Two MoU were signed between University of Malaya and two French institutions in support of HIR projects headed by Associate Professor Dr. Chan Kok Gan, Institute of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science, during the launch of the ICT-BioAsia Workshop held in UM on 30 May 2016 by the Honorable Minister Datuk Dr. Abu Bakar Mohamad Diah, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. These MoUs involved the University of Malaya, the French National Centre for Scientific Research (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique or CNRS) and the Paris Natural History Museum (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, MNHN). The principal investigators involved are Associate Professor Dr Chan Kok Gan (UM), Dr Yves Dessaux (Director of Research, CNRS at Gif-sur-Yvette) and Professor Dr Soizic Prado (MNHN and Marie Curie University) on the project "Quorum sensing and quorum quenching in the bacterial world".

Dr. Chan said, "Since 2008, we have collaborated with Dr. Yves Dessaux on the bacterial quorum sensing in human and plant pathogens project with the generous support of the French Embassy in Malaysia. Several French fellowships have been awarded to my team and 3 of my PhD students have been attached to laboratories based in Paris". The first MoU between UM and CNRS was signed in 2011 when the project received funding from HIR MoHE. The French Embassy in Malaysia has since regarded this as its flagship project and offered it its full support. To date, Dr Chan’s collaboration with the French researchers has resulted in 7 peer-reviewed papers (ISI-indexed), and 2 books chapters, with several more manuscripts currently under review.

The new MoU with Prof. Prado at the Paris Natural History Museum will explore several hundred molecules originating from bacteria, plants and fungi to test their effects on deadly hospital-acquired pathogens. “The aim of this screening is to find compounds that can block quorum sensing which can then serve as a next generation magic bullet against multi-resistant bacteria. This project is very important, given the issues of emergence of multidrug resistance superbugs which has rendered many antibiotics useless”, said Dr. Chan.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by His Excellency, Mr. Christophe Penot, Ambassador of France in Malaysia, Professor Awang Bulgiba Awang Mahmud, Acting Vice-Chancellor (UM), Puan Hazami Habib, Acting CEO of ASM and the participants of the ICT-BioAsia Workshop.