1. Background

The IBSA Social Development Working Group held its first meeting in Brazil from the 12th – 14th June 2006. During this meeting, the Working Group analyzed the report and the main conclusions from the IBSA (IBAS) Seminar on Economic Development and Social Equity, held in Rio de Janeiro on August 3 and 4 2005. Focus was also on social development challenges faced by each country and the need to identify and implement new and innovative ways to address those challenges.

In this regard, presentations on aspects of key programmes implemented by each country for poverty alleviation and social inclusion were made to share best practices and knowledge as the basis for development of lasting solutions to respond to social needs of each country. A brief presentation about the “IBSA Facility Fund for Alleviation of Poverty and Hunger” was made and information was also shared regarding projects funded from the IBSA fund in Guinea Bissau and Haiti.

The Working Group identified the following as main areas for trilateral cooperation: poverty alleviation, micro-finance and application of indigenous knowledge systems for social development. It was then agreed that a dialogue with experts be convened to engage further on these issues in order to inform future planning of IBSA projects targeting the IBSA fund. This dialogue will take place during the 2nd meeting of the IBSA Social Development Working Group scheduled to take place in South Africa during the month of November 2006.
2. Theme for the Seminar/Meeting

The proposed Theme for the seminar is “Towards a Development of an Integrated IBSA Poverty Eradication Strategy”.

In September 2000, leaders of 189 countries agreed on a pact during the Millennium Summit convened by the United Nations in New York. This agreement gave rise to a document named the Millennium Declaration, establishing as a priority the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger in the planet by 2015. To this effect, eight goals were agreed, called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are to be achieved by means of specific actions to fight hunger and poverty, combined with the implementation of policies in the areas of health, sanitation, education, housing, promotion of gender equality and environment. In addition, the development of a global partnership was agreed, with a view to contributing to sustainable development.

While a lot has been achieved by India, Brazil and South Africa in meeting the MDGs, progress has been slow in most of the developing countries within the regions of IBSA countries. Millions of people are still living in extreme poverty in these areas which makes fighting hunger and poverty key priorities for IBSA. IBSA countries have independently developed and implemented innovative strategies to address these issues. There are good lessons learnt and experience acquired from ‘best practices’ embraced in these strategies that can be packaged into an integrated IBSA Poverty Eradication Strategy. The integrated IBSA Poverty Eradication Strategy best practice would assist the IBSA countries to jointly achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It will also be useful in the implementation of poverty eradication programmes and strategies by other developing countries especially those in the process of post-reconstruction.

The IBSA Social Development Working Group has been established with the purpose to facilitate a process towards ensuring that knowledge, lessons and best
practices are shared to address the social development needs of IBSA countries as well as developing countries within specific regions of IBSA countries going through a period of reconstruction and development. It is in this regard that the Social Development Working Group deems it crucial to extrapolate ‘the best’ out of each country’s poverty alleviation strategies to develop an integrated ‘IBSA Poverty Eradication Strategies’.

2. Objectives of the Second Social Development Working Group Meeting

The main objectives of the meeting are to:

- Share knowledge and best practice on poverty eradication strategies with the view to consolidate and extrapolate the ‘best’ of the best practices into an integrated IBSA Poverty Eradication Strategy.

- Discuss the ‘IBSA Fund’ and to agree on a ‘plan of action’ that would facilitate cross-pollination of knowledge across the IBSA countries and those targeted for implementation of IBSA funded projects.

- Facilitate a process by which the signing of the Trilateral Agreement can be done during the Social Development Ministers’ meeting taking place during the first quarter of 2007.

- Plan for the Social Development Ministers’ meeting taking place during the first quarter of 2007.

3. Structure of the Seminar/Meeting

The structure for the working group meeting will be divided into three phases. The 1st phase will be in form of a plenary session and will be attended by key stakeholders with experts from each country presenting papers on selected on the afore-mentioned items. These phase will also include break-away sessions to further critique and extrapolate the ‘best’ of each countries ‘best practices’ towards the consolidation of an integrated IBSA Poverty Eradication Strategy.
The second part will be a meeting of the Social Development Working Group to review the outcomes of the seminar, discuss a process towards finalization of the Trilateral Agreement and the ‘plan of action’ for utilization of the IBSA Fund.

The third part will be visits to flagship projects

PART ONE:

Day 1: Plenary - Presentations

- IBSA Countries’ Poverty Eradication Strategies.
- Social Inclusion and participation as a strategy for poverty eradication.
- Micro-finance and cooperatives as a poverty eradication tool.
- Gender equality and women empowerment and its impact on poverty
- Indigenous Knowledge Systems and its contribution to social development and poverty eradication.

PART TWO

Day 2 and Day 3: Break-away sessions

- Feedback from Break-away sessions
- Extrapolation of the ‘best’ out of IBSA Countries’ best practices
- Consolidation of the draft ‘strategy’ incorporating aspects of lessons from presentations.

PART THREE

Day 4 and 5 Project Visits

- Visit to identified projects