

EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA  
COMMITTEE

Strategic Forum for International  
S&T Cooperation

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Secretariat

ERAC-SFIC 1353/13

**NOTE**

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Subject : Summary conclusions of the 17th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 19 March 2013

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The meeting was chaired by Ms. Riitta MUSTONEN (FI).

The Forum drew the following conclusions:

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda (CM 1894/13) was adopted with one amendment: point 7 (Good practices in Member States) was withdrawn from the discussion.

DE announced they would like to introduce an AOB point on current Horizon 2020 negotiations and the role of international cooperation; while FI stated they would like to share some information on the Senior Officials Working Group on ICT for Societal Challenges in the context of the EU-CELAC cooperation.

The Chair recalled that the summary conclusions of the SFIC meeting of 18 December 2012 were approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1351/13.

The Chair also recalled that the SFIC Work Programme 2013-2014 was approved by written procedure as set out in doc. 1352/13.

The Chair informed delegations that the SFIC Chair's advice to the Council conclusions on international cooperation in research and innovation had been transmitted to the Irish Presidency for their consideration. The final text was also distributed to SFIC Members and Observers. The Chair encouraged every SFIC delegate to liaise with their relevant counterparts at national level in order to follow the process.

## **2. Presentation of the procedure for the election of the SFIC Chair in June 2013**

### **- Presentation by the Chair**

The Chair presented a paper with the specific procedure for the election of the SFIC Chair, taking into account articles 2 and 8 of the SFIC Rules of Procedure, and outlined the following process:

1. The persons wishing to become candidates for the position of the Chair will send their CVs and letters of intention to the SFIC Secretariat, thus confirming the candidature. The deadline for the confirmation of the candidacies is 24 May 2013.
2. By 31 May 2013 the SFIC Secretariat will send the CVs and letters of intention received from the nominees to all the SFIC Members.
3. At the next SFIC meeting of 18 June 2013 there will be the vote and the candidate with a simple majority of votes will become Chair.

Delegations had no remarks on the procedure.

### 3. 4th SFIC Annual Report

#### - Presentation of draft outline scheme

The Chair announced the beginning of the process for SFIC's annual reporting to the Council and the Commission, also stating that the period to be reported covers from 1 March 2012 to 28 February 2013. The Chair introduced a draft outline scheme of the report, with the same structure than the previous report and including the following sections:

- I. Report summary
- II. Detailed progress report
  - 1) Progress on the implementation of the European Partnership for international S&T cooperation
  - 2) Development of joint EU/MS (AC) - SFIC initiatives
  - 3) Information sharing
  - 4) Internal organisation

Annexes

Delegations welcomed the draft outline scheme for the Annual Report and underlined the importance of SFIC's contribution to the preparation of summits and bi-regional and bi-lateral dialogues and the advances on the India SRIA. SFIC Members were of the view that particular attention should be paid to these two issues in the recommendations section of the report.

The Chair announced that the first draft version of the 4th Annual Report will be discussed at the next Task Force meeting on 24 April. Delegations were encouraged to contribute to the different parts of the report, with deadline for written input set at 12 April 2013.

The plenary on 18 June will discuss the contents of the report and will either adopt it or engage on a written procedure for adoption if there is a substantial discussion on amendments to the report are needed.

#### 4. SFIC initiatives

##### - **China: Presentation of SRIA (short version) and discussion on next steps**

Florence LELAIT (FR) gave an update on the work carried out towards an EU/MS-China Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda and presented both the short and long version of the SRIA, which were accompanied by a paper on ongoing activities in priority areas. Ms. LELAIT encouraged SFIC Members and Observers to internally share both documents (e.g. ask the relevant national stakeholders which activities mentioned in the SRIA annex might be open to other EU MS/AC and in which way) in order to be able to proceed and advance discussions at Task Force level. Delegations widely welcomed the documents, highlighting their quality and usefulness. SE delegation pointed out that the title of the SRIA should reflect the status of the document.

The Commission announced that MOST has launched a call for Chinese to work with at least 2 European partners on the same topics. The Commission also updated on the preparation of the urbanisation workshop (30-31 May 2013, in China) and the first meeting of the innovation cooperation dialogue (October 2013, in China) and suggested the possibility of an ERA-NET with China (supported by AT, FR and DE, although the latter may consider it "too early").

##### - **United States: Information from Commission**

Ms. Sigi GRUBER (Commission) reported back from the Joint Consultative Group meeting with the US on 12 February 2013, in which both sides showed committed to the role science, technology and innovation can play in developing the knowledge and technologies that can foster economic growth, create jobs and help solve shared challenges, such as in health, climate change and food security. PL put emphasis on the role of Member States in the preparatory process of Joint Consultative Group meetings, not to be left only to Task Force discussions.

