



THE REVITALIZATION, ENHANCED VISIBILITY, AND FUTURE DIRECTION OF FEALAC

Introduction

In the first decade of its existence, FEALAC has developed itself substantially from a loose forum of dialog into a more solid and stable vehicle of cooperation. During this period FEALAC has grown quantitatively, in terms of its member countries and activities, as well as qualitatively, in terms of its scope and areas of cooperation. In its infant stage this forum has found its ground and began to be widely accepted and recognized, by the international community. It has no doubt that at this stage FEALAC has been able to make steady progress towards the intended goals.

However, entering the second decade, there is a need for FEALAC member countries to enhance the initiatives and activities as well as the participations. Based on the new modalities, officially adopted at the 4th Foreign Ministers meeting in Tokyo early this year, it is timely for FEALAC to regain its momentum to revitalize and develop further.

As the world today is confronted by a number of multifaceted and interconnected global problems – such as financial crises, social exclusion, food and energy security, terrorism and climate change – FEALAC is challenged to come forward and to do more. As those problems also transcend national borders, thus forcing countries to rely on one another, FEALAC needs to adapt itself to these changes.

Against this backdrop, FEALAC should therefore evolve into a forum that will not only contribute but, more importantly, become part of their solution. Only by doing so will FEALAC be able to go beyond its motto “Bridging the Gap between Asia and Latin America”. It is in this very vein that FEALAC is contested to provide greater substance to such a “bridge”, including by continuously renewing and strengthening FEALAC’s mechanism. Furthermore, beyond the refinement of modalities, there is an urgent need to transform or translate its spirit of friendship and cooperation into concrete initiatives and feasible projects.

Only through this resolve will FEALAC be able to face future changes. But this will greatly depend on a renewed commitment, concrete initiatives and full participation in all of its activities. Only through this common endeavor that FEALAC can become a forward looking and future oriented forum, and further enhance its visibility.

Rationale

In order to improve its mechanism and maximize its works, at the Tokyo Meeting, the Foreign Ministers officially adopted the New FEALAC Modalities which should be implemented soon afterwards. These modalities were based on careful consideration to make FEALAC an effective and efficient forum whereby member countries will be able to obtain its benefits. In this spirit, it is more than timely for member countries to carry out concrete actions through various initiatives/projects, and to enhance its visibility accordingly.

Objective

The objectives of the paper, among others, are:

- To increase effectiveness and efficiency of its working mechanism;
- To encourage member countries to be more active, in initiating more action oriented, feasible and workable initiatives/projects;
- To encourage member countries to commit themselves and render their full participation, in order to enhance and strengthen FEALAC's visibility.

Visibility : Commitment, Initiative and Participation

Commitment. As it was agreed, FEALAC was established with the sole purpose to promote better understanding, dialogue and cooperation in all areas to achieve more effective and fruitful relations and closer cooperation between the two regions. This purpose cannot be achieved without strong and firm commitments from all the member countries. Considering the progress made by FEALAC up to the present, it is no doubt that member countries have shown and continue to uphold this commitment. It is certainly a basic requirement for a forum like FEALAC but in order to enhance its posture, we need to do more. FEALAC needs is a renewed commitment. But commitment is only part of the overall elements for FEALAC to succeed.

Initiative. As a forum established under the principles of voluntary, informal and flexible nature, FEALAC achievements would certainly not only depend this commitment. Rather, the success of FEALAC would greatly depend on the initiatives taken by individual member country in both regions in a balance and comprehensive manner. Commitment should inherently accompanied by initiatives. Regretfully, the trend in recent years demonstrates the declining of FEALAC activities due to this imbalance and incomprehensiveness. Tokyo Declaration of 2010 laid down the commitment to strengthen the links and broaden the areas of cooperation. Therefore, more initiatives need to be promoted and encouraged by all members, in both regions. Only by having more initiatives will then FEALAC be able to enhance its visibility.

Participation. Since the inception of FEALAC, it was well known and accepted that geographic distance between East Asia and Latin America would become the biggest obstacle to overcome. However, it was also agreed the technology has mitigated this effect and created the opportunity to explore and realize the full potential for a closer interactions between the two regions. Regretfully, in recent years not only were the initiatives declining, but in terms of participations in FEALAC activities as well. Full and active participation in its activities is a most immediate sign of FEALAC visibility.

In short, if member countries wish to see FEALAC moves forward to adapt to changes, open up the opportunities and answer the future challenges, its visibility needs to be enhanced. For this, FEALAC need a renewed commitment, fresh initiatives and fullest participation.

Scope

As the forum comprises of sovereign states, the nature and scope of dialogue involves government officials, which means that basically FEALAC is a Government to Government (G to G) forum. While since the very beginning of its inception it had already been projected that this forum should be further developed and expanded to cover wider participation. It is in this context that in order to have wider support and participation contact among its people (P to P) need to be promoted, including among business people (B to B). Forum that accommodates this concerns and interests should then be seriously considered.

