

EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA
COMMITTEE
Strategic Forum for International
S&T Cooperation

Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1357/10

NOTE

Subject : Summary conclusions of the 7th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 17 September 2010

Since the SFIC Chair Mr. Volker RIEKE (DE) was unable to attend the meeting, this meeting was chaired by Mr. Pieter DE PAUW (BE Presidency), in line with the agreement reached at the meeting of SFIC on 28 April 2010.¹

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

1. SFIC Pilot Initiatives

a) Approaching China²

The Commission introduced this agenda item, which was organised in form of a "dedicated China session", by presenting recent developments in cooperation with China under FP7.

¹ Doc. 1355/10.

² Item prepared by the Task Force on Priority setting.

Mr. Manfred HORVAT (AT) and Mr. Svend REMOE (NO) presented their reports³ which included results from their mission to Beijing where they had met, with organisational support from the EU Delegation, local stakeholders and in particular with European science attachés.

Furthermore, the German delegation indicated that they are considering organising a workshop on Europe-China S&T cooperation in follow-up to the present work.

The Forum broadly endorsed the approach and the proposed actions presented and the Chair asked the Task Force to develop the initiative further, building upon the elements of the presentations and delegations' comments.

b) The "India Pilot Initiative"

Following introduction by the Task Force Chair the Commission representative, Chair of the SFIC India Group, reported on developments regarding the India Pilot Initiative, in particular as regards the preparations for the Stakeholder Conference (10-12 November 2010, New Delhi). This conference will address thematic questions (notably water-related), instruments for cooperation as well as innovation-related aspect of cooperation. Delegations have been invited to participate in the stakeholder conference. Confirmations are expected on the participation from the Indian side. This being a test case for such an event to which SFIC is contributing, it was noted that the question of the EU's and Member States' representation in such context in general needs to be discussed further taking the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty duly into account.

The Chair put forward the suggestion by the Presidency to consider inviting the Indian Minister of Research for an informal lunch in the margins of the session of the Council ("Competitiveness") on 26 November 2010, as a political signal supporting Europe-India S&T cooperation. Some delegations in general supported the proposal for such an informal event, whilst noting that any formal meetings, possibly at a later date, would need further preparatory work and experience from the Pilot Initiative. The Chair indicated that the Presidency would continue reflecting on this initiative further.

³ Transmitted separately to delegations.

c) **Approaching the USA**

Mr. Ales GNAMUS (Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, IPTS/JRC) presented the analysis⁴ of results to the questionnaire sent to SFIC members on their bilateral S&T cooperation activities with the US. Delegations who so wish may still transmit further clarifications as to their activities with US, to be taken into account in the report.

The Commission proposed to take this issue back to the Task Force to prepare the next steps. The Commission also suggested inviting other interested delegations to look into how to prepare such a discussion in the Task Force and identify activities that SFIC could consider for further development in view of a more in-depth debate at the SFIC December meeting. The particular link to the SET Plan was noted as regards cooperation in the field of energy, to be taken duly into consideration.

In this context, it was noted that the future role of the Task Force in general might need attention by the SFIC, as regards the tasks to be given to it and the resources needed for its work.

d) **The "Energy Pilot Initiative"**

The Commission informed the Forum on the preparations with a view to the SET Plan Conference of 15-16 November 2010, in particular as regards the envisaged session on the international dimension of the SET Plan⁵ and in which the SFIC Chair has been invited to participate. The session is dedicated to best practice examples of international cooperation and SFIC could contribute with its experience in the coordination of Member States' and EU activities. It is envisaged that the session could contribute to identifying concrete examples for the organisation of the international cooperation within the SET Plan, considering also the various international cooperation initiatives in the field of Energy.

⁴ Transmitted separately to delegations.

⁵ It was recalled that Council Conclusions of 11 March 2010 on the Commission Communication "Investing in the Development of Low Carbon Technologies (SET Plan)" also called for reinforcing the international dimension of the SET Plan (doc. 6688/10).

