

**India-Brazil-South Africa Forum:
A New Model for South-South Cooperation**

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With the world becoming a global village and increasing liberalisation and globalisation, level of interaction between the comity of nations has increased on an unprecedented scale resulting in increased economic interdependence and the mushrooming of regional groupings. Developing countries are seeking closer cooperation with each other and eager to form economic blocs to strengthen their economies and raise the standard of living for their citizens. Groupings like Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have been highly successful. The cooperation has not only enhanced their economic clout but also catapulted them on to the world stage.

During the Cold War era realpolitik of the time gave birth to groupings like North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, South East Asia Treaty Organisation, CENTO and Warsaw Pact. While the world's two superpowers were engaged in arms race, newly independent and developing countries looked to political and economic groupings to better their lot. However, NAM, G-77 and G-21 have become unwieldy and divergent interests emerged over the years, thereby rendering them largely ineffective.

In the changed political scenario in the post-Cold War era, economics stole a march over politics and globalisation and liberalisation became the new mantras. In an effort to enhance their economic clout, developing countries across Asia and other continents formed groupings that helped them to strengthen their economies and catapulted them onto the world stage.

Every continental region has seen the emergence of at least one major integration movement- Europe has the European Community (EC) now European Union (EU), Asia has the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), North America has the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Latin America has the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA) and the Andean Common Market (ANCOM), the Caribbean has the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Middle East has the Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU), Central America has the Central American Common Market (CACM), and Africa has the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

These regional blocs or economic groupings have the common goals of economic transformation and development, implicitly including eradication or reduction of poverty in the process. In other words, economic cooperation and integration are not ends in themselves, but rather a means towards sustainable economic development. Another such initiative has been the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) forum, which brings together three developing countries from three continents- Asia, Africa and South America. Comprising India, Brazil and South Africa, the largest countries in their respective regions, IBSA is unique in that it spans three continents. The diplomatic initiative among India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) to collaborate with each other in areas of common concern to leverage their strengths is a new model for South-South cooperation and should not be viewed as a confrontationalist bloc to the US in an increasingly unilateral world. In the past few years, the importance and necessity of a process of dialogue amongst developing nations and countries has emerged.

The idea was mooted by Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim and his South African and Indian counterparts Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and Yashwant Sinha respectively. They met in Brasilia in June 2003 following consultations and subsequent meetings between the three heads of state during the G-8 meeting in Evian. This meeting of the three countries with vibrant democracies, from three regions of the developing world, active on a global scale, with the aim of examining themes on the international agenda and those of mutual interest, resulted in Brasilia Declaration and outlined the initial charter of IBSA. The trans-continental initiative would simultaneously boost bilateral ties between the three countries, which though geographically distant share several common concerns. Trade flows between the three countries are expected to increase to 10 billion dollars by 2007 from the current 4.6 billion dollars as a result of this initiative.

The main objective is to create an effective trilateral forum to cooperate in areas as diverse as health, science and technology, security, and international trade. They decided to pool their resources and jointly tackle common threats including poverty, hunger, disease, terrorism, environmental degradation, maritime security and trans-national organised crime. The dialogue forum also has on its agenda UN reforms and expansion of the UN Security Council (UNSC), cooperation in IT, biotechnology, space and communications, tourism, aviation and shipping sectors.

The three countries favour early reform of the United Nations to make it more democratic and responsive to the priorities of its member states, particularly those of the developing countries that constitute the vast majority of its membership. They decided to jointly explore solutions to the issues relating to the reform of the UNSC in order to accelerate the decision making process. India, Brazil and South Africa are demanding permanent membership of the UNSC to uphold UN legitimacy and make the world body more representative in character. India, Japan, Germany and Brazil met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2004 meeting to claim permanent membership of the UNSC. With international terrorism posing a major threat to the world, the three countries are of opinion that collective action was the best way to combat the menace. There can be no justification for terrorism- political, religious or any other, they feel. Former Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha who was the prime mover behind the initiative said IBSA would prove to be a more effective body than the G-15, G-77 and other groupings as it had the advantage of being a small, cohesive unit.