Mechanism

In the new modalities, SOM as well as Working Group meetings will be held at one time at the same venue. There will be a great number of issues to be discussed and there will also be a great number of members to speak and share their opinions. This would certainly require efficient time budgeting and management. In addition to the new modalities, more working mechanisms need to be considered, taking into account and in anticipation of future developments. To promote FEALAC visibility and to anticipate the deepening and strengthening of cooperation among member countries, Cyber Secretariat is established to maximize coordination between Coordinators and member countries, as well as among member countries. The Regional Coordinators should be encouraged to manage their own sites, in cooperation with the Cyber Secretariat, such as the Indonesian FEALAC site or the Argentine FEALAC site.

a. Regional Grouping

Even though member countries participate in their individual national capacities, in order to have maximum use of the time, it would be advisable if prior to the meeting

there will be Regional Meeting among each region. Therefore the mechanism of regional grouping should be established. In this regard, a FEALAC East Asian Regional Meeting and FEALAC Latin American Regional Meeting shall be convened separately and simultaneously. The two meetings are held not to limit the right of the individual country to speak at the Plenary, but rather to increase the level of effectiveness and efficiency, and also to improve the coordination among respective regional groupings.

Also in this regards that the Regional Coordinator will become central and play their crucial role in order to lead and smoothen the meeting, and prevent protracted and lengthy debates and deliberations at the Plenary. This would certainly not to dilute the sovereign rights of any FEALAC member countries to speak.

b. Secretariat

Since the nature of FEALAC is a forum for dialog which is supposed to be voluntary, informal and flexible in accordance to its principles, the establishment of a permanent Secretariat is perceived unnecessary in the short term. Therefore the initiative and offer by the Government of the Republic of Korea to establish a Cyber Secretariat is highly appreciated. The current Cyber Secretariat proves to be an effective means of communication and a resourceful of database for future initiatives and activities. This Cyber Secretariat has served the purpose facilitating communication among member countries. It is hoped that the Republic of Korea will continue to operate this Cyber Secretariat until further considerations. At the same time this should be accompanied by a strong commitment by all member countries to be more active to make the most of the Secretariat for sharing information, initiatives and ideas on matters pertaining to FEALAC's common concerns and interests.

c. Summit Meeting

In its first decade, as it is widely known and recognized, FEALAC has developed into a more stable and solid forum. During this period, leaders of the FEALAC member countries had agreed to entrust the Minister of Foreign Affairs of its respective countries to be the highest authority to guide the works of this forum. During this period also, four ministerial meetings had been convened alternately in both regions namely in Chile, the Philippines, Brazil and Tokyo.

In the meantime there is also a growing interest among member countries to increase this level onto the highest level, in order not only to demonstrate the serious and strong commitment, but also to give more weight to its interactions and cooperation. Along this line, the discussion on the possibility of convening FEALAC Summit remains relevant, as stated in the *Framework for a Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation between East Asia and Latin America*.

As FEALAC represents 40% of the world population, 26% of the world economy and more than 40% of the world trade and the bi-regional trade between the two regions has quadrupled, far outpacing other regions, it is certainly logic to consider this

possibility. The FMM V to be held in Buenos Aires might represent an appropriate opportunity to examine this topic at the highest current level in FEALAC.

Future Direction

As it was decided in the Fourth Foreign Ministerial Meeting in Tokyo, FEALAC Tokyo Declaration constitutes an imperative to address with a sense of urgency major challenges such as the global financial and economic crisis, sustainable development including environmental protection and climate change and social inclusion through the activities of the three Working Groups. Strong commitments are needed for the effective and efficient implementation of the methodological changes approved by the Foreign Ministers in Tokyo, namely the new modality of Working Group and Senior Officials' Meetings as well as the creation of a Coordinating Board, a Cyber Secretariat and a segment for technical cooperation.

In order to adapt and to be able to address major global challenges in their respective regions, the need to involve international financial institutions and other regional organizations in the FEALAC process such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), as well as the contribution of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) to promote bi-regional cooperation are underlined. As such, it is significant for each Working Group to explore ways to enhance financial and technical cooperation with these organizations and others from these regions to carry out the FEALAC projects.

As a forum established to become a relevant actor in the international arena which is expected to contribute to the creation of a more stable, secure and prosper world as well as to become part of the solution to the global problems FEALAC needs to undertake more concrete measures. FEALAC cooperation needs to be action oriented so as to produce tangible benefits. For this purpose, it is a prerequisite to look back to previous activities which had been carried out. Based on that review a number of concrete measures can then be formulated or projected for future direction.

Based on the conclusions of a survey carried out by the Indonesian Coordination, a number of steps need to be taken in order to revitalize and to enhance FEALAC's visibility in the future:

1. Balanced initiatives and participations from both regions need to be seriously taken into consideration if member countries intend to further enhance the cooperation and the role of FEALAC in the global world.
2. There are areas that need to be further explored. Both East Asian and Latin American are widely known for their huge potentials in their natural resources and beauty. Therefore FEALAC member countries need to focus to enhance

its less-explored areas, such as tourism and most specifically ecotourism, particularly in the case of the Latin American partners.

3. The 21st century is recognized to be the era of science and technology. Considering that there were lesser initiatives in this area, all FEALAC member countries are encouraged to further initiate projects to promote cooperation in science and technology. It is in this context also that the Working Group III on Science and Technology be reactivated.
4. In Tokyo the FEALAC member countries agreed to commit themselves to further strengthening their activities and interactions in order to make the most of the vast potential in bi-regional cooperation, as well as to jointly tackle major global challenges of today and the future. Therefore it is reasonable to give more weight to future FEALAC meetings. It is therefore quite timely to seriously consider the holding of meeting at the highest level (Summit Meeting), even though on an occasional basis and circumstances.