3. SFIC's Role in Summits and Bi-regional Dialogues

a) EU-Africa: Discussion of a SFIC recommendation on how to strengthen EU-Africa cooperation

The Commission, on behalf of the Task Force, presented a draft recommendation calling for launching an S&T policy dialogue working in conjunction with the EU-Africa 8th Partnership.

The Forum adopted a SFIC recommendation as set out in document ERAC-SFIC 1356/10, to be put forward through appropriate Council channels.

The Chair indicated that the Presidency would prepare a note on this issue to the Council ("Competitiveness") of 12 October 2010 containing also the recommendation as approved by SFIC, and more concrete steps to strengthen the dialogue between the EU and Africa.

b) EU-LAC: state-of-play

The Spanish delegation presented a draft paper of the process which led to the recent EU-LAC Summit and the related S&T Ministerial event, containing also suggestions on the possible role of SFIC in preparing input for such processes, including as regards the follow-up. ES invited delegations to comment on the draft paper before finalising it. In general terms it foresees that SFIC acts as a platform to discuss and to contribute to a possible common European position at a very early stage in the preparation of a summit and also by identifying priorities and strategies, therefore contributing with the strategic orientation and principles of the new EU-LAC Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation, as approved during the Ministerial Conference.⁶

⁶ Regarding bi-regional dialogue: "...Each region may use the appropriate specific structures to identify its priorities and strategies. In the case of the EU, the Strategic Forum for International Cooperation (SFIC) may undertake this task by contributing with the strategic orientation and principles of the new Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation". (Document on the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation, European Union-Latin America and Caribbean Ministerial Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation, Madrid, Spain, 14 May 2010).

4. SFIC Sharepoint/Information Sharing

The Commission informed the Forum on the state-of-play of the "Sharepoint" tool for information sharing set up by the German DLR as a result of the work (now completed) by the Task Force on Information Sharing. The Commission indicated that it would suggest further improvements to the Sharepoint. It was recalled that the Commission services are presently involved in the management of the Sharepoint on a provisional basis, while the question of a dedicated SFIC "information officer" remains under consideration, pending the identification of resources for this purpose. It was noted that the Member States should increasingly feed the Sharepoint, which is necessary to make it a "living system", whilst the issue of human resources on Member States' side was also acknowledged.

The Chair called on SFIC members to use the Sharepoint to disseminate accurate and up-to-date information on their activities with third countries.

5. The FP7 2011 INCO Work Programme

The Commission informed the Forum on FP7 activities on international S&T cooperation, focussing on the "Capacities" Specific Programme. The Commission agreed to give also a general overview on international cooperation activities under the thematic areas of the "Cooperation" Specific Programme focusing on major partner countries, at the next meeting. The Commission recalled that the FP7 Programme Committees, consisting of representatives of Member States, are involved in the management of the FP programmes and suggested that Member States should present equivalent information on their international cooperation activities in SFIC to reflect SFIC's partnership approach.

6. Preparation of the Strategy Workshop at the Villa Vigoni

The assistant of the SFIC Chair informed the Forum on the planning of the SFIC Strategy Workshop, for which an input paper will be shortly transmitted to the participants.

7. Any Other Business

- The Swedish delegation informed the Forum on four studies of priority setting in China, Japan and the US with implications at European level as well as priority setting in the Framework Programme.
- The German delegation informed the Forum of a German initiative to enter into a dialogue on S&T cooperation with the ASEAN countries, including a bi-regional science year (EU-ASEAN), which would be the first of its kind.
- The assistant of the SFIC Chair presented a suggestion for a possible logo for SFIC. It was noted that this question is linked to the ongoing discussion on the possible external visibility of SFIC. The suggested logo will be forwarded to delegations for further consideration.

Next meeting of SFIC is scheduled for 3 December 2010.
