



Institute of Social Sciences

Report

Sixth BRICS Summit Expectations from Fortaleza Meeting

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(From L to R) George Mathew, Chairman, Institute of Social Sciences, Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia, Director-General, Indian Council of World Affairs, Zuo Rui, Second Secretary, Embassy of China, Mark Reynhardt, Counsellor, South African High Commission, Carlos Duarte, Ambassador of Brazil, Roman Babushkin, Head, Foreign Policy Section, Russian Embassy, Ash Narain Roy, Director Institute of Social Sciences.

Extract from the Report of Sixth BRICS Summit Expectations from Fortaleza Meeting

Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia, Director-General, Indian Council of World Affairs, delivered the keynote address.

Ambassador Bhatia began by presenting a balance sheet of BRICS' achievements and shortcomings pointing to the wide gap



Rajiv Bhatia, Director General, ICWA


between its critics and advocates as well as notable discrepancies between projection and reality. He also referred to the divergences among five member-states, despite their brave, continuing endeavours to forge unity, coordination and cooperation.

Russia, India, China (RIC) grouping and India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum played no less important role in giving shape to BRICS. RIC had been in existence since 1996 and through its dozen meetings of foreign ministers between 1996 and 2012, it created shared perceptions and

habits of working together in the political domain. And through its five summits between 2006 and 2012, IBSA shaped a useful tri-continental partnership among leading democracies from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Ambassador Bhatia further explained how over the years BRICS Summit declarations and joint action plans have been expanding. Compared to the first summit declaration which contained only 16 paragraphs, New Delhi and Durban declarations had 50 and 47 paragraphs respectively. He cautioned against rhetoric taking precedence over substance. Three Cs - Common vision, Coordination, Cooperation - have stamped all the five declarations. On international political issues, the BRICS menu has kept expanding from perennial issues such as countering terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to more topical subjects such as Syria, Afghanistan, the Iranian nuclear question, and Africa.

To Ambassador Bhatia, the expectations from the Fortaleza Summit are not very high. International environment since the Durban Summit has been characterized by rising tensions in relations between the West, particularly the US, and two members of BRICS -



Russia and China. World economy indicators point to low growth in developed economies as well as slower (than before) growth in BRICS economies. These factors are hardly congenial to reforming the world order, a fundamental aim of this grouping. Hence what we can expect is progress on consolidation and expansion of intra-BRICS cooperation in a measurable manner.

For Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it will be the first summit, but he arrives armed with a powerful national mandate and a clear goal to deploy foreign policy to the cause of accelerating India's economic development. He would be driven by "enlightened national self-interest" and doctrine of "mutually beneficial relationships." Given this state of play, creating good chemistry among leaders would be a challenge, but it should also be a top priority.

According to Ambassador Bhatia, BRICS has its work cut out. It has to grapple with an essential fact: much like players in a football game, it has to keep running with a clear aim in view; if it stands still, it will lose the momentum and the match itself!
