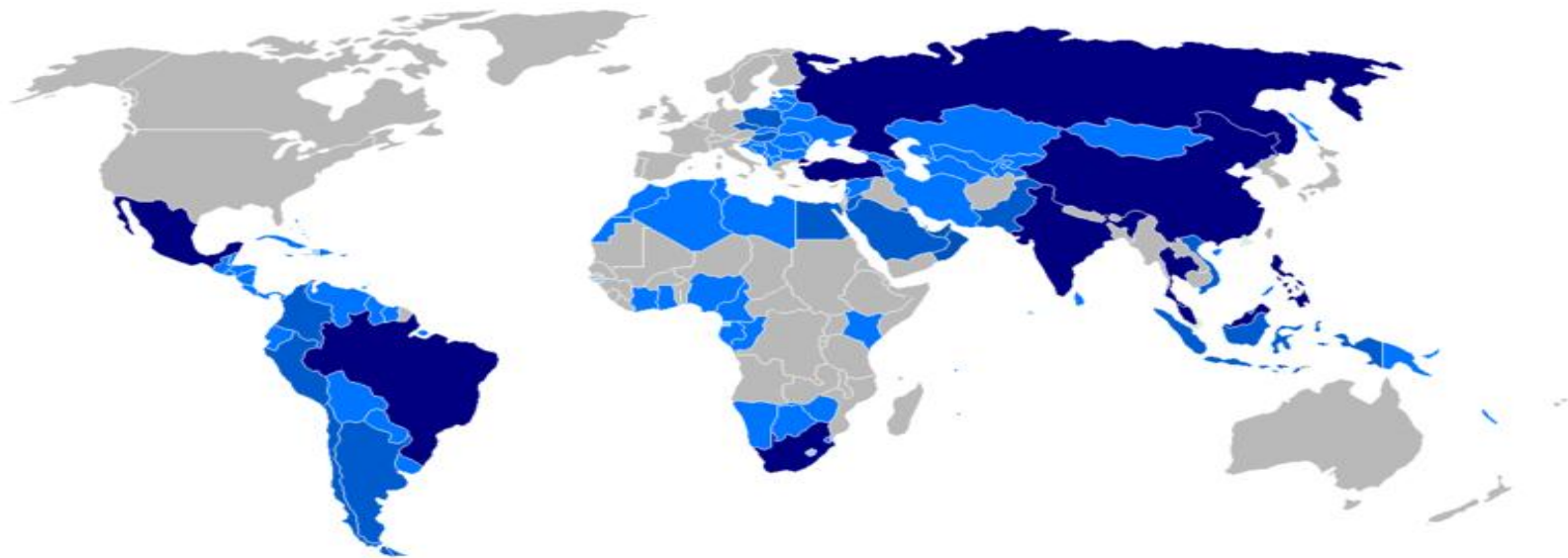




The Egyptian Cabinet
Information and Decision Support Center

Concept Note

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE ROLE OF THINK TANKS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS



17TH - 18TH OF JANUARY 2009

Brief Description

Realizing the importance of sharing developmental Knowledge and enhancing developmental cooperation between the developing countries, The Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) (www.idsc.gov.eg) is taking the initiative of holding a first International Conference for the Developing World Think Tanks in Cairo. The significance of this initiative resides in the fact that this would be the first international conference ever grouping the developing world Think Tanks that are becoming more and more essential policy actors in their societies.

The Conference will promote **South-South Cooperation** and will aim to:

- Encourage **collaboration on joint research projects** between Think Tanks in order to share the most successful best practices and experiences in developmental policies.
- Develop concrete mechanisms between Think Tanks for **Sharing Knowledge concerning socio-economic development** across the Developing World.
- In coordination and cooperation with the developed countries Think Tanks, the conference will **identify and disseminate innovative strategies, best practices and technologies developed by Think Tanks in the Europe and the United States of America.**

The Conference will also gather Think Tanks that represent the vanguard of reformers Think Tanks across the Developing World and its activities will provide a valuable forum and a neutral space where **reformers** ideas can be discussed in a serious and non-adversarial way.

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1. BACKGROUND

For a long time, International Cooperation was promoted as a tool of development between the advanced and the developing countries. As the world became more aware of global injustice and the necessity of pushing forward the development of the least developed countries, most of the international cooperation efforts were concentrated at a “North-South Cooperation” level. The North-South Cooperation was considered as a bridge to fill the knowledge gap between the developed and the developing “worlds”.

The concept of the South-South Cooperation was introduced in the field of development studies in the late 1990's. Developing countries became more and more conscious that appropriate and sustainable solutions to their developmental dilemmas might be found in other developing countries rather than in the north. For the developing world, South-South cooperation represented both an economic and an intellectual choice. On one hand, accessing southern developing countries pool of expertise is far less expensive than bringing experts from the developed north. On the other hand, the South share common challenges like high population pressure, poverty, hunger, disease and environmental deterioration. Consequently their developmental experiences that emerged out of those challenges are sharable between each others and could be even perceived as more solid, appropriate and consistent solutions. The main problem facing the spread of those experiences is the lack

of a sustainable mechanism that would permit to share and manage this knowledge and consequently to benefit from it for developmental purposes.