The Joint Consultative Group meeting highlighted the role of Transatlantic marine, maritime and Arctic research and Ms. GRUBER opened the door to enhanced cooperation with Member States in this specific area. This area is in line with the Blue Growth strategy supported by DG MARE and research areas underpinned by Horizon 2020. ES, FR, PT, BE and NO showed interested in such type of research. The Commission also announced the gathering of information in some policy areas as regards projects and initiatives in the field of marine, maritime and Arctic research at national level and will inform SFIC accordingly.

Ms. GRUBER also gave an update on the Destination Europe initiative, informing about the next event that will take place on 11 April 2013 in Washington DC. DE and FR supported a more thematic approach to the Destination Europe conference concept, to foster the EU-dimension and attractiveness instead of showcasing particular and singled-out Member State initiatives. AT stated that such thematic approach could be counter-productive for small Member States. The Task Force is meant to further discuss the issue when dealing with the preparation of upcoming events.

**- India: State of play on GSO creation and setting up of thematic groups**

Mr. Laurent BOCHEREAU (Commission) presented recent developments on the India initiative, in particular with regard to the creation of the Group of Senior Officials and the setting up of thematic groups. At the end of January 2013, the India group (also with input from a video-conference with the Indian side) decided to focus on 3 specific topics: environment/water, energy and health. Moreover, work has been done on developing the Terms of Reference for the thematic groups. Mr. BOCHEREAU also announced that the tentative date for the first GSO meeting is 9 October 2013, within the context of the EU/India R&I week in Brussels and Paris.

- **Brazil: State of the overview on R&I activities and workshop preparation**

Ms. Ana Cristina NEVES (SFIC Vice-Chair, PT) gave an overview of the recent work of the SFIC Task Force, particularly in relation to the advances made on the compilation of an overview of R&I activities with Brazil, for which a template was sent to all SFIC delegates, and announced different deadlines and milestones for future work: final reception of input to the overview from SFIC Members and Observers (17 April 2013); discussion on completeness and main messages for the introductory part of the report (24 April 2013, at SFIC Task Force) and finalisation of the overview report (after 24 April 2013, in view of the workshop on 17 June 2013).

Ms. Tiina VIHMA-PUROVAARA (FI) made a presentation on the preparations for the Brazil workshop on 17 June. The main target of the seminar is finding solutions to joint challenges and identifying focus areas for the Brazil initiative. In principle, the workshop is intended to generate out-of-the-box thinking with a key note presentation on the new Brazilian innovation programme and an overview of the current Brazil initiatives by MS/AC, Commission and relevant stakeholders. Using a peer-learning exercise, defined groups are meant to discuss the "challenges and solutions" that will be identified in the preparatory material for the workshop. During the discussion, ES raised the importance of PPPs with Brazilian local entities and PT, FR, FI and DE highlighted the difficulties to deal with such a big and administratively complex country with several states and a federal government but acknowledged the opportunities this may bring. The Commission highlighted the need to involve the EU/MS/AC Science Counsellors in Brazil as well as some representatives from industry with presence in Brazil. The Brazil core group will finalise the concept note on time for discussions at Task Force level in April and for the workshop.

**5. Africa: STI cooperation mapping and 8th Partnership**

- **Presentation by the EEAS**

The European External Action Service (Mr. Jose Fernando COSTA PEREIRA, Pan-African Affairs) presented a mapping of STI activities in Africa as well as the past, current and future situation of the 8th Partnership for science, information society and space.

The Africa-EU Summit in Lisbon (2007) adopted the Joint Africa-EU Strategy including 8 Partnerships of which a Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space, the 8th Partnership. According to Mr. COSTA PEREIRA, since Lisbon the European Commission and the African Union Commission have together made substantial progress towards the identification of a broad range of scientific projects and initiatives. These have helped reinforcing the African science and technology base and its research systems both in terms of production and use of knowledge and of institutional capacity in science and technology policy. A High Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation followed and the first Senior Officials Meeting of this dialogue was held in Addis Ababa on 10-11 October 2011.