Beyond trilateral cooperation, the members are also considering setting up food assistance programme for underdeveloped countries with UN assistance. IBSA facility/fund for alleviation of poverty and hunger as part of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) will be governed and monitored by the three countries.

The trust fund will be used to implement identified replicable and scalable projects to be disseminated in interested developing countries as examples of best practices in the fight against poverty and hunger, including actions in the areas of improved access to health, education, sanitation and food security. The IBSA facility for poverty and hunger alleviation will be a dedicated trust fund within UNDP. Mr Sinha said that 'the main aim of IBSA was to try and coordinate views on major international issues. The first positive outcome of the initiative was seen at the Cancun WTO summit. At the WTO summit in Cancun, Mexico in September 2003, India and Brazil led the coalition of developing countries which refused to buckle under pressure and sign the agreement on agriculture as it did not address their concerns, leading to the collapse of the trade talks.

The G-22 group of developing countries had asked for the elimination of all subsidies for goods being exported and major cuts in subsidies for domestic farm products. But the proposals fell short of what these countries demanded. Moreover, though it provided for phasing out the farm subsidies in rich countries, the developing countries would have to commit themselves to opening their own heavily protected agricultural markets, a central demand of the US. The document also did not set a date for the elimination of export subsidies, which the developing countries had been pressing for. The developed countries also hoped to introduce the four 'Singapore issues' - investment, trade facilitation, competition and government procurement that were not part of the WTO mandate. But the developing countries stood firm and led to the failure of the summit.

On the Defence Front, the former Foreign Minister said IBSA was not a security forum and not thinking of common security or defence production collaboration. However, he added that avenues for greater cooperation in defence matters would be explored.

The Defence Ministers of the three countries met in the South African city of Pretoria early 2004 to chalk out possible areas of cooperation. The defence tie-ups would be limited to training each others security personnel and armed forces and joint exercises and participation in international peacekeeping missions.

Dismissing the possibility of inclusion of new members, Mr Sinha said they would like to limit the forum to democracies. Moreover, he said there was the danger that the grouping could suffer the same fate as the G-77 or NAM and become unwieldy.

According to Indian External Affairs Ministry officials, the forum, which is not a defence or economic bloc, will add a new lease of life to South-South cooperation. In fact, the forum can be termed as a new model for South-South Cooperation. The South African Deputy High Commissioner in India Desmond Monde Nxiweni said IBSA aimed at bringing the three countries together to leverage their strength in various multilateral fora. "Its an attempt to make

our voice heard by the developed countries. He suggested that instead of inducting more members, IBSA could have dialogue partners on the lines of the ASEAN. India is one of the four dialogue partners of the ASEAN.

According to First Secretary in Brazilian Embassy in India Fernando E L S Coimbra, IBSA has given birth to a new economic geography and will unite people from South. He said the initiative will enhance inter-continental trade. The initiative will help to share best practices of the three countries and implement those practices in each other's country, Mr Coimbra said. At a landmark meeting in April 2004, the Foreign Ministers of the three countries IBSA chalked out a New Delhi Plan of Action covering all areas of mutual concerns. The Action Plan is the *raison d'être* of the grouping.

The Action Plan

Transportation: Recognising the need for air connectivity between the three nations, so as to facilitate and enhance the movement of passengers and goods and achieve the objectives of the Brasilia declaration, the three countries have emphasised the importance for concrete trilateral co-operation in the Civil Aviation and Shipping sectors.

With regard to cooperation in Maritime Sector, the Ministers agreed that there would be exchange of information and meetings among the officers of Ministry of Shipping and Transport of the three countries with a view to develop a Trilateral Maritime Transport Corridor.

Tourism: The Ministers agreed that the product offering of the three countries viz. India- Culture and Heritage; South Africa- Eco Tourism and Nature Conservation and Brazil- Festivals and Sun and Sea, provided opportunities for convergence and integration into unique tourism packages. The Ministers agreed to a programme of action in various areas including Capacity building in Culture/Heritage, Joint Marketing initiatives and Eco-tourism.

