

Press release

Dakar, Senegal, May 25, 2023

Unizima launches African academic-private partnerships, paving the way for cross-country biotech education.

Unizima announces new academic partnerships, and enhanced cooperation between academic and private actors from Senegal, Rwanda and Belgium around a joint Master's degree in biotechnology.

To support the capacity building needed to enable autonomous vaccine production in Africa, Unizima, an affiliate of the Univercells Group, the University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar (Senegal), the University of Rwanda, the University Amadou Mahtar Mbow of Diamniadio (Senegal) and the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium) have come together to support the creation of an inter-university Master's in biotechnology. This degree, which will be complementary to the training provided in Rwanda, will be framed by practical professional internships in the field, organized in the laboratories of the Univercells Group to enable students to acquire a first practical experience of the world of bioproduction.

On 20 April, within the framework of a Round Table organized around university partnerships, Unizima S.A. ("Unizima"), the Cheikh Anta Diop University ("UCAD"), the University of Rwanda ("UR"), Amadou Mathar Mbow University ("UAM") and the Université Libre de Bruxelles ("ULB") decided to agree on the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during the princely mission led by HRH Princess Astrid in Dakar. The aim of this initiative is to create a joint Master's degree at the participating universities offering a differentiated and high-quality training programme. This South-North collaboration would support the strengthening and development of the in-country skills needed to guarantee the success of local production of vaccines and therapeutic products in these African countries.

If the first will is to anticipate the provision of a competent workforce, qualified in the use of cutting-edge biotechnology or bioinformatics, this inter-university cooperation also aims at to foster closer collaboration between the laboratories of UCAD and ULB, to jointly contribute to the body of scientific research on malaria.

By signing this agreement of university partnerships between Senegal, Rwanda, and Belgium, all partners wish to concretize the ambition to advance towards a common objective favoring the reinforcement of an academic training specific to the world of biotechnology, the sharing of industrial technical expertise, while supporting the effort of scientific research to fight against the health problems specific to Africa.

A unique aspect of this cooperation lies in the desire to bring together a range of academic and private actors whose joint aims are to:

- Share scientific developments and advance research on malaria between the different universities.

- Encourage the strengthening of skills by creating joint and complementary Master's degrees in biotechnology between Africa and Europe, and to promote quality training.
- Make available industrial and technical expertise in biotechnology through practical internship placements that promote a better understanding of industrial reality.

Making healthcare accessible and affordable for all also requires the development of a trained and skilled workforce, supported by close collaborations between academia and the private sector, to achieve vaccine sovereignty in, and for, Africa.

Hala Audi, CEO of Unizima:

“This MoU underscores Unizima’s commitment to more equitable access to vaccines and other biologics. Local pharma manufacturing initiatives will not be sustainable if the new factories are dependent on expensive imported labour to operate them. So, it is vital to create a skilled workforce and R&D base in the countries investing in biopharma infrastructure. This is why Univercells group will support the success of this new Master's degree in biotechnology, contributing our expertise to develop the curriculum, and offering internship opportunities in our industrial sites to students from Rwanda and Senegal.”

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Contacts

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About Unizima

Unizima is part of Univercells, a global life science leader with the mission of making biologics accessible to all. We deliver international biomanufacturing projects from inception to technology transfer and validation. The company brings together all the elements needed to make the project a reality and offers operational support to ensure successful continued operations. The operational support services cover quality control, supply chain, and digital oversight. Unizima also devises and implements bioproduction training programs and designs and builds care centers and diagnostics surveillance centers.

www.unizima.com

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