

CO-CHAIR'S REPORT

3rd FEALAC SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WORKING GROUP MEETING

AIDE MEMOIRE

San Jose, Costa Rica March 7-8, 2005

The III FEALAC Science and Technology Working Group Meeting, was inaugurated by the Minister of Foreign Relations a.i., Mr. Marco Vinicio Vargas, accompanied on the main table by Mr. Medha Promthep, General Director of American and South Pacific Affairs, as well as Ms. Circe Milena Villanueva, Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Relations and Worship of Costa Rica.

The Minister a.i., Mr. Marco Vinicio Vargas, was very confident in his remarks reiterating that this meeting will “continue to contribute to the strengthening of the ties in relation to science and technology between our nations, as well as consolidating the important initiatives like cooperation projects, with great importance within the bi-regional focus which characterizes FEALAC.”

The Working Group Meeting session started with welcoming words by the Vice-minister of Science and Technology, Mr. Luis Adrian Salazar, expressing a special interest that the Forum exceeds anything written in paper and that the development of joint actions lead to poverty reduction and improving quality of life.

The Director of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Relations, Costa Rica, Ms. Circe Milena Villanueva, presents background information related to the current meeting leading towards the III Science and Technology Working Group Meeting. She reminded that the II Working Group Meeting on August 2003 took place in San José. During this meeting will be done a follow up of the agreements that were made in that event, and will also be discussed the FEALAC Portal and Observatory.

I. Presentation

Disasters in Latin America. Sustainable Human Development
Presentation of Project Proposals on Natural Disasters.

The session begins with the presentation made by Dr. Marco Adamson, Director of the Program on Investigations on Disasters of the University of Costa Rica, whose topic was Interregional Cooperation on the Administration of Disasters. He informs about the lack of warning instruments regarding tsunamis, saying that “we have forgotten that technology without information networks doesn’t work.” He also comments that there have been studies on different natural phenomena determining that prevention is less costly than reconstruction. The economic losses caused by the disasters imply more than financial sources needed to implement a system to prevent disasters.

Dr. Adamson presented the following project proposals:

- International Congress: Reduction of the vulnerability in the tropics: poverty, degradation of natural resources and disasters
- Low Cost Regional system for early warning against tsunamis

- Evaluation of risk and direction of water in the mountains

The Director of International Cooperations presents her compliments and advocates for the support of other nations to cooperate with these proposals.

II. 2nd Presentation

Interregional Cooperation on Disaster Management

Mr. Medha Promthep, Director General of the Department of South Pacific and American Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Thailand informs that his presentation complements the proposal made by the University of Costa Rica, coinciding that an early warning system is a good way to prevent natural disasters. He expresses that Thailand would like to support the proposal and will study the details themselves and will encourage the respective authorities to participate in an active manner.

Several comments and proposals are expressed by the different representatives based on the necessity to unite, coordinate and connect efforts.

III. 3rd Presentation

Latin America and East Asia Cooperation Project on El Niño Southern Oscillation and Its Related Social Economic Impacts.” ENSO

Mr. Godofredo Canote Santamaria, Executive Director of the Sea Institute of Peru presents the project. He assures that although the studies have had some continuity, it hasn't been able to establish a system to predetermine the magnitude and periodicity of the phenomena.

The project obtained the support of the participants and applauded the realization of the First International Coordinating Workshop for the establishment of an Information Interchange Network on ENOS under FEALAC, which will take place from the 27 – 29 of April, 2005 in Lima, Peru.

Countries like New Zealand, Thailand, and Chile expressed the possibility of participating in the above mentioned workshop.

Peru appreciated the support given to the proposal. Peru also indicated that they have finalized the negotiation with an international entity and have the funds to attend the investigation of the phenomena.

Costa Rica, supporting an initiative made by China, proposed the creation of a Commission that will give follow-up to the proposals and projects mentioned under the theme of natural disasters.

In accordance with the initiative, the Commission will be integrated by countries such as China, Costa Rica, Peru, Argentina and Ecuador. Membership will be left open for those countries who wish to form part of the Commission.

IV. 4th Presentation

Cooperation with AIDS/HIV. SARS and Influenza

This presentation was made by Mr. Worawoot Ponprapapant, Counsel, Department of American and South Pacific Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. This presentation focused on sicknesses like AIDS/HIV, the SARS and Avian Influenza. These infections of the XXI century began in Asia and have been spread all around the world. HIV was discovered more than two decades ago; it has taken many lives and could harm tourism and public health, producing a negative effect on manual labor. This indicates that the contagious diseases are a menace. FEALAC is trying to gather all relevant information and will determine what needs to be done to establish an information network.

Lessons learned from the influenza are focused in that the international community should work together and should strengthen the capacity of treaties and information on health.

Peru also presented the necessity for more cooperation between nations, technical support, planning, as well as different workshops to promote cooperation among countries. Also laboratories should be improved.

Peru demonstrated interest and support and is concerned about epidemics due to the fact that these imply economic sanctions.

