

CO-CHAIR'S REPORT

2nd EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WORKING GROUP MEETING

Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC)
San Jose, Costa Rica, 11th- 12th August, 2003

INTRODUCTION.

The 2nd Education, Science and Technology Work Group Meeting of the Forum for East Asia and Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC) was hosted by Costa Rica and was held in San Jose on 11th and 12th of August, 2003. The meeting was presided by Mr. Carlos Manuel Echeverria, Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Relations and Worship, Costa Rica, with the assistance of Ms. Merrilyn Murphy, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, who represented Australia. Australia co-chairs with Costa Rica the Education, Science and Technology Working Group, and hosted the first meeting of the Working Group in June, 2002.

The meeting was attended by delegates representing the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Colombia, Republic of Korea, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, People's Republic of China, Ecuador, El Salvador, Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, New Zealand, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Singapore, Thailand, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Vietnam. As an observer, a representative of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), also attended the meetings.

The following agenda items were adopted:

Country presentations on "Best Practices" on the topics of Education as well as Information and Educational Technologies.

Development of a FEALAC Web Portal.

Development of a Science and Technology Observatory Network for the FEALAC countries.

Analysis of project initiatives presented by:

Peru: "EVALUATION, MONITORING AND MODELLING OF EL NINO-SOUTHERN OSCILLATION AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE MARINE ECOSYSTEM"

Argentina: "NATURAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT"

GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE MEETING.

The general objective of the meeting was to contribute to the strengthening of links between FEALAC countries through the application of Communication and Information Technology, including the advancement of TRACK II and III networks between FEALAC member countries, through scientific and technological exchanges in specific areas of common interest.

PRESENTATIONS BY COUNTRIES.

The delegates of Brazil, Costa Rica, China, Ecuador, Indonesia, Korea, New Zealand, Peru, Venezuela, and Thailand, presented "best practices" related to the use of

information technologies and communication methods in education. It was agreed that, where possible, countries would seek to strengthen cooperation in this area.

Peru circulated a project titled “A Cooperative Program between Latin America and East Asia to Improve the Health Services for Dispersed Rural Populations through Information and Training Systems,” to be presented during the next Working Group Meeting.

AGREEMENTS.

The Working Group meeting agreed to work toward progress on the following outcomes prior to the second Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (FMM II):

The Development of a FEALAC Web Portal by Costa Rica and New Zealand, building on an earlier model developed by Colombia. The basic frame would be designed in English and in Spanish. All documents are to be translated from Spanish into English and from English to Spanish, where possible. It is envisaged that the portal will be linked to national FEALAC and Working Group websites, for which guidelines will also be developed as part of the initiative.

To advance towards the creation of a Science and Technology Observatory Network, which will concentrate on the previously approved projects and areas of greater priority, as well as promoting synergies. In this context, an ‘observatory’ refers to an instrument to monitor themes or objects of study by a group of experts linked to Track II and Track III entities. This instrument would be used to construct scientific knowledge and to share it through the use of information technologies

The implementation of projects proposed by Peru for the facilitation of cooperation on the El Nino phenomena and by Argentina on the application of space technology to natural disaster management. A number of FEALAC countries signalled interest in these proposals, while acknowledging that contact between relevant experts - many of which were not present at the meeting - would be necessary to progress them.

The Working Group endorsed these projects, outlining responsible countries which would take the lead in their implementation :

FEALAC PORTAL:

Co- responsibility: Costa Rica and New Zealand

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OBSERVATORY:

Responsibility Costa Rica

“EVALUATION, MONITORING AND MODELLING OF EL NINO-SOUTHERN OSCILLATION AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE MARINE ECOSYSTEM”:

Responsibility: Peru

“NATURAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT”:

Responsibility: Argentina

NEXT STEPS.

· New Zealand and Costa Rica will lead the first phase of development of the FEALAC web portal, which will involve the upload of basic information on FEALAC and of key FEALAC documents. Links to national FEALAC websites and to working group web pages will also be developed, and it is envisaged that there will be a

restricted area for private exchange between FEALAC member countries in relation to developing the agenda for FEALAC meetings, etc.

Countries interested in participating in proposals agreed to nominate the representatives responsible for each project, by the end of September 2003, in response to the requests made by Costa Rica, Argentina, and Peru; once minimum critical mass is achieved, the responsible focal points from these countries will be able to further develop the projects proposed.

It is envisaged that each focal point will be responsible for the development of and participation of their country in the project. Ideally, this will include an incremental development of TRACK III networks.

Progress on proposals will be reported to FMM II and noted as outcomes of FEALAC.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

Within this context, the following recommendations were outlined:

That the four proposals endorsed by the Working Group be further developed with progress reports to be delivered to SOM VI and, as appropriate, to FMM II.

Development of the FEALAC website, taking into account the original Colombian model, should be a priority, and therefore receive all possible attention.

English-language documents should be made available in Spanish where possible, and all documents should be made available in English.

As a general conclusion, it was agreed that the Working Group continue to implement effective communication processes within FEALAC. It was also acknowledged that in order to advance proposals in the area of science and technology, the involvement of experts is crucial. The Working Group therefore agreed to continue to facilitate the development of Track II and Track III level networks, and to continue to encourage the presence of experts at meetings.

The Working Group meeting concluded by thanking Costa Rica for its efforts and hospitality.