In terms of particular and specific initiatives with Africa, the EEAS representative highlighted the African Union (AU) Research Grants Programme to support collaborative research with researchers from Africa - and in certain cases also Europe - to implement the priorities of the AU S&T policy; the launching of a second call for proposals (October 2012) under the ACP S&T II programme (EUR 23 million) for African R&I capacity building; as well as the Network for the Coordination and Advancement of sub-Saharan Africa-EU Science and Technology Cooperation (CAAST-Net, with a EUR 4 million contribution from the EU). Another highlight was the EUR 2 million FP7 ERA-NET for Africa (ERAfrica), which leveraged EUR 11 million from ministries and public institutions in 15 European and African countries.

Mr. COSTA PEREIRA also put emphasis on FP7: Since the start of FP7 in 2007, the EU has funded some 400 cooperative research projects with Africa and Europe, with almost 1000 participants from 42 African countries for an EU contribution of around EUR 140 million and EUR 44 million in co-funding from African partners.

Concerning the future of the 8th Partnership, the EEAS announced ongoing reflection, jointly with Commission services and Member States, about the future of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy and implementing structures after 2013. In this context, the focus on tangible goals instead of on partnerships is foreseen. STI cooperation will remain an essential part of the overarching goal of sustainable and inclusive growth with a specific focus on developing a knowledge-and-skills-based society. The aim of this overarching goal is to "stimulate growth that will reduce poverty, create jobs and facilitate the entrepreneurial potential of the people in a sustainable manner".

Delegations welcomed the presentation given by the EEAS. PT, MT and BE encouraged other delegations to show commitment to STI cooperation with Africa and to overcome the lack of political will. DE showed its concerns on participation, capacity development and structures that work in practice and FR on the thematic priorities for future STI cooperation with Africa. The EEAS encouraged Member States to coordinate internally with the relevant Ministries of Foreign Affairs to reach a coherent R&I political framework.

## **6. PLA on SFIC and national administrations linkages and SFIC's role at national level**

### **- Debriefing and presentation of report**

The Chair informed delegations about the successful organisation of the PLA seminar on 5 March 2013 at FI Permanent Representation in Brussels, with a well-prepared setting and highly valuable group discussions. The aim of the seminar was to focus on the national processes of international scientific and technological cooperation and on the SFIC activities as a part of those and other national processes. Main recommendations emerging from the workshop dealt with the following issues:

- Recognition of SFIC within national ministries;
- Dissemination of information and active participation;
- Bridging the gap between ministries and funding bodies;
- Adequate timing of different policy, budget and political cycles;
- Added value of SFIC, with benchmarking, assessment and exploitation of results;
- Mapping exercises (helping towards tangible results);
- Select the right people to SFIC;

- ERA groups interactions and coordination at national level *vis à vis* ERA governance;
- Setting strategic priorities for SFIC nationally;

Ms. Tiina VIHMA-PUROVAARA (FI) also welcomed the results of the workshop and the very fruitful way of working. The Commission encouraged the wide dissemination of the final version of the report.

## 7. Any Other Business

- **Standing Information Points:** The Chair informed delegations about the three standing information points distributed prior to the meeting, including: the SFIC Task Force minutes from January 2013, the review of the EU-South Korea S&T Agreement as well as information on studies commissioned by the European Commission.
- **Horizon 2020 negotiations and the role of international cooperation:** DE expressed its concerns on the potential Programme Committee structure, the role of international cooperation and the proposal from the Commission on comitology and its implementation in practice.
- **Senior Officials Working Group on ICT for Societal Challenges:** FI distributed a paper in the context of the EU-CELAC SOM and its ICT working group, related to the workshop foreseen for 15 April 2013 on "ICT for better living: increasing welfare for societies in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean".
- **Next EU-CELAC SOM:** The Commission briefly informed SFIC Members and Observers about the next EU-CELAC SOM, which will take place on 16 and 17 April 2013 in Brussels, back-to-back to the launch of the INCO-Net EU-CELAC and the ICT working group workshop. For the INCO-Net launch (on 18 April), the Argentinean Research Minister and the Commissioner have been invited.

- **EU-Russia Year of Science:** The Commission briefly informed SFIC Members and Observers about the future EU-Russia Year of Science in 2014. The tentative launch date is scheduled for 25 November 2013. The BILAT project for Russia is likely to provide the Secretariat. SFIC was invited to nominate one SFIC representative to the steering committee. SFIC delegates were also encouraged to identify suitable events to be included in the Year and to submit names of high-level persons who could act as 'ambassadors' for EU-Russia cooperation in R&I and higher education.
  
  - The Commission also informed about the conclusion of the **review of the EU-US bilateral S&T agreement**, to be published in April, as well as of the **Joint Committee meeting with Chile**.
  
  - **Next plenary meeting:** the Chair informed delegations that the next SFIC plenary will take place on Tuesday 18 June 2013.
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