



**Indian Council of World Affairs**

**Sapru House, Barakhamba Road**

**New Delhi**

**ICWA Sponsored**

**Event Report**

**on**

**Fifth India-Africa Academic Conference  
'India-Francophone Africa:  
Issues and Challenges'**

**at**

**King Fahd Palace Hotel, Dakar**

**October 17-18, 2013**

## 1. BACKGROUND

As part of the Track II dialogue process of the Second India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) – II, a two-day academic conference on “India- Francophone Africa: Issues and Challenges” was held by the Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA) in collaboration with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), at King Fahd Palace Hotel, Dakar on October 17-18, 2013.

The Conference aimed at

- Bringing together Indian and Francophone African academics, researchers, policy makers, analysts and consultants to share their views and perspectives on issues relating to India- Francophone Africa partnerships in the wider context of growing Indo-Africa relations.
- Promoting collaboration of academic institutions from India and Africa to undertake joint projects and research on areas of mutual interest.

A seven member delegation of diplomats and analysts represented ICWA in the conference.

The members include:

Ambassador Niranjan Desai, *President, Osian's-Connoisseurs of Art Pvt Ltd,*

Ambassador Shamma Jain, *Joint Secretary, ICWA,*

Prof Mohammad Gulrez, *Aligarh Muslim University,*

Mr Manish Chand, *Editor-in Chief, India Writes,*

Ms Ruchita Beri, *SRA, IDSA,*

Dr Nivedita Ray, *Research Fellow, ICWA,*

Dr Sandipani Dash, *Research Fellow, ICWA*

About 50 experts from Francophone African region, drawn from areas such as strategic affairs, banking, finance, business, policy, education and foreign relations presented papers on issues pertaining to the four thematic areas of the conference. Besides the experts, a large number of academics, policy makers, practitioners, media and civil society contributed to the debate and discussions in the conference.

The conference was inaugurated by H.E. Mr Amadou KEBE, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Senegal with his inaugural address. H.E. Ambassador Shamma Jain gave her opening remarks and Dr Ebrima Sall, Executive Secretary, CODESRIA presented his introductory remarks. The keynote address was delivered by H.E. Ambassador Niranjn Desai. H.E. Shri Partha Satpathy, Ambassador of India to Senegal, gave his vote of thanks.

The Conference focused on four important areas (a) India-Francophone Africa Ties (b) Economic and Commercial Engagement (c) India-Francophone Africa: Emerging Areas of Co-operation in Agriculture (d) Partnership for Energy Security.

The speakers for various sessions of the conference are the following:

### **Inaugural Session**

1. Dr. Ebrima Sall, Executive Secretary, CODESRIA
2. H.E. Ambassador Shamma Jain JS, ICWA
3. H.E. Mr Amadou KEBE, Secretary General,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad
4. H.E. Ambassador Niranjn Desai, President, Osian's –Connoisseurs of Art Pvt Ltd
5. H.E. Partha Satpathy, Ambassador of India to Senegal

### **Session I**

6. Prof. Aminata Diaw, Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar (Chair)
7. Dr. Issa Samake, Dept. Social Sciences, University of Bamako, Mali
8. Mr. Manish Chand, Editor-in-Chief, IndiaWrites
9. Mr. Kouassi Venance KONAN, Director General of Fraternité-Matin, Cote de Ivoire

### **Session II**

10. Dr Cheikh Tidiane DIEYE, Directeur Executif, Centre Africain pour le Commerce, l'Integtraion et le Development (CACID)
11. Prof. AGBENOTO Koffi Mawunyo , Agrégé des Universités Togo
12. Mr. Amit Kumar, Resident Head Dakar, EXIM Bank India
13. Prof. Mohammad Gulrez, Director, South African and Brazilian Studies, Aligarh Muslim University