Trade & Investment: The Ministers agreed that the IBSA countries would reinforce the economic strength of each other by synergising their complementarities in areas of industry, services, business and technologies and create a market of 1.2 billion people, 1.2 trillion dollars of GDP and foreign trade of 300 billion dollars. The Ministers agreed to increase trade flows between the three countries from US\$4.6 billion presently to US\$ 10 billion by 2007 and hold IBSA Business Summits on rotation in each country.

Infrastructure: The Ministers recognised that there are opportunities for IBSA members to implement projects through, inter alia, State owned enterprises and public/private partnerships in each other's country as well as jointly in other countries. Areas of cooperation could include civil engineering, project management; Construction, roads, highways, airports, ports, and energy sector;

Telecommunications and Internet. The Ministers underlined the importance of job creation, youth entrepreneurship and development of small, medium and micro enterprises and to develop joint training programmes for human resources development, including the exchange of students and youth entrepreneurs.

Science & Technology: The Ministers noted the existence of functional science and technology bilateral agreements among the three countries. They also outlined a process to shape the relationship among the IBSA countries towards a mutually agreed outcome, which includes. The Ministers agreed to establish IBSA Technology Days, which will be organised annually, on rotational basis, for the purposes of showcasing the IBSA science and technology capabilities and progress.

The three countries agreed to share information on best practices in technology transfer and to engage on intellectual property rights issues related to the protection of biodiversity and traditional knowledge.

Information Society: The Ministers highlighted the strategic role of information and communication technologies in the promotion of social and economic development. The Ministers emphasised the need for joint action and urgency in combating the fast growing Digital Divide not only between developed and developing, but also within, countries. Brazil, India and South Africa, as founders of the World Summit on the Information Society Like-Minded Group of countries, decided to continue their coordination of positions in order to contribute effectively towards the development of an inclusive Information Society.

Health: In the area of the health related issues, in its meeting held in Brasilia on Feb.12-13, 2004, the working group on health, discussed six areas of common interest: -

Intellectual property rights and their impact on access to medicine; Traditional medicine; Integration among laboratories / sanitary regulation; 4. Epidemiological survey; Vaccines; Research and development of products of the pharmaceutical sector.

Energy: The Ministers proposed the institution of a programme of reciprocal visits with the purpose of exchanging ideas, experience and practices in the energy area. These exchanges may include: research and development, storage and distribution, technology transfer, practical application of technological knowledge, and organisation and regulation. The following areas were identified for initial cooperation: (i) access to affordable energy in rural areas with emphasis on non-conventional energy; (ii) exploring bio-diesel as a commercially viable energy source by exchanging knowledge and experience; and (iii) research and development in the areas of hydrogen energy and fuel cells.

Education: The Ministers decided that major areas of collaboration will be open and distance education, higher and professional education and universal mass education with special emphasis on quality and gender equity. The detailed mechanism and framework for collaboration will be worked out in round table conferences in each area, preferably before the next IBSA Dialogue Forum. Each country may host one round table conference on one of the selected themes.

Trilateral Commission: Second Meeting of IBSA

The forum was given a momentum when Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Indian External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh and Foreign Minister of Brazil Celso Amorim, met in Cape Town for the Second Meeting of the Trilateral

Commission of the IBSA Dialogue Forum. The Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their determination to play a constructive role in international affairs and to maintain friendly relations with all countries. The IBSA Dialogue Forum serves as a mechanism for political consultation and co-ordination as well as for strengthening co-operation in sectoral areas and to improve economic relations between India, Brazil and South Africa.

The three countries also confirmed their support for a strong multilateral system as a means towards addressing issues of global concern, in particular the pre-eminent role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of sustainable development. The Ministers noted that the Trilateral Ministerial Commission has also proved to be an excellent environment to exchange views on regional and global developments.

The Ministers agreed to work together, within the UN processes in New York, towards the successful conclusion of the Millennium Review Summit scheduled to take place from 14 to 16 September 2005. They expressed hope that the Summit outcome would reflect a balance between development and security concerns and emphasised that development was an indispensable foundation for a new collective security system. In this regard they noted that the Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and the Report of the United Nations Millennium Project 2005 provided useful inputs towards this end.

