

IBSA leaders committed to uplifting poor countries

The second summit for the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) dialogue forum has resulted in renewed commitment from the three states towards helping poor and developing countries around the world.

By [Sholain Govender](#) 19 Oct 2007

Key to this commitment, established as one of the objectives of IBSA at its inception in 2003, is the World Trade Organisation Doha Round of trade negotiations.

Here, President Thabo Mbeki, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva pledge to show a united front that will result in agreements that create more gains for poor countries, rather than the richer nations.

The meeting of the three leaders at the Presidential Guesthouse in Pretoria on Wednesday, 17 October, along with other government, business and working group representatives, resulted in the Tshwane IBSA Summit Declaration.

They said the Doha negotiations were entering a critical stage and in a genuine multilateral process, with draft modalities texts for agriculture and industrial goods that provide a good basis for negotiations.

It was noted that agriculture remained the key to the conclusion of the Round and the leaders called for the removal of existing international agricultural trade restrictions like subsidies and trade barriers that affect the agricultural exports of and domestic production in developing countries.

They also said that developed countries must agree to substantial and effective cuts in their trade distortion support and commit to real and new trade flows in agriculture.

They underscored that meaningful and operable special and differential treatment, are vital to address the concerns of developing countries with subsistence and low-income farmers.

The discussions between academics, business people, parliamentarians and women's forum members from all three countries in the two days prior to the summit was acknowledged as a means of developing a people-to-people platform for IBSA.

An IBSA trade target of US\$15 billion by 2010 was set during the summit and business and industry was urged to be even more ambitious and exceed this target.

They voiced their full support for the launch of the Women's Forum which aims to strengthen participation of women in IBSA and recognise the fundamental contribution of women in the social, cultural and economic development of India, Brazil and South Africa.

They also applauded the commitment by the peoples of the three countries to participate at the Music and Dance Festival in Brazil later in October 2007. This ongoing cultural exchange was enhanced by the signing of a cultural cooperation agreement by the three countries.

Other documents signed at the closing of the one-day summit included MoUs and Agreements on cooperation in areas of Wind Resources, Health and Medicines, Social Issues, Public Administration, High Education and on Customs and Tax Administration Cooperation.

Two additional working groups on “Human Settlement Development” and “Environment and Climate Change” were also established.

They reaffirmed their commitment in multilateralism and said that the international system cannot be reformed meaningfully without a comprehensive reform of the United Nations.

“We will strive for a reform in the UN Security Council and will not give up,” said Da Silva in his closing address. He said that the UNSC did not represent the current political world and that the IBSA member states would demand the right to have better representation.

They also said negotiations should start on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified time framework and emphasised the need for ensuring the supply of safe, sustainable and non-polluting sources of energy.

In this context, they agreed to explore approaches to cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy under appropriate International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) safeguards.

They urged all developed countries to set higher GHG emission reduction targets in the post 2012 period under the Kyoto Protocol and said that significant progress is needed at the UN Climate Change Conference to be held in Bali, December.

Another important item on the summit agenda was the envisaged India-MERCOSUR-SACU Trilateral Free Trade Agreement (T-FTA).

The leaders welcomed the initial meeting amongst the representatives of SACU, MERCOSUR and India during exploratory discussions held in Pretoria, 6 October 2007, and supported the proposal to hold a Trilateral Ministerial meeting in 2008.

It was acknowledged that many developing countries are still far from achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the leaders expressed their determination to intensify common efforts towards achieving the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals.

They said debt of developing countries had to be reduced in order to increase the Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows and reduce the inequalities in the international trading system.

They committed to close cooperation amongst IBSA partner countries while preparing for the “Financing for Development” Review conference that will take place in Doha, Qatar, in the second half of 2008.

The leaders reiterated the importance and uniqueness of the IBSA Fund Facility for South-South Cooperation for the benefit of other developing countries.

President Mbeki said the South-South Partnership Award received by the Fund from the UN demonstrated that the importance of IBSA was already being recognised.

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