### **Session-III**

14. Pr Mouhamadou FALL, Dean of Economic Sciences Faculty, Gaston Berger University, St Louis
15. Mr. Ajit Kumar, Chief General Manager, EXIM Bank India
16. Dr Moussa SECK, President of Pan African Agribusiness and Agroindustry Consortium (PanAAC)
17. Dr James Christopher MUROMBEDZI, RFGI Coordinator, CODESRIA
18. Dr. Nivedita Ray, Research Fellow, ICWA

### **Session-IV**

19. Mr. Mass Lo Tiers Monde, Senegal
20. Dr. Alioune Ndiaye, University of Quebec, Montreal
21. Ms. Ruchita Beri, Senior Research Associate, Institute of Defence Studies & Analysis
22. Dr. Ahmet Illa, Assistant at Abdou Moumouni, University Niamey & Political Advisor at the Office of the President, Republic of Niger.
23. Dr. Sandipani Dash, Research Fellow, ICWA

## **2. CONFERENCE SESSIONS**

### **Inaugural Session**

Dr. Ebrima Sall, Executive Secretary, CODESRIA in his introductory remarks stated that though content of the trade between India and Africa is largely based on the raw material and primary commodity, there has been growing academic and cultural linkages between institutions from both sides. He pointed out that there is a necessity for transformation of the world order dominated by the West. The existing framework of understanding global affairs is tilted in favour of the West. The voices of the South and its scholars need to be adequately represented in the scientific publications.

In her opening remarks Ambassador Shamma Jain welcomed the participants on behalf of Director General, ICWA. Highlighting ICWA's commitment to the Second India–Africa Forum Summit's dialogue process, she noted that the conference was an effort to engage in

candid exchange of ideas on issues relating to partnership between India and Francophone Africa. She highlighted the growing importance of India-West Africa partnership in the economic, commercial, investment, as well as, political areas.

Ambassador Niranjana Desai in his keynote address noted that there is great potential for elevating engagement between India and Francophone Africa to new higher levels. He also qualified by saying that there are some lacunae to be made good before the India-Francophone Africa partnership can achieve full potential. Ambassador Desai pointed out that there is a yawning knowledge deficit on both sides and general popular perceptions of each other are still to a large extent based on colonial stereotypes. Despite the growing engagement at political and economical level, he opined, people-to-people contacts as well as the civil society and academic level have hardly increased in proportionate terms. Ambassador Desai emphasized that the awareness of Francophone Africa in India and vice versa needs to be raised by widening the agenda of mutual interaction among diverse segments of the societies and institutions, including educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and the arts and culture.

Mr. Amadou KEBE, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, in his inaugural speech stated that this Conference is extremely topical. He expressed his expectation from this Conference by saying that the presentations would help us share and identify the prospects and concerns of India-Africa relations which are age old. He acknowledged that India fought against discrimination and supported liberation movements in Africa. He went on saying that India played a critical role in the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement. Secretary General spoke about India's green revolution and its capacity building and technology transfer initiatives in Africa.

Shri Partha Satpathy, Indian Ambassador to Senegal, gave a vote of thanks and stated that India's engagement with Africa/West Africa has become multifaceted and diverse on science and technology, capacity building, agro processing, etc. Ambassador Satpathy pointed out that this India-Francophone Africa Conference was a timely initiative, prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> Francophonie Summit to be hosted in Senegal in 2014.

### **Session I: - India-Francophone Africa Ties**

In this session the panellists reflected upon India's multi-faceted engagement with Francophone countries in the West African region. It was reiterated that due to colonial, geographical and language factors, in the past, this region had received limited attention in India's Africa Policy purview. However, under globalization, the mutual efforts by the two regions to diversify the partnerships have reinvigorated the relations and language no more remains a barrier

**Dr Issa Samake**, in his presentation, highlighted the bilateral cooperation between Mali and India, which is based on the principle mutual benefits and South – South cooperation. Mali and India, he said, have many commonalities with regard to ancient civilizations; both are home to different ethnic groups, cultures and religions. And the shared experience of colonization and the resistance movement. All these elements of similarities must logically conclude in strengthening of relations between these two countries.

