BRICS Must Address Growing Inequality

Concerned with growing inequality and exclusion in India, a meeting of development NGOs in Delhi has issued a call for greater attention to those trade and economic policies in BRICS countries which perpetuate and exacerbate such exclusion. Meeting in advance of the 4th BRICS Summit being held in Delhi on March 28-29, 2012, these NGOs are asking the Prime Minister of India, as host of this Summit, to take a lead in evolving an institutional mechanism for ongoing dialogue with development NGOs and civil society in all the five BRICS countries so that their practical knowledge can be harnessed in addressing the challenges of increasing inequality and exclusion.

In its last Summit in Sanya (China) in April 2011, the declaration from BRICS Heads of States identified a shared concern related to growing inequality in their countries; it also acknowledged the importance of promoting a wide range of people-to-people exchanges across BRICS countries to build understanding and share knowledge. Indian NGOs have considerable practical knowledge on such issues as food security, youth unemployment, economic inclusion, basic education, environmental sustainability, local development and urban poverty; these issues have been identified by BRICS for attention by its leadership. Many development NGOs have been actively involved in formulating proposals for 12th Five Year Plan in India; similar experiences are available in other four BRICS countries. Therefore, it is critical that the capacities and expertise of this vast segment of active and knowledgeable development NGOs and civil society in all the five BRICS countries is adequately harvested so that current policies of economic growth do not perpetuate further inequality and exclusion.

Indian development NGOs also call upon the BRICS Summit to use their collective influence in ensuring that firm commitments for addressing challenges of climate change are secured in the forthcoming UN conference Rio+20 in Brasil. In order to ensure that global multi-lateral institutions like the IMF and World Bank live up to the new commitments made in the past couple of years, BRICS Summit must issue a call for open, transparent and merit-based recruitment of the President of the World Bank this summer, and put an end to post-colonial hegemony of America and Europe.

As the country responsible for carrying forward the mandate from the 4th BRICS Summit, India can play an important leadership role in ensuring that such mechanisms for dialogue and exchange of knowledge between development NGOs and civil society and the BRICS deliberative processes are institutionalized in a creative manner. It is also hoped that BRICS governments will support such processes actively so that the vision of BRICS as an alliance for ‘stability, security and growth’ in the world is realized for all citizens of the world.

Centre for Budget & Governance Accountability
Cuts International
Help Age
PRATHAM
SPARC/SDI
Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)
Sa Dhan
Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)

New Delhi March 23, 2012