

MIKTA diplomacy: New dynamism or more of the same?

Geneva, 30 August 2014

Summary

MIKTA countries (Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey, and Australia) and DiploFoundation convened a seminar on 29 August 2014 to provide the opportunity for the academic and diplomatic community to share views and perspectives on how MIKTA can influence the agenda of International Geneva in the diverse issues addressed such as health, humanitarian affairs, trade, and UN reform.



Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey, and Australia have recently developed a cooperation scheme within a framework called MIKTA. MIKTA countries represent a total population of over 500 million people, a GDP of US\$5.6 billion, and US\$1.5 trillion in trade. They represent open economies, which have strong domestic markets, moderate inflation, and populations with rising purchasing power. They are developing resilient economies with potential for high growth rates, while consolidating democratic processes. MIKTA is based on a common interest in strengthening multilateralism by supporting worldwide efforts for stability and prosperity, facilitating pragmatic and creative solutions to

regional and international challenges, and implementing the needed reforms in global governance structures. The concept of MIKTA was first discussed at the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2013, with a consequent joint communiqué signed in Mexico City in April 2014.



Jorge Lomónaco, Ambassador of Mexico to the UN, welcomed close to 80 participants by calling MIKTA ‘an informal platform of an ambitious co-operation’ that, according to his words, should be ‘building, not blocking’. The magic of acronyms seems to work well in the MIKTA context, which some of the panellists called music to their ears. While the countries forming MIKTA may seem to have more diversity than similarity, Ambassador Lomónaco is convinced that diversity is actually the main strength of the platform; all members have common interests in strengthening

multilateralism and increasing international responsibilities. He hopes to have the club use its potential as a force of good in global affairs. Ambassador Lomónaco’s point was echoed in the ensuing discussion.



Dr Jovan Kurbalija, Director of DiploFoundation, who moderated the discussion, built on Ambassador Lomónaco's reference to MIKTA countries as ‘bridges’. Some of them are even geographical bridges. Turkey bridges different continents and cultures. Mexico is a bridge between North and South America. Other MIKTA countries are cultural, economic, and social bridges. The ‘bridge’ metaphor for MIKTA was carried throughout the event.



Prof. Raymond Saner of the University of Basel laid the [data and scientific basis for discussion](#) on MIKTA in trade and development. Quick ‘data mining’ on MIKTA has shown some interesting insights. MIKTA countries depend heavily on services (around 60%) with the exception of Indonesia (39%). Service-dependence makes MIKTA more dependent on stable and predictable global relations. It is supported by a wide range of Free Trade Agreements and active participation in WTO activities. Data also shows the high level of competitiveness of MIKTA countries (much higher than

BRICS countries). With a solid statistical basis, Prof. Saner shifted to policy analysis of MIKTA’s potential role in negotiations and implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs). In an analysis of each SDG, he highlighted a few where MIKTA can play a prominent role, such as SDG 8a (Aid for Trade).

Lastly, he analysed the role of MIKTA countries in WTO activities (implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, Plurilateral on Environmental Goods, Non Tariffs Measures, etc.).

Ambassador Toni Frisch, former Head of Humanitarian Aid of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, had a very persuasive presentation on a possible role of MIKTA in the humanitarian field. In 2015/2016, the following main events will define humanitarian field for the forthcoming period: 3rd World Conference on Disaster Reduction, Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change COP in Paris, ICRC/IFRC Conference, and the Humanitarian Summit in Turkey in 2016. MIKTA countries could play an important role in promoting synchronised approach to all these



processes aiming at achieving policy coherence and avoiding duplication of efforts. One practical area where MIKTA can contribute, in particular in Geneva-based activities, is to simplify reporting and monitoring when the same/similar issue (e.g. disaster reduction) is addressed from different policy angles (e.g. humanitarian, climate change and development); i.e., how to avoid reporting to each of these processes and, as much as possible, harmonise reporting and monitoring criteria. MIKTA's contribution to addressing this practical challenge which burdens many countries could be of high relevance for the humanitarian field. He stressed the diversity aspects, which provide a great opportunity considering the regional group's membership and their important networks; this can give the club an opportunity to tackle various questions.

Dr Petru Dumitriu, lecturer at Diplo and Ambassador of the Council of Europe to the UN, described MIKTA as an example minilateralism defined as 'bringing to the same table the smallest possible number of countries needed to have the largest possible impact on solving a particular problem'. MIKTA's strength is that its diversity implies convergence around globally adopted values. It provides MIKTA with a high moral standing. MIKTA's role could be in these four main areas: the UN as whole, peace and security, development, and human rights. The added value of MIKTA as a group includes enhanced legitimacy,



capacity to have an influence at regional level, special national experiences that could be shared, and taking a pioneering role in experimenting conformity with emerging norms and policies recommended by the UN. He advised that MIKTA take a role in a few specific areas including UN human resource policy, and a review of the excessive use of outside consultancy. Given MIKTA's priorities, partner countries could consider accession to a few Council of Europe conventions that are open for global accession: the Cybercrime Convention and Personal Data Convention, the Medcrime Convention, and the Convention on Violence against Women.



Dr Daniel Low-Beer, a visiting fellow at the Global Health Programme of the Graduate Institute, spoke on health diplomacy, focusing on three areas where MIKTA can contribute to global governance: (a) an innovative partnership around specific issues, (b) diversity diplomacy which MIKTA will exercise by definition, and (c) result-oriented partnerships. In all of these areas MIKTA could make a substantial contribution since it is not a traditional and fixed political alliance.

Thus MIKTA is more than an acronym and ‘music to the ears’ of all of those who are looking for innovative partnerships and a way to harness diversity.

MIKTA diplomats and the audience then engaged in a lively discussion. It was suggested that MIKTA countries take a more active role in Internet governance, where there is a need for convergence among different positions in negotiations.

Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, **Choi Seokyoung**, who will take over coordination of MIKTA from Mexico from 1 September 2014, asked experts to reflect on the *do not’s* and the potential risks for MIKTA. The panellists gave the following advice:

- ◆ The main challenge is how to make an exclusive club inclusive. This is where BRICS has not succeeded so far. It will be important for MIKTA countries to make other countries, in particular in their respective regions, comfortable with MIKTA’s initiatives.
- ◆ MIKTA should choose a few focus