He drew attention to India's developmental progress and economic rise, particularly in the mastery of technology, citing example about 9 operational geostationary satellites to conduct tele-education and tele- medicine and India being the first producer and exporter of generic medicines material handling. He stressed that his could become an area of mutual gain, as Mali with a population of approximately 15 million inhabitants, exposed to tropical diseases, offers a good market for pharmaceuticals. Dr. Samake opined that there is space for the two countries to cooperate in trade and business opportunities, and the transfer of competence and technical know-how.

**Mr. Manish Chand** stated that Francophone Africa is emerging as a new frontier for India's Africa policy. He focussed on key drivers of India's enhanced engagement with Francophone African countries and mapped out future directions and challenges. He noted that a complex interplay of strategic, economic and developmental imperatives is driving India to deepen and diversify ties with the Francophone Africa. He said that the last decade has seen a host of initiatives by India which seek to scale up diplomatic, economic and energy ties with the French-speaking countries of West Africa. However there is a dire need to connect, on the level of minds and hearts, and in this area there are rich possibilities, he stated. He looked at the prospects of enhancing cultural connectivity with Francophone African countries– an



important area of future engagement, given the vibrancy of culture and performance arts in this region. Indian films and music are very popular among the natives of the Francophone African region, despite the language barrier, and that needs to be capitalized. He pointed out that India and Francophone Africa need to take concrete steps to bridge knowledge deficit and enhance collaboration between their culture industries.

**Mr Kouassi Venance KONAN** said that Francophone Africa, like the African continent, is not a monolithic entity. He stated that Francophone African countries are diverse in many respects, including geographic location and cultural identity. He pointed out that there are 31 countries with 600 million populations that belong to Francophone Africa. He said that India's engagement with Francophone African countries should be oriented towards people's welfare. It needs to transcend beyond trade and investment linkages. Focus should be placed on the security challenges in the Francophone Africa region, as it has implications not only for the growth and development of the region, but also for India's own security concerns.

## **Discussion**

In the interactive session questions were raised by the local experts, as to whether India currently has a strategy and a vision to towards Africa and so also whether Francophone African countries have strategy towards India. Some African participants articulated that organizing the conference itself is a part of India's strategy towards Africa. Furthermore there was clarification from Indian delegation that India has well documented Plan of Action in place to engage Africa. Another issue that was discussed at length was the question of bridging knowledge deficit and how that can be overcome. It was suggested that establishment of India study centres in Francophone Africa and Francophone African study centres in India will enhance mutual knowledge and promote relations. These could be undertaken by Indian and African universities and research institutes. Emphasis was also put on collaborative research between academic institutions of India and Francophone African countries, to assess the growing engagement and come out with actionable policy suggestions that would help in making the engagement more people centric and meaningful.

## **Session II: - Economic and Commercial Engagement**

The panellists identified the growing complementarity of economic interests between India and Francophone West African states. The participants discussed the status of trade and investments, opportunities and challenges between India and Francophone African countries and it was viewed that agriculture and pharmaceutical sector offer immense opportunities for cooperation.

**Prof. AGBENOTO Koffi Mawunyo** in his paper brought out the genesis of India-Togo relations, as this was marked on 24 April 1981 at the end of a stay of a Togolese delegation, sanctioned by a memorandum signed between the two countries. On this occasion the two countries have identified the opportunities for cooperation in the sectors of sugar industry and the railways. Apart from the above-mentioned memorandum, he referred to another memorandum signed on 16 April 2010 between Togo and the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC). The objective of the memorandum was to inform the strengths that can be offered to India by Togo and the cooperation they seek for development projects in the areas of agriculture, water and energy.

