

## **Annex to Consultancy Report on Nov 26-29 2012 Meetings in Sao Paulo**

### **Analysis of Progress on the FIM BRICS Initiative Project**

I write this annex, not only from the perspective of the Sao Paulo meetings, but also as someone who participated in the conceptual phase of the project and as someone who participated in the Stockholm meetings and then followed from a distance the meetings in India and China.

My general conclusion about the Brazil meeting is positive. In my mind, it confirmed the basic thesis of the approach; that the first step towards full dialogue with the BRICS Alliance is to build up awareness and knowledge within the civil societies of each BRICS member state.

There were about 40 civil society participants in the Sao Paulo meeting. Most of them were from Sao Paulo, but a small number came from other cities. They represented not only the NGO community, but also academia, alternate media and the unions. I was informed that they were selected so as to ensure that the strongest possible leadership from Brazil civil society was included. In the view of the organizers, this objective was successfully achieved.

This qualitative aspect was also true on the government side. Both officials work at the highest possible level and had the capacity to speak with total authority about Brazil and its role within BRICS. In addition, the meeting which was scheduled to last four hours, actually continued on for an additional half-hour. This significant amount of time illustrated the importance of the meeting to the government and its willingness to give to it its complete attention.

A second observation is that the meeting confirmed to me that the attitude and role of Brazil is key to the success of the FIM project. In Sweden, Brazil was identified as being the most pro-civil society of all of the BRICS countries. Given that the BRICS membership includes a country like China which, to all intents and purposes, does not recognize an independent civil society, as well as Russia which currently displays an openly adversarial role towards its own civil society, the objectives of the FIM project can only be achieved if the Brazil government is prepared to take constructive and proactive leadership.

In my view, the meeting confirmed the willingness of the Brazilian authorities to assume this leading role and I also perceived that the Brazilian civil society leadership is aware of their potential and is prepared to play its own leadership role within and among civil society from all BRICS member states.

In summary, I believe that the Sao Paulo meetings confirmed two important aspects of the projects; one, that the methodology is valid and workable and two, that the original assessment about the importance of Brazil is confirmed. Also, I believe that because of this meeting, both

the Brazilian state and civil society are very aware of the role that they must play and that they are each willing to play it; separately when required, and together when it would be most advantageous.

## Challenges

There are also two issues which emerged which I would recommend require attention.

The first is that, in my view, each national meeting to date has been very helpful in its own right, but that overall the Project itself has not yet been able to ensure that the sum of these efforts is greater than its separate parts. I did not get the impression that the Brazil meeting greatly benefitted from the efforts in China and India nor that civil society multilateral effort is gaining momentum.

The original vision of the project was that the FIM secretariat as well as PRIA<sup>1</sup> would be present or represented at all national meetings. For diverse reasons this did not happen at either the China or India meetings and this may have delayed continuity and momentum-building.

I would strongly recommend that FIM be present at each of the next national meetings.

It is true that there is ongoing communication from the PRIA center-point to three of the four other coordinating bodies (except Russia). However, I also now realize that, with the exception of Russia, all national coordinating bodies belong to the same LogoLink network. This pre-established interrelationship is clearly helpful in many ways; there is already a familiarity and trust across the four BRICS countries that facilitates the first phase of this project. However, the use of LogoLink also creates a kind of 'silo' effect, where disseminating knowledge of the project, its objectives and its progress across diverse networks within each BRICS country, is somewhat restricted.

I would recommend that the communications capacity of the project be strengthened and that, similar to the BB project, all engaged bodies become part of a coordinated communications programme, that each and every one of them receive constant updating on the project and that they also be encouraged to share their views on any and all aspects of the project.

A second, and vital issue, is to help the Brazilian government to provide leadership within the BRICS Alliance. Ambassador Reis constantly came back to the question of **how** they might best proceed. The spirit is there, but the experience is lacking.

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<sup>1</sup> As per the original agreement between FIM and PRIA.

How do they deal with the representative issue within their own civil society, how do they proceed in a way which does not antagonize China, how can they convey to sceptical BRICS members the value-added potential of dialogue with civil society.

FIM has considerable experience in dealing with all these issues. I mentioned to the Ambassador that I would be willing to share some thoughts with her on these and any other questions which might emerge. I can do so in my individual capacity, but I would recommend that this be done as a FIM initiative, and that any communication to the Ambassador be communicated officially from FIM to her.

There is a third issue which does not require immediate attention, but which is integral to the success of this project and which must be part of all conscious forward planning. Dialogue with the BRICS Alliance must originate from within civil society of the BRICS countries themselves. Already there is an academic-related initiative on BRICS which is Northern inspired and funded by DIFID and contracted to International Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex in the UK. This is part of a larger interest by the UK in the emerging economies and the global implications of the growing influence and impact of the BRICS Alliance.

FIM must assume that this interest will grow, and that increasing resources will be allotted by Northern governments and NGOS to increase understanding of and influence on the BRICS.

In order to ensure that BRICS-based civil societies retain the leadership in having access to and influence on the BRICS Alliance, I would recommend that FIM should, and can aim to have the first cross-BRICS dialogue in Brail, in 2014.

### **Suggested Next Steps**

1. That FIM be present at the South African national meeting
2. That FIM ensure that, in advance of this meeting, potential participants in South Africa fully benefit from the experiences in India, China, Brazil and Russia.
3. That FIM monitor and be part of the IDS-led initiative within academia
4. That FIM strengthen communication efforts across civil society within each of the BRICS countries
5. That preliminary planning for a full or partial cross-BRICS dialogue in 2014 begin in early 2013. And be part of the dialogue in South Africa.

Nigel Martin

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