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the goal of developing countries successfully achieving, at the minimum, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a core strategy in the international fight against underdevelopment, hunger and poverty. They reiterated their support for the New York Declaration, issued at the World Leaders' Meeting on Action Against Hunger and Poverty, and reconfirmed the importance of obtaining new and additional financial resources for fighting poverty and financing development.

The three countries emphasised that South-South cooperation was an essential and fundamental component of international co-operation for development, especially in terms of global, regional and country-level efforts to achieve the MDGs and reaffirmed cooperation under IBSA to promote these objectives.

UN Institutional Reform

The three countries have re-iterated their continued support for the early reform of the United Nations to make it more democratic and responsive to the priorities of its Member States, particularly those of developing countries that constitute the vast majority of its membership. They agreed to fully utilise the window of opportunity afforded by the Millennium Review Process for a serious effort at the long-needed UN reform, in particular the institutional reforms relating to the UN General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.

The Ministers expressed the view that the composition of the UN Security Council no longer represented present-day realities. Bearing in mind that decisions of the Council should serve the interests of the broader United Nations Membership, they highlighted the need for the urgent reform of the Council that would include its expansion in both categories of membership,

permanent and non-permanent, in order to render it more democratic, legitimate and representative. Towards this end, developing countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America would need to be included as permanent members on the Security Council. The IBSA countries agreed to exchange information and work towards this common purpose in the coming months.

South-South Co-operation

The three nations have also committed themselves to developing a common vision for enhanced South-South co-operation and the realisation of the development agenda of the South during the 21st Century. They agreed to work together on economic development with social equity in the context of a globalising world. IBSA would examine ways to adopt a pro-active approach to channel the forces of globalisation in this direction. They re-affirmed the principle that IBSA was dedicated to the strengthening of the international framework of South-South co-operation and the advancement of human development through the promotion of potential synergies among its members.

IBSA and Africa's Development

The Ministers reaffirmed their support for the socio-economic development programme of the African Union and committed the IBSA partnership to seeking practical and concrete measures to be pursued in support of the implementation of NEPAD. The three countries shared a common experience in the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment, as well as complementary levels of development. There was therefore much to gain from sharing information and best practices in dealing with common challenges and in identifying areas of common concern, need and benefit.

Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership

The Ministers noted the decision made during AASROC II, held in Durban in August 2004, to launch a New Asian-African Strategic Partnership during the Asia-Africa Summit, scheduled to be held in Jakarta, Indonesia in April 2005. They made a commitment to focus on practical ways of addressing the developmental needs of Asia and Africa by focusing on economic issues, trade, investment, health, human resource development and infrastructure.

Latin And South American Integration

The Ministers expressed their support for the creation of an Asian-African Business Summit which would focus on exploring business opportunities, promoting trade and investment and identifying measures to strengthen the African private sector. They undertook to investigate ways in which to facilitate closer co-operation with South America.

World Trade Organisation

The three countries have agreed to intensify co-operation in areas of mutual interest in the current round of multilateral trade negotiations, in the lead-up to the 6th WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in December 2005. This co-operation, as exemplified by the G-20 in agricultural negotiations, aimed to realise the Doha Development Agenda and to enhance trade

opportunities under an open, fair, equitable and transparent rules-based multilateral trading system.

Sustainable Development

IBSA would continue its efforts to mobilise new and additional financial resources and the transfer of environmentally-sound technologies within an agreed time-frame in order to implement the outcomes of these conferences. They have expressed their pleasure at the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol on 16 February 2005. They further urged developed countries to meet their own commitments and undertakings under the Protocol not only in terms of complying, with current targets for Green House Gas (GHG) emission reduction, but also in terms of the expansion of technology transfer, capacity-building and financial support to developing countries.

Peace And Security

The Ministers reaffirmed the view that the primary focus on human development, the fight against poverty, and measures to promote a better quality of life, should underpin and provide for greater guarantees for international peace and stability. The three Ministers took stock of the global security situation concerning disarmament and non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and noted the adoption by the UN Security Council of Resolution 1540 (2004) on 28 April 2004. They agreed to further intensify their cooperation at the IAEA and other forums with a view to ensuring the unimpeded growth and development of the peaceful use of atomic energy through the supply of technology, equipment and material under appropriate safeguards.

