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UCT signs agreement with leading French geological institute dedicated to sustainable management of natural resources

The University of Cape Town (UCT) and the French Geological Survey public institution, BRGM, have joined forces to promote research in three major themes – responsible mining, the circular economy and the sustainable management of water resources.

UCT and BRGM signed their first memorandum of understanding (MoU) on 4 February 2019 during the Mining Indaba 2019 conference in Cape Town, with the Consul General of France in Cape Town, Laurent Amar, in attendance. This agreement will promote scientific cooperation in order to contribute to research in the broad areas of mineral resources and environmental management.

Signed for an initial duration of five years, the agreement formalises a relationship based on the complementarity between UCT as the leading university in Africa, and the BRGM, for whom nearly 80% of their international activity is deployed on the African continent.

Professor Sue Harrison, Director for the Centre of Bioprocess Engineering Research at UCT, said: "The need to make a paradigm shift in mining and mineral processing practices is well recognised with a growing focus on responsible mining. With this as a common interest of BRGM and UCT, and our complementary skills, growing our interaction and collaboration offers much value to both institutions and beyond. In particular, UCT will bring to play our interdisciplinary research in minerals beneficiation and valorisation, our focus on the importance of regional development to the benefit of the community and the interacting focus on water sensitive design."

These include developing innovative approaches for the treatment of primary mineral resources and the recycling of mining waste, but also in the context of a sustainable groundwater management applied in particular to mining sites and water supply in urban areas.

Pierre Toulhoat, BRGM Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Scientific Director, commented: "UCT is the number one research university in Africa and, moreover, established in one of the world's largest and most important mining countries. Therefore, there is a strong

strategic interest for an institution like ours, of which 80% of our international activity takes place on the African continent. The eligibility of South Africa for the European H2020 programme is also an asset, as this alliance can also be part of a European dynamic."

Mineral resources and water at the heart of tomorrow's issues

As a first step, the collaboration between the BRGM and UCT will focus on the following themes:

- The valorisation of resources, including the improvement of biohydrometallurgical technologies applied to primary and secondary raw materials;
- The understanding and management of risks and environmental impacts of former mine sites;
- The artificial recharge of aquifers and other alternatives to overcome water scarcity.

Exchanges of scientists, the joint organisation of conferences, the sharing of numerical simulation tools as well as the preparation of projects and bilateral and multi-partnership proposals are planned.

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Note to editors

The BRGM (Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières) is France's reference public institution for Earth Science applications in the management of surface and subsurface resources and risks. BRGM's activities are organised around its five key roles, including scientific research, support to public policy development, international cooperation, and mine safety and training. The BRGM was created in 1959. It operates as a public industrial and commercial institution, reporting to the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition, and the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

For more information, visit: www.brgm.eu.

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