

BRIDGING THE SOUTH DIVIDE

A common agenda will ensure that government institutions, scholars, NGOs and professionals of the South can 'walk together'



HOPEFUL: Ambassador R Carlos Sersale di Cerisano says co-operation can have a great effect on economies. PICTURE: PATRICIA HAGEN

BY R CARLOS SERSALE DI CERISANO AMBASSADOR OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC TO SA

South co-operation dimension into their foreign policies in order to deal with most of the issues that are part of the international agenda in today's world: the promotion of democracy; the advancement of human rights; facing conflicts that affect peace and security; moving towards regional integration; promoting economic growth and sustainable development; achieving social development; and reaching the Millennium Development Goals according to the deadlines agreed.

Obviously, all these issues should be dealt with in a complementary fashion with each country's own domestic priorities, strategies and policies with the ultimate aim of self-reliance.

The factors that will allow government institutions, non-governmental institutions, universities, scholars and professionals of the South to walk together, in classic Dinokeng jargon, is a common agenda, although it in itself will always need to bear in mind the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the countries and the sub-regions in which the co-operation is going to be implemented, based on the structural characteristics of the developing world. They share a common pattern in the challenges facing them: all of them have suffered from colonialism – the legacy of which is still present today in a number of different ways. They each have unresolved governance issues. And how best to

deal with structural, economic and social problems, largely stemming from unequal income distribution, is still a priority in their domestic agendas.

Other factors that justify the co-operation of the countries of the South is the international context characterised by hegemony at a military level, fragmented economic powers and protectionist trade policies in developed countries in sectors where developing countries are competitive.

In consequence, if we accept that developing countries have common global challenges; if we define South-South co-operation as "neutral" and "politically correct"; and if we assume that we share some characteristics that restricts the way out of our own governance and economic and social structural problems, therefore, we will agree that there are enormous opportunities for South-South co-operation at "policy" and at "operational" levels.

In this regard, the agenda for the South, particularly among the "progressive" countries of the region, should include strengthening multilateralism with the aim of global governance; promoting democracy and human rights; enhancing peace and security; eliminating the vestiges of colonialism in the world; economic growth and sustainable development (negotiations at WTO and G20 among others); and social

development. All of these concur at a policy level.

At an operational level, the countries of the South need to find the means and build the instruments to facilitate trade and investments; they need to transfer technology; step up training and education; utilise the UN system at country level; and enhance bilateral and triangular co-operation.

Increasing trade and investments among the countries of the South is not horizontal co-operation, per se.

Obviously, increasing international trade and promoting investment should be encouraged but this is something that is going to happen regardless by way of business opportunities.

The role of the main actors recognised in the Dinokeng scenario "walking together", should be the identification, design, approval and enforcement of the strategies and, as well, the policies and the operational modalities required to facilitate international trade and investments.

It is quite evident that the existing instruments are not adequate to promote trade and investments between the Souths.

There is enough scope for co-operation at the level of policy in the negotiations with the North and to identify operational activities aimed at facilitating regional and inter-regional trade and investments through regional trade agreements, investment promotion

and avoiding double taxation.

Trade and investment should be the two faces of the same coin.

The potential exists and should be explored through concrete activities in which governments should create and facilitate the policy framework and develop some related instruments.

Another good example is the role of science and technology linked to investments.

Transfer of technology and training should be a component of any foreign investment related to the production of goods and services.

In addition, the association between companies from countries of the South with local entrepreneurs of the country in which the investment is going to be made should be encouraged in all foreign investments. Joint projects in science and technology between research institutions connected to the real economy will have a multiplier effect in all sectors.

South-South co-operation will have a real impact in the economies of their respective regions.

Co-operation at a regional level will contribute to the complex task of regional integration.

Sharing best practices can only have a positive impact at institutional, economic, social and educational levels as well as on all activities related to training.

Therefore there is a role for progressive governments of the South walking together with all their relevant actors in their own societies to lead a convergence process towards horizontal co-operation at policy and operational levels with the terms of reference described above.

It would not only benefit their respective societies but it will also contribute to a better and fairer world.