Different nations expressed the necessity of uniting efforts to reduce epidemics.

V. 5th Presentation

Latin America and East Asia Cooperation Project for the improvement of information on Medical Services Network, presented by Peru

The objective of this Hispanic-Peruvian project, between Madrid and Peruvian universities, is to contribute to health systems as well as improving and guarantying the access to health.

The specific objectives are: improve the information people have in order to attend in a better way those who doesn't have direct access to healthcare. By improving these conditions, the quality of the technical workers for a continuous access to healthcare and control possible epidemic outbreaks will also be improved.

This project began in September, 2001. It has targeted quick responses and has saved 60% of lives. It has a 95,2% satisfaction rate.

The project was presented in 2003 to this forum and is of great interest by Peru that other countries take interest in it as have the Peruvian government. The benefits are interminable.

It was insisted by Peru that it is of great importance to foment bi-regional cooperation in this topic. The presentation was overwhelmed and the members expressed the satisfaction for the experiences lived.

Costa Rica reiterated its interest in gathering all the relevant experiences that have existed and summed up to the project; and that Peru is a model of best practice and as Thailand indicated, has nominated Peru as the coordinator of this group. Colombia suggested that this opportunity should foment triangular cooperation and to complement and support Thailand's recommendation in the sense that it could be used as a useful mechanism for health services in rural areas, using distance education. A CD will be handed out with information of all the presented proposals.

VI. 6th Presentation

The Space Information in the Development of Health Early Warning Systems,
presented by Dr. Carlos Marcelo Scavuzzo (Argentina)

The importance of special information: information that is undertaken by global satellites.

The presentation focuses on modelling Argentina as a spatial country in the sense that the socio-economic development of the country cannot leave aside spatial technology when developing.

This information is essential for the development of systems of early warning for natural disasters, for the study of harvests and for the individual health of people.

With satellite imaging we can study different phenomena; for example, the phenomena of El Niño, epidemic outbreaks related to dengue, malaria, encephalitis, water contamination and respiratory sicknesses, all of which are effects of El Niño.

With this project, Argentina demonstrates the capacity of offering aid for these types of initiatives. They will host an event during September 2005 and are welcoming all members.

The members expressed their support for the project and considers that the cooperation has to be based on sustainable projects, not in topics; whether it may be in the form of associations, these should be presented as joint programs. This project complements very well with the proposals previously made by Costa Rica and Peru.

It is proposed to introduce a chapter on health in the projects relating El Niño and Disasters to better monitor the diseases through the satellite.

Peru and Costa Rica have agreed to introduce the topic of health in the Information Network relating to El Niño and the proposals of Natural Disasters.

Meeting closure at 5:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2005

Costa Rica initiates the working group session, mentioning the celebration of the Women's International Day.

Beginning with a short review of the events brought forth the day before: presentations by Peru, Costa Rica, Argentina, Thailand, as well as the proposal to

form a Commission on Natural Disasters. Membership is open and is waiting response of other countries.

In 2003, a series of agreements were made, of which have been given their respective continuation. In this session the delegates agreed to consolidate the FEALAC Portal, proposed by Costa Rica and New Zealand, following the Colombian experience, of which was approved under the same framework.

In this instance, Costa Rica introduced Mr. Roberto Sasso whom will present the official FEALAC Portal.

“Implementing the FEALAC Portal” was the proposal made by the Costa Rican Technical Team.

The experts presented the portal background, and made a live presentation, focusing FEALAC as a medium to improve the relations between Latin America and East Asia, promoting cooperation. The portal www.fealac.org / www.focalae.org will give each country a space for their own country input, in accordance with the topics to be determined and not losing in sight the great FEALAC objective of cooperation.

There exists a general portal and the creation of subportals was proposed for each country, all with the same format. Each country has the liberty of choosing the content to be included in their national subportals according to the agreements made.

Costa Rica considers of great importance to improve the knowledge of technology between countries. The format to be used will include different themes, without altering the format.

The development of a pilot plan, was supported by the Department of International Cooperation, by the Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED) and by the Ministry of Science and Technology, each representing their respective tracks.

The portal is the door to FEALAC, (online) with existing subportals standardized for each member in the Forum, of whom will administer their own content.

Existing web pages will be linked to the main portal.

The general portal can be updated through the subportals, as long as there exist the corresponding authorizations.

The portal may enhance any type of information that can benefit the users.

The FEALAC portal as well as the pages for the subportals already exists. These will be divided by country, and further along will be used to promote this site.

The details of the portal are under Mrs. Andrea Tanzi's supervision.

The second part of the presentation was exemplified in real life cases representing users with everyday necessities.

The team reiterated that the portal www.focalae.org is in use. They also proposed the access to information to be divided into: 1. areas of interest, 2. by countries (divided in Latin America and East Asia) and 3. by working groups.

The third part, the expert Anthony Alvarado referred to the administration of the portal.

The portal can be administered by individuals without a deep knowledge on computers.