He pointed out that the areas of cooperation are varied and academic cooperation (Research fellowships for the students, strengthening of capacities for the executives of the public administration) remains an important area. He detailed out Togo's economic potential for India, outlining that India remains one of the markets for privileged phosphates exports by Togo. There are Indian investors which are currently in Togo particularly in the cement production. He further emphasized, that there is need to diversify the cooperation in the fields of vocational training, self-employment, small technologies and agriculture in order to get a better profit as possible.

**Mr Amit Kumar** stated that countries in the African region constitute a focus region for EXIM Bank of India. The critical component of the Bank's strategy is to promote and support two-way trade and investment flows. As a partner institution to promote economic development in Africa, the commitment towards building relationships with the African region is reflected in the various activities and programmes which EXIM Bank of India has set in place. EXIM Bank has representative offices in Johannesburg (South Africa)/ Dakar



(Senegal)/ Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) to cater to the Southern, Western and Eastern region of the Continent. Dakar Representative Office is conferred with a special diplomatic status 'Accord de Siège' by Government of Senegal at par with multilateral institutions.

**Prof Mohammad Gulrez** observed that Senegal shares common aspirations and positions with India on many issues of international concern. He added that since 1962 both governments have established diplomatic relations, which has been translated into several economic cooperation agreements. The Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement or TEAM 9 has further strengthened India's relations with Senegal. He considered Senegal as a gateway for India's venture into business with Francophone countries in the region, for being politically stable and economically vibrant. It is the fourth largest export destination of India, so an important partner not only for bilateral engagement but also for regional level project partnerships. Senegal is also seen as a stable country, and a potential partner in combating transnational security threats, such as terrorism. He observed that bilateral ties and engagements provided opportunities for strengthening cooperation between the two countries in the sectors ranging from technical training, urban transport, agriculture, rural electrification and Information & Technology.

### **Discussion**

The issue of mobilizing finance was given a greater focus in the discussion. There were questions as to whether EXIM bank would be able to provide financial support to Francophone African SMEs and local entrepreneurs, to which the response was that the EXIM bank can only facilitate and mobilize finance through other Banks. The issue of mitigating risks concerning Indian investment in Francophone African region was also raised. It was also observed that governments in Francophone African countries need to be sensitive to people's interests, while negotiating with India or other countries on mineral/energy projects. The need for a multipronged approach with a primacy on human resource development and youth employability was flagged.

### **Session III - India-Francophone Africa: Emerging Areas of Co-operation in Agriculture**

The panellists analysed the importance of cooperation between India and Francophone Africa countries in the field of agriculture as it is backbone of the economies of both regions.

**Mr. Ajit Kumar** highlighted the stable growth rate in the West African region as it accounted for 20 per cent of GDP of Africa. Outlining the rise in bilateral trade between West African countries and India from US\$ 1.7 bn in 2003-04 to US\$ 20 bn in 2012-13, he observed that India maintained a trade deficit of US\$ 8 bn with West Africa in 2012-13. He stated that the Exim Bank plays the role of catalyst for investments in West Africa, by extending loans to Indian companies for investments in the region and entering into various collaborative programmes. In the agricultural sector, Exim Bank's presence in Francophone West Africa, he pointed out, has been much through extension of LOCs for a range of agriculture related projects.

**Dr Moussa SECK** tried to redefine agriculture in Francophone Africa. He said that given its comparative advantage, Francophone African countries, particularly the local private entrepreneurs need to expand their partnership with India in sector of fertilizers, seeds ,irrigation, capacity building and experience sharing in the field of land reforms, mechanization of agriculture, sustainable agricultural production, drought and floods management, and above all research and innovation efforts. He also stressed on self reliance and said that agro-business should be promoted with every farmer being able to do business.

