

Consultancy report on meetings in Sao Paulo; Nov 26-29 2012

I was assigned some very specific mandates as part of this consultancy. One day was to be dedicated to a meeting with Polis in which there were four specific objectives.

One was to hopefully conclude the signing of the proposed contract between FIM and Polis. A second was to identify the contact person in Brazil with whom FIM could have contact regarding all logistic preparations and implementations. A third was to assess the proposed venue and assure that it met FIM`s needs, both from the quality and quantity perspective. A fourth was to identify and or receive recommendations on possible invitees to the March Sao Paulo FIM Forum.

I was also to represent FIM at the meeting at the Office of the Presidency in which civil Brazilian CS bodies would be discussing, with senior Brazilian officials, the need for society inputs into the processes of the BRICS Alliance. My terms of Reference specified that I was to try to bring the benefit of the FIM experience to the day`s dialogue.

Nov 27: Meeting between civil society and Government

This meeting was held entirely in Portuguese, with the exception of my interventions, and although I was kindly provided with an interpreter, there were periods of dialogue that I missed. Nevertheless, I believe that I captured the essential elements of the discussion and I did verify my understanding with the Polis participants following the meeting.

Polis will produce a full report for distribution.

Clearly, there is a positive relation between Brazilian civil society and its government. The discussions began at 09:00 and finished at 13:30, one half hour more than scheduled.

Not only does the Brazilian government welcome dialogue with civil society concerning BRICS, it also sees that it can play a leadership role on this issue from within the BRICS alliance and is prepared to do so. Likewise, the Brazilian CS

participants are prepared to give leadership and use the openness of their government as possible leverage to generate more widespread dialogue.

The Brazilian ambassador to BRICS, Maria Reis, underscored their willingness to initiate dialogue, but questioned how best to proceed. She questioned who was best authorized to speak on behalf of civil society and wondered whether it would be best to commence a dialogue only after a common theme is agreed upon. She also wondered to what extent such dialogue ought to be institutionalized.

I told her that I would be happy to forward some ideas on this issue after my return to Canada and she encouraged me to do so. I can do so in my personal capacity or as a FIM Board member.

Based on the Sao Paulo meeting, my recommendations to FIM regarding future direction are the following:

- Advise Ambassador Reis on how best to proceed
- Continue the national CS awareness-building in Russia and South Africa
- Following the first circuit of CS of all member states, conduct a thorough review of the progress to date and identify next steps
- That FIM aim to hold the first joint meeting between CS from all BRICS countries and participating governments prior to the Brazil Summit in 2014
- That, in preparation for Brazil, FIM begin to work closely with Polis immediately after the South African Summit
- That FIM ensure CS presence in the BRICS Academic meeting to be held in Durban in the spring of 2013
- That FIM investigate who might be the best operating partner for any meetings to be held in South Africa.

Nov 28: Meeting with Polis

The meeting opened with the signing of the contract between FIM and Polis.

Julia Meida was identified as the contact point for FIM.

I had a thorough tour of the Polis facilities and recommend without hesitation that they be used for FIM's 2013 Forum. They meet all of the logistic criteria which had been suggested to me before my departure from Montreal.

Both Ana Falu of Argentina and Jorge Balbis of ALOP in Mexico were recommended as Forum participants.

During the meeting we also had a Skype conversation with Alex Shankland of IDS. They are being financed by DFAIT to do a project on the BRICS countries. He is planning a meeting of Academics in Durban prior to the Summit there and would like to explore possible collaboration between his initiative and the FIM project.

Following my return to Montreal I debriefed Rajesh Tandon about the Sao Paolo results. (This is in a separate note sent to Heather.) Rajesh is meeting with Alex in the UK this week and FIM should hear from him following those meetings about possible future steps in this regard. ha

Nigel Martin

Montreal

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