Think Tanks are becoming more and more essential policy actors and decision supporters in the developing world societies as they assure a scientific process of policy analysis, research, decision making and evaluation of policies. One may strongly argue that establishing a south-south mechanism linking those policy research institutes would help in achieving a better developmental knowledge management in the south. One may actually think that the south is ready for such a move especially with the southerner states have taken conscious of the following:

- They realized that policy research formulated in the north is often limited in terms of its applicability due to differences in the political, socio-economic and even cultural contexts.

In addition, important developments have emphasized the importance of South-South Cooperation in policy research and formulation:

- The focus of research activities is moving in the North from the public sector to the private sector which is highly interested in profit. And consequently, the cost of research drastically increased.
- The growing politicization of research coming from the north often serves political interests.
- The developmental solutions that were proposed by the northern states are discredited as they didn't meet the developmental aspirations of the south. Neo-colonization

- The Development of regional economic blocs in the south (that became a necessity for survival in the global economy) made the coordination of policy research a requirement not to say an obligation for regional integration.

Developing countries account for a major proportion of the people in the world and some of them are large economies, which have a major share of the world GNP. Developing institutional ties and mechanisms between Think Tanks in the developing world will help sharing, managing and benefiting from southern developmental knowledge that will consequently be of assistance to the south facing its developmental challenges. On the other hand, it will help southern states to coordinate their developmental policies which will facilitate regional integration processes. And as the South unites into regional blocs, those blocs will voice their opinions and concerns as larger economic, moral, political and social entities making them less vulnerable confronting the global economy. It goes without saying that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for North-South Cooperation in this field. The north has a lot to provide in terms of know-how and infrastructure in the field of policy research. What we aspire is more a complementary relationship in which the core policy research will become increasingly southerner supported by a Know-How transfer from the North in terms of methodologies and technologies.

2 WHY PARTICIPATING IN THIS CONFERENCE?

Your participation will be a golden opportunity to provide your Think Tank with an important international dimension which will strengthen its capabilities and develop it further more. In addition, your insight, experience and contribution will be used to achieve the conference objectives that were designed to serve your Think Tank Core Business.

Our Objectives are to:

- Encourage collaboration on joint research projects and activities between Think Tanks in order to share the most successful best practices and experiences in developmental policies.
- **Develop concrete mechanisms between Think Tanks for Sharing Knowledge concerning socio-economic development across the Developing World.**

In addition, the conference will be the perfect place to gain Knowledge, network & develop relationships

KNOWLEDGE

- Learn from International Best Practices.
- Share your experiences and insights.
- Voice your own thoughts about developmental obstacles and get feedback from your interaction with international experts.

NETWORKING & DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS

- Meet with Think Tanks experts, researchers, policy makers and international donors.
- Negotiate potential research projects for your Think Tank

VISIBILITY

- Engage in a process that will bring together a solid international network of Think Tanks
- Be included in publications and projects which will be resulted from our conference. This is a unique opportunity of presenting your Think Tank to an international audience which permits you a High profile brand positioning and image identification

3. CONFERENCE PROFILE

3.1 THE INITIATIVE

Realizing the importance of sharing developmental Knowledge and enhancing developmental cooperation between the developing countries, The Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) initiated the idea of holding a First International Conference for the Developing World Think Tanks in Cairo. The significance of this initiative resides in the fact that this would be the first international conference ever grouping the developing world Think Tanks that are becoming more and more essential policy actors in their societies.

3.2 BENEFITS FOR THE DEVELOPING WORLD

- Promoting South-South cooperation as a significant approach for Development
- Encouraging Economic, Political and Cultural relations between the developing countries.
- Encouraging collaboration on joint research projects between Think Tanks in order to share the most successful best practices and experiences in developmental policies.
- Developing concrete mechanisms between Think Tanks for Sharing Knowledge concerning socio-economic development across the Developing World.

3.3 CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The Conference will lead to the promotion of South-South Cooperation and will aim to:

- Encourage collaboration on joint research projects between Think Tanks in order to share the most successful best practices and experiences in developmental policies.
- Develop concrete mechanisms between Think Tanks for Sharing Knowledge concerning socio-economic development across the Developing World.
- In coordination and cooperation with the developed countries Think Tanks, the conference will identify and disseminate innovative strategies, best practices and technologies developed by Think Tanks in the Europe and the United States of America.

The Conference will gather Think Tanks that represent the vanguard of reformers Think Tanks across the Developing World and its activities will provide a valuable forum and a neutral space where reformers ideas can be discussed in a serious and non-adversarial way.

3.4 PARTICIPANTS

The Conference will make an open invitation to all interested Think Tanks in the Developing & Developed World.

3.5 INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

The Conference will have an International Steering Committee that will be responsible for coordinating efforts between significant, influential and resourceful Think Tanks in the developing world to make the conference a reality.

3.6 SUSTAINABILITY

Rotating Conference, Permanent Secretariat

The first Conference will be organized in Cairo and then will rotate across the developing world continents (Asia, Arab Africa, Latin America etc...). A permanent Secretariat would be established to ensure the conference sustainability.