



RECOMMENDATIONS: IBSA ACADEMIC FORUM, 2011

IBSA SUMMIT 18 OCTOBER 2011

INTRODUCTION

The IBSA Academic Forum serves as a platform for engagement between academics in higher education, based on the IBSA Trilateral Memorandum of Agreement and the Academic Forum Concept paper of 2005.

The 2011 IBSA Academic Forum symposium was held at the Durban University of Technology on 14 and 15 October. The Forum was framed by the theme of Competitiveness through Synergy – From Knowledge Generation to Social Development. Four papers set the scene for critical engagement on IBSA Academic Forum matters.

The Honorable Deputy-Minister of Higher Education and Training, Prof H Mkize, in her paper, pointed out that a strong bond has been built between the three member countries. India, Brazil and South Africa share much: we have similar views in regards to democracy and to issues that may have global consequences. This is because these views are deeply rooted in shared historic experiences in respect of striving for freedom from oppression, and have thus resulted in the development of common values and aspirations for our people. In addition, we find ourselves in a common situation in terms of our development as emerging economies.

The Deputy Minister's paper was followed by three academic papers addressing the different perspectives on IBSA. The first paper delivered by Mr Dhesigen Naidoo from the Water Research Commission, discussed IBSA as a global science bloc; while the second paper dealt with IBSA in the global economy. This paper was delivered by Dr Gansen Pillay from the National Research Foundation. The final paper was delivered by Prof Chris Landsberg from the University of Johannesburg, and dealt with IBSA in the context of a radically changing global order.

Following some intense deliberation, the Forum agreed to the following recommendations relating to organization of, and support for, academic activities within the India-Brazil-South Africa trilateral dialogue process. These recommendations are presented as follows:

1. Organisational matters

In order to ensure more effective communication and continuity, the IBSA Academic Forum should establish a more formal structure of representatives supported by reference groups in each of the three countries. The Forum supports the institution of an IBSA Academic Champion to give direction to the academic interaction. The national agencies responsible for the coordination of the trilateral Academic Forum, in collaboration with respective national academies, should identify appropriate IBSA champions and reference groups in each country.

Further, the Forum recommends that the agencies should provide operational support for the Champions and the Reference Groups in respect of coordination and communication needed.

As one primary objective, the Forum recommends that a review be conducted coordinated by the Champions and the Reference Groups, to review past achievements of the IBSA Academic collaboration, and progress made in collaborative research endeavours and to provide direction for future engagement. This should form the basis for future monitoring and evaluation and provide a motivation for mobilization of resources in the future.

The Forum recommends that mechanisms should be implemented to enhance communication between parties in the three countries to facilitate research collaboration and research opportunities and shared learning. In addition, repositories should be developed to house relevant information with a view to facilitating access by current and aspirant researchers, students and the general public.

The IBSA champions and reference groups should jointly develop a more coherent conceptual framework to inform the priority agendas for the Academic Forum in generating knowledge-based solutions to challenges faced by the IBSA countries, and in particular to bring together Natural and Social Sciences to deal with complex social problems requiring inter-disciplinary; trans-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches.

2. Resourcing

The Academic Forum recognizes the South African implementation of the IBSA research mobility fund which has facilitated engagement leading to 14 collaborative projects in the last year. The Forum notes how effective the mobility fund has been in promoting engagement between academics in developing research themes. These projects are a positive start to strengthening research collaboration between the three countries, addressing diverse social, economic and political imperatives prioritised by the three countries ranging from health and education to urban planning and gender-related issues.

On this basis the Forum recommends the provision of substantial earmarked funding to support collaborative research projects in long-term and sustainable programmes. This research funding would be in support of the identified themes and goals of the IBSA Memorandum of Understanding in the field of Higher Education, including

- engineering, computer science and mathematical sciences;
- bio-technology, agriculture and livestock
- sustainable development;
- social transformation and empowerment; and
- higher education studies

The Forum also notes the importance to the global South of climate change and its effect on rural livelihoods, health and food security.

The exchange of post-graduate students and post doctoral fellows and the establishment of an adjunct faculty exchange programme, require committed funding on a multi-year basis. In addition, IBSA student scholarship and fellowship programmes are proposed, to promote student mobility between the three countries.

The Forum also strongly supports the exchange of students from relevant student representative bodies in the three countries to facilitate participation in the Academic Forum and related activities.

3. Conclusion

The implementation of these recommendations will lead to a stable and sustainable platform for the synergistic generation of new knowledge, and shared intellectual property leading to social development, to the benefit of the member countries.