

**German Chancellor Dr. Merkel and Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao witness signing procedure of cooperation contract between Beijing Genomics Institute and University of Lübeck**

On the occasion of the visit of German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel to China, a cooperation contract between the University of Luebeck and the Beijing Genomics Institute was signed yesterday in the People's Congress in Beijing. The German Chancellor and Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao as well as German Minister of Economy, Mr. Michael Glos, were present at the ceremony. On behalf of the University of Luebeck, the contract was signed by Vice Rector Professor Thomas Martinetz and by Professor Rolf Hilgenfeld, the Director of the Institute of Biochemistry, and on behalf of the Beijing Genomics Institute by Professor Yang Huaming and Dr. Wang Jing. The contract will further strengthen the collaboration of the two institutions in the field of genomic and structural analysis of new viruses. Many of these, such as the bird flu virus H5N1 or the SARS coronavirus, have their origin in Southern China, from where they spread towards Europe (as presently is the case with H5N1) or Northern America (as with the SARS virus in 2003). Within the collaboration, the Beijing researchers will analyze the genetic material of the new viruses, whereas the Luebeck group will determine the three-dimensional structures of key components of the pathogens and develop antiviral drugs on this basis. Using such an approach, Professor Hilgenfeld had succeeded in presenting an anti-SARS compound in May 2003, only a few weeks after the discovery of the new virus and during the ongoing global SARS outbreak.

*Further information is available from:*

Professor Rolf Hilgenfeld, Institute of Biochemistry, University of Luebeck

E-mail: [hilgenfeld@biochem.uni-luebeck.de](mailto:hilgenfeld@biochem.uni-luebeck.de)

Cell phone: 0177-2412455