to industry in the field of biotechnology to promote sustainable global development, and 23 years as an autonomous international organisation operating within the framework of the United Nations family.

At the Industrial Development Board last year, marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of UNIDO, the Director-General of the ICGEB, Prof. Mauro Giacca, expressed the firm intention to strengthen the cooperation between the two organisations. The Director General of UNIDO reciprocated this auspice, clearly indicating that UNIDO was most willing to follow this course, and affirming that there is very solid ground for development in this direction.

The ICGEB is unique in pursuing its goals through advanced experimental research, running 47 research programmes in its own laboratories, in Trieste, Italy, New Delhi, India and Cape Town, South Africa, with over 600 scientists actively engaged in pursuing excellence in research and transfer of technology.

ICGEB is the only international organisation in the field of biotechnology to have its own research laboratories, enabling its science to be done “in-house”. Its pillars of research are cancer, infectious and non-infectious diseases, food security and biofuels.

A strong complementarity persists between the biotech activities of UNIDO, with its overall expertise in industrial planning, and the specific expertise in research and developing knowledge, also with a view to innovation, which defines the ICGEB. This complementarity extends through UNIDO’s access to the Ministries of industry and finance in its own Member States and ICGEB’s direct and top-level access to the scientific communities in those same countries. Recently, a joint article was published by UNIDO and ICGEB entitled “Biotechnology and the bioeconomy - Towards inclusive and sustainable industrial development”.

Against this background our two organisations have been working to define specific areas of possible, more intense collaboration, and two areas in particular have been put into focus.

ICGEB intends to launch an initiative for the further development of biosimilars and similar biotherapeutic products; drugs which licenses have, or are about to, expire. ICGEB holds more than 70 agreements with industrial partners around the world, some of these have already been able to bring their own production of biosimilars to domestic and foreign markets. ICGEB is committed to upgrade its offer through an ISO 17024 certification and by acquiring GMP practices, thereby making it even more attractive to industry. It is also considering duplicating the facility that it operates in Trieste to its laboratory in Cape Town, to make it more immediately available for cooperation with more African partners.

A second promising area for cooperation concerns next generation biofuels and related bio by-products from advanced bio-refineries. The ICGEB New Delhi labs have been particularly successful in this field. While external conditions at present are not very favourable to further application of the development of biofuels, given the relatively low cost of oil and gas, ICGEB is ready to transfer available technologies primarily to Member States. Ensuing positive results would include energy production, environmental protection and increasing revenues for the rural communities.

To make the prospect of cooperation between our two organisations concrete, both projects deserve priority attention. Ambitious in their final goals, they require appropriate strategy but are certainly attainable, given our respective expertise, alliances and funding opportunities, such as the African Union, the funding objectives of the European Commission, and the instruments made available by international financial institutions.

While it is a challenging path, on behalf of the Director-General, Prof. Mauro Giacca, I am glad to confirm that ICGEB is ready to fully play its part.

Thank you very much.