Terrorism

The Ministers reaffirmed that international terrorism continued to constitute one of the most serious threats to peace and security and that acts of terrorism were criminal and unjustifiable whatever the considerations or factors that might be invoked to justify them. The Ministers emphasised the need for concerted and co-ordinated action by the international community, with the ultimate objective of eradicating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

IBSA Sectoral Cooperation

The Ministers reviewed the work of the Sectoral Working Groups and adopted their reports. While appreciating the progress made thus far, they recognised that greater scope existed for further intensifying co-operation amongst the three countries. The Ministers decided to initiate trilateral cooperation in two additional sectors, namely Agriculture and Culture. While noting that the Health and Energy Sectoral Working Groups had been unable to convene, they welcomed the proposals for the convening of both these Working Groups in the near future.

With regard to Science and Technology, the Ministers agreed on areas of co-operation for research and development and decided that each country would champion research areas through a system of coordinators. A work plan was developed for 2005/06, reflecting milestones in

implementing projects, a schedule of relevant events as well as a process to finalise a working document to be signed at the next meeting of the Science and Technology Ministers, scheduled from 8 to 10 June 2005 in Brazil.

The Ministers decided to formalise an IBSA sectoral working group on Agriculture. It was agreed to maintain the momentum that resulted from the launch of the IBSA Funding Facility for Hunger and Poverty Alleviation. They also agreed to form a closer partnership between IBSA and UNDP on the implementation of the Agriculture and Livestock Development project in Guinea Bissau.

The Ministers welcomed the launch of the IBSA Business Council. It was agreed that the Business Council and the Working Group will have an active working relationship, and also work jointly in areas such as Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises. The Ministers welcomed the preparations for the IBSA Education Ministerial meeting scheduled preferably for July 2005, in New Delhi. Thematic areas previously identified in the New Delhi Plan of Action will form the basis of discussions at this meeting and include issues of higher education, distance education and basic education.

They also expressed the view that enhancing co-operation in the tourism sector was vital in order to foster people-to-people contact as well as to contribute to economic development. They highlighted that statistics of inbound tourism from among the IBSA member countries showed an encouraging upward trend. They recommended that for tourism purposes, competent authorities in the three countries examine the possibility of visa waiver or the issuing of visas on arrival for IBSA nationals.

The countries for the first time included the cultural sector in the agenda of the IBSA Dialogue Forum. They decided to coordinate their positions within UNESCO, amongst others, on issues such as the contribution of culture to a country's economy, the protection of intellectual property rights keeping in view the development dimension, and the potential of creative industries to alleviate poverty and generate income. They agreed to commence their collaboration by organising a music and dance festival in Brazil in November 2005, a meeting in India on the audiovisual sector in 2005 and a conference in South Africa on indigenous knowledge systems at the beginning of 2006.

An IBSA seminar on Economic Development and Social Equity will be held in Rio de Janeiro from August 3 to 5, 2005. The seminar will examine the contribution of the IBSA Forum towards a new paradigm for South-South dialogue and cooperation, and seek to promote a better understanding among IBSA members of their national policies and strategies in order to encourage economic and social co-operation.

Hunger and Poverty Alleviation

The Ministers reviewed progress made with regard to the operationalisation of the IBSA Facility for Hunger and Poverty Alleviation. They furthermore reviewed progress that had been made in addressing certain operational issues aimed at strengthening project implementation

and future delivery. The criteria for the submission and evaluation of projects were discussed, as were certain practical guidelines for the functioning of the Board of Directors of the Facility.

The Ministers once again emphasised the financial commitment of their Governments to the Facility and agreed that they would extend invitations for participation in the funding of this South-South initiative. They noted with approval that the implementation of the Guinea-Bissau project was on schedule and discussed the possibility of initiating other projects. The Ministers expressed optimism that the launching of the project in Guinea-Bissau would help raise the profile of the Fund, especially among the private sector and civil society, and thereby encouraged further participation.

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