First, the administrators will be able to log in by a user name and password. Following this step there will be an administrative panel. It would be shown as the portal but with administrative functions.

The changes to be made on the portals and subportals, will be immediately modified and included.

Notice that the working group should validate the design of the proposals. It is also suggested that New Zealand, as the counterpart in order to collaborate for establishing a strategy for content management; however, they expressed they should submit it to consideration of their government.

It is proposed that the countries chose a technical counterpart for each, so they can be taught online and then be able to disperse their capacities to other people.

This is the first intent of introducing the portal as a functioning tool. More capacities and tools will be added to the portal. First, the contents will be defined as well as documents will be included for downloading.

The two existing domains are: www.focalae.org and www.fealac.org, each country will have their own, for example, www.focalae.org/japon or www.fealac.org/japan.

Costa Rica reiterates that the follow-up agreed upon regarding the terms of reference to choose the focal points were given to the members in the last meeting. To this date there are only a few responses.

Different points of view as well as suggestions having to do with content, language, tools, training, updating, and management support were made.

Costa Rica suggests that all countries consult their respective authorities and other officers relating the proposals presented, while having suggested remitted through email.

New Zealand considers a good idea to take the proposal to each country for further evaluation so that the respective technicians can make their comments. New Zealand also expressed the interest of administering the portal in English and that the English speaking nations assist in this project.

Costa Rica, having heard all the different comments reiterates that the proposals are welcome as long as these have designated the respective focal points, so that these can

make the observations. The main objective is to promote FEALAC and specially that related to cooperation.

The project on the Development of the Network of Scientific and Technological Observatories was presented under the FEALAC Portal Framework implying the permanent monitoring of science and technology which supports the self content by each country by means of the portal through the internet. In this space can be shared information oriented towards education, science and technology. This last presentation was introduced by Cristian Alvarez of the Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED).

CONCLUSIONS AND CLOSURE

Of the sessions taken place on March 7, it was agreed upon to present a proposal for the creation of a Commission on the topic of prevention of Natural Disasters. The University of Costa Rica agreed to be the coordinator of this commission.

Costa Rica gave the word to the delegate representing the University of Costa Rica, who presented a working agenda. The commission will be constitute initially by Costa Rica, as coordinator. Countries such as Argentina and Peru showed their interest in joining the commission.

The agenda proposal was supported by all members.

It was also suggested important to take into consideration the participation and learning aspects of the rural population that are affected by diseases.

Peru reminds that all countries should do all relevant consultations to institutions for the formation of the commission. Peru follows Mexico's observations in that these projects should not duplicate efforts.

Costa Rica communicates that they will submit to evaluation of the participants the basic instruments of the FEALAC Portal presented, which represent the "first step" that will be improved with the help of all the member countries of the Science and Technology Working Group.

It is requested to all countries that haven't designated a focal point to do so and send the required information.

With regards to the observatory, it is suggested that all countries make their observations via email.

Peru reiterates the necessity to register the invitation to their workshop that will take place in their country in April 2005. Peru's representative requested to the countries that haven't responded to issue their response. Also reiterates the support given to Telemedicine project. This project will improve thanks to what was expressed by Thailand and other countries. In the next coming months, they will deliver the Project Profile. They ask all other countries with experiences in Telemedicine to extend their experiences by written to Peru.

The Philippines expressed their interest in obtaining commentaries from countries on the second Ministerial Meetings held in Manila, January of 2004 and of the meetings with the United Nations.

Costa Rica retakes the support given to the presentations made by Peru, Argentina and Thailand and insists on the necessities highlighted by Peru, focusing on the April Workshop to send their applications.

Closing words were offered by the Viceminister of Science and Technology, Mr. Luis Adrian Salazar. He assured that these two days have been a source of motivation and inspiration given that each day the distances have been shortened and under the same working ethics the norms of knowledge sharing will lead these nations forward.

Reiterating that the main objective is that the cooperation between different countries is to achieve improvements in quality of life of the people. If knowledge and information aren't shared, and this work isn't made jointly, it would be impossible to conform a working group where all give a hand to survive in this new society and economy.

He make marks of appreciation in the name of the Minister of Foreign Relations and Worship, Mr. Roberto Tovar, the Viceminister of Foreign Relations and Worship, Mr. Marco Vinicio Vargas, and the Minister of Science and Technology, Mr. Fernando Gutierrez, as well as the President of the Republic, Mr. Abel Pacheco for the participation of the members of the forum and for their willingness to cooperate, share and improve quality of life.

Mr. Medha Promthep, as copresident congratulated all for the successful meetings. He has seen the cooperation work more systematically and reaffirmed the compromises to advance towards the strengthening on bi-regional cooperation in Science and Technology.

With this meeting there has been given an important step towards cooperation for which they congratulate Costa Rica, the staff of International Cooperation and all the delegates for the support. Thailand welcomes all for the next meeting to be held in their homeland.

Finally Costa Rica, gives their appreciation to the Corporacion Andina de Fomento (CAF) for the support given during the organization of the meeting and the elaboration of the portal.