

## PRESS RELEASE

**NEW DELHI – November 30th, 2022:** The International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) in collaboration with the Embassy of Italy in India has organised a high level meeting on “Pandemic response and Post- Pandemic challenges” with the participation of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS), the Italian agency for research, control and technical-scientific advice on public health. The meeting brought together Senior Scientists from India and Italy who have evaluated the insights gained through the Pandemic and the New Post pandemic Challenges.

Dr. Vincenzo de Luca, Ambassador, Embassy of Italy to India and the Director-General of ICGEB Dr. Lawrence Banks inaugurated the event. The Director-General emphasised the need for such meetings, stating “The pandemic demonstrated the incredible resilience and flexibility of science to respond to a global crisis; in less than one year we had vaccines, diagnostics and surveillance mechanisms all against a virus which was completely new to humans. The challenge going forward is to ensure we do not lose what we have built - a global pandemic response network and thereby being even more equipped to meet the next pandemic.”

Commenting on the collaboration with ICGEB for convening the meeting Dr. Vincenzo de Luca Ambassador, Embassy of Italy said “The pandemic has revealed the crucial importance of multilateral health cooperation to which the Italian G20 Presidency placed strong attention as testified by the Global Health Summit in May 2021 and the Rome Declaration. Cooperation in biomedical research has proven to be strategic for developing a safe and effective vaccine in an extremely short time. In the framework of the Executive Programme for Scientific and Technological Cooperation, the Italian Republic and the Republic of India have paved the way to exchange of Researchers, to the development of Projects of Significant Relevance and to the construction of Networks of Excellence, including the ones on Biomedical Sciences leading to communicable and non-communicable diseases. The dialogue between the Embassy of Italy, ICGEB and the Istituto Superiore di Sanità is a concrete token of the cooperation between Italy and India”.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020. Since then, research on COVID-19 has been conducted at an extraordinary pace, which helped to control the progression of the disease to some extent. Now is the time to evaluate the Pandemic responses and prepare for any unforeseen future situation.

Post-Pandemic change in the pattern of some diseases has been drastic and indicates the probable impact COVID-19 has had in this context. This has spurred scientists globally to study sudden change in the pattern of disease progression in relation to COVID-19. Leading Indian and Italian immunology experts discussed these issues during the meeting where those working in both Malaria and Plant science shared their observations. The topics, such as investigating and translating genomic evidence for public health response to SARS-COV-2 with special focus on surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in Italy, cardiovascular research in the post-pandemic era, drug resistance post COVID in Malaria, and post-pandemic challenges in the agricultural sector, were discussed at length.

ICGEB New Delhi has done tremendous work during the Pandemic; it has collaborated in the effort of the Government of India to provide the testing facility for COVID-19 to the people of the country. Approximately 85,000 RTPCR tests have been done at the COVID facility in the Centre. In collaboration with ICMR, Government of India and Emory University, USA, human monoclonal antibodies have been generated from single cell sorted memory B cells that have high therapeutic value, derived from COVID-19 recovered individuals. The meeting is another service in this direction. On this occasion, the Director, ICGEB, New Delhi said “The Centre has a mandate to work in the area of Human health and Plant sciences. During the Pandemic times, along with rigorously working on COVID, emphasis was also given to understand COVID’s impact on Tuberculosis, Malaria and in Agricultural sector. Similar work in different areas was done at the other ICGEB Components. Through this meeting, we have created a platform for scientific discussions to conclude extremely important learning in Pandemic response and future challenges that will pave the way to understand Coronavirus and its after impact better.”

COVID is still a volatile issue worldwide. Constantly changing variants have worsened the situation. It has impacted the people in different geographical areas in different ways. The conference aspires to study the response of COVID-19 on two continents and the challenges faced by the people in far-located geographical areas. Insights from the Conference will enlighten the future path to deal with the deadly pandemic that cost more than 60 million lives globally and is the biggest challenge in front of human kind to deal with.

### **About the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology**

The ICGEB is a unique intergovernmental organisation initially established as a special project of UNIDO. Autonomous since 1994, it runs over 45 state-of-the-art laboratories, in Trieste, Italy, New Delhi, India and Cape Town, South Africa and forms an interactive network with almost 70 Member States, with operations aligned to those of the United Nations System. It plays a key role in Biotechnology promoting Research excellence, Training, and Technology Transfer to industry, to contribute in concrete terms to sustainable global development.