**Dr Nivedita Ray** emphasized on agriculture cooperation as an important area which provides enormous opportunities for building partnerships. She pointed out the challenge in harnessing these natural resources to usher in agriculture productivity in Francophone region. India's expertise in using data applications in diverse fields such as sustainable agricultural production, environment auditing, management of floods and drought can prove beneficial to these countries, apart from the ongoing developmental cooperation, in rice production in Senegal and improved seeds accessibility. She also reflected upon issues relating to scope in India-Francophone Africa cooperation in agriculture R&D, technology review and the steps needed to boost Indian investments in Africa's agriculture sector.

**Dr James Christopher MUROMBEDZI** noted that with vast arable land, Africa has not been able to produce enough to feed the people of the region. Majority of the people in Francophone Africa are undernourished, instead of 90 meals people are having 45 meals in a month. He also mentioned that since Africa does not have food sovereignty they cannot ensure food security. And control over food productivity process is therefore essential.

## **Discussion**

There was curiosity as to how India, with 9 times less arable land than Africa, has been able to feed its vast population. India's experience of Green revolution evoked much discussion. Besides attention was also drawn to India's success story of White Revolution by the cooperative movement in Gujarat that enabled India to be self reliant in milk production. Important questions relating to the potential of the establishment of India and Francophone Africa R&D were also raised. In this context Swaminathan Rice project and institute like International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid-Tropics (CRISAT) were referred to.

### **Session IV- Partnership for Energy Security**

The panellists threw light on the rising need for hydrocarbons and other energy resources for ensuring economic development. Discussion was focused on the prospects of India's partnership with the region on hydrocarbon, minerals and renewable energy.

**Dr. Alioune Ndiaye** said that energy demand, driven by the rising economic growth and geopolitical concerns in procuring energy resources from the West and Central Asian regions, have impelled India to look for Francophone Africa/Africa, as preferred source of hydrocarbon energy procurement. He also added that India's recent focus on developing nuclear energy programme, has become another factor that has created scope for partnership between India and emerging uranium rich Francophone African countries. In India-Francophone Africa energy cooperation, India's comparative advantage on technical capability should be harnessed to the benefit of Francophone African countries, he added.

**Ms. Ruchita Beri** outlined the emergence of Africa as a hot spot for energy sources as Africa's share of proven global crude oil reserves stands at 10 percent and of global gas

reserves around 8 percent. She reiterated that the rising energy demand is pushing major energy consumers such as US, Europe and China to invest in Francophone Africa. Similarly, India's energy security concerns are driving it towards Francophone Africa. As Indian companies invest in energy assets in several countries on the continent, India has offered a collaborative partnership with the Francophone African countries. This partnership is mutually beneficial, providing the country energy security and benefitting Africa through sharing its experience and building local capacities. However, she stressed that many resources rich African countries face challenge of conflict which thus erodes significant gains from the oil export. She further suggested that India should make efforts to set a fresh roadmap for its partnership with Africa that hinges on cooperation beyond accessing hydrocarbons and prioritise sustainable development on the continent.

**Dr. Ahmet Illa** in his presentation reiterated the importance of India-Africa's age old relations dating back since the independence period. India had to play an important role for the independence of African countries as India played a role in the structuring of the movement of non- Aligned countries. He noted that in contemporary times, the interest of India for Africa has grown and vice- versa. There is reinvigoration of India-Africa relations in South- South cooperation framework. This cooperation could be very useful for the African continent because of the technological progress of India and for its willingness to make technology transfer a reality. He further stressed that India seeks to deepen its access to the Franco-African market in this era of globalization. It is this strategy which leads to investment in strategic domains, such as telecommunications and mining including the uranium sector. He emphasized that Niger can become an alternative source of uranium for India.

**Dr. Sandipani Dash** examined the prospects and constraints for hydrocarbon energy cooperation between India and Francophone Africa. The hydrocarbon resource sector is always critical to the industrial production process. Francophone African countries have come up as new sources of hydrocarbon resources. Since Indian economy is heavily dependent on hydrocarbon energy import, diversification of its overseas energy supply remains a constant priority at the policy level. Currently, Francophone Africa's quest for favourable capital investment and intermediate, cost-effective technology for industrial expansion coincides with India's requirement for hydrocarbon resources to sustain its rising economic growth. Therefore, he stated that, in the context of existing geo-political solidarity,

growing geo-economic complementarity and increasing capacity building cooperation between both regions, there is a scope for a symmetrical partnership on the hydrocarbon resource sector.

## **Discussion**

There was detailed discussion on technology transfer in energy cooperation between India and Francophone African countries. The need for synchronising India's capacity building programme with its energy partnership, making its capacity building programme more employment oriented were mentioned. It was also suggested to undertake feasibility study of establishing mega Petro Chemical Park on a collaboration basis in Francophone Africa. Concerns were raised about Resource Curse and "Dutch Disease" syndrome prevalent in many resource rich African countries and therefore the need to avoid such crisis was discussed. It was stressed that the domestic issues of conflicts and competitive claims over oil reserves have been major impediments in sharing the revenues generated from the hydrocarbons sector. In the context of accessing uranium from Africa, it was mentioned by an Indian participant that India had has an impeccable record of non –proliferation, despite being a non-signatory to the NPT.

## **Conclusion**

This session tried to consolidate the two day discussion on India –Francophone Africa ties relating to issues such as economy, capacity building, agriculture, energy, culture and security. The existing engagement in above mentioned areas was evaluated and future cooperation possibilities explored. The conference was appreciated by the local participants because of its focus on Francophone Africa, as a distinct geographical entity. It was felt that such regional approach on the part of India was first of its kind and encouraging, as it has tremendous potential for deepening India's engagement with Francophone African countries, given their history and linguistic specificity. It was highlighted that despite the pressing financial commitment for its domestic priorities in the social sector, India tries to partner in the development cooperation initiatives in Africa. The continent is, therefore, perceived to be a partner and not a target by New Delhi. The expectation is that India should have more proactive engagement on issues directly concerning the African people, and the question of governance should not be lost sight of while pursuing economic partnership. The emerging



powers engagement with Africa through BRICS mechanism was discussed and it was felt that concerted reflection needs to be undertaken to develop an African understanding of BRICS. To this end an academic exercise needs to be carried out. It was reiterated that agricultural cooperation has to be geared towards ensuring food security. It was also expressed that the collaborative resource extraction process should be ecologically sustainable. Establishing academic linkages, cultural ties and fostering people-to-people contact were given utmost importance. In this context, it was felt that CODESRIA and ICWA can play important roles in policy reflection exercises to make the India- Francophone partnership more meaningful.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Following recommendation and suggestions were made at the Conference:**

- There is a need to diversify and expand further trade with a large number of Francophone African countries. The content of trade which is largely based on the raw material and primary commodity needs to be diversified.
- A multipronged approach with a primacy on human resource development and youth employability needs to be adopted.
- India needs to prioritize its efforts towards developing power sector in Francophone African countries.
- Francophone African countries should create enabling environment for attracting investments from Indian public and private sector companies.
- India and Francophone African countries should undertake joint research and development (R&D) programme to optimize the agriculture productivity, given India's Green Revolution success story and its vast experience in R&D.
- Partner with local entrepreneurs in agriculture sector for enhancing productivity and market access of their produce.
- India and Francophone African countries must cooperate in renewable energy resources particularly in the hydel sector and solar and wind power.
- Establishment of Francophone Africa and India studies centre for enhancing mutual knowledge and understanding will go a long way in promoting relations. Collaboration between Indian and Francophone African universities and research



institutes will boost free and frank exchange of ideas on policy issues of mutual interest.

- Setting up of institutes on the pattern of petroleum engineering college in Dehradun and TERI University through public private partnership to equip and train personnel to manage the hydro carbon industry in an ecological sensitive manner.
- India should be more proactive in its multilateral/ regional approaches to respond to non- traditional security threats including terrorism in Francophone Africa.

