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WE KNEW THAT 2016 would be a tough year due to the unstable local and global economic conditions. Happily, the year has also had many highlights for the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC). The Centre hosted some high calibre international conferences in 2016, notably the 35th International Geological Congress which brought together approximately 4 000 experts and the 60th Global Summit of the Consumer Goods Forum which was hosted in Africa for the first time. We were delighted to see strong attendance at consumer exhibitions such as Decorex, Cape Homemakers Expo and Cape Town Art Fair.

We also won some major academic and scientific conferences ensuring a sustainable pipeline of business. We are particularly excited about the International Congress of Immunology to be hosted in 2022.

We ended the year on a high; announcing record revenues and profits for our 2015/16 financial year in October and with the various events we will be hosting, more than 11 000 people will walk through our doors during December.

Going into 2017, we will see the continuation of some interesting trends.

Constrained economic conditions and government austerity measures have meant that marketing budgets are becoming tighter across the public and private sector. With rising food prices in South Africa, due to the drought, there will definitely be fierce competition between the food and beverage offerings in the hospitality sector. Catering is often the area to be cut first when budgets are tight. However, by removing important cocktail functions, dinners or even tea/coffee breaks from the delegate package, one also removes opportunities for face-to-face networking which are as important for the delegates as the conference programme.

Social media has really gone mainstream in the events industry and will remain an exciting trend for some time to come. All parties – organisers, visitors, exhibitors, media, suppliers – are all using social media channels throughout the event lifecycle and as a result events extend well after the conference or event days. Organisers and their clients should therefore be prepared for continuous engagement and longer-term communication plans – beyond the physical event.

Africa remains the market to watch among organisers and associations. Cape Town and South Africa is often seen as a launch pad into Africa. We are seeing increasing interest from our association and corporate clients, who want to access the African market, by hosting their conferences or exhibitions in Cape Town.

The CTICC is committed to sharing knowledge and building capacity in business and society to drive the knowledge economy and contribute to promoting and realising Africa's amazing growth potential. In this respect, conferences hosted on the continent have a great potential to build exciting and meaningful legacy programmes – an aspect that will also satisfy delegates' growing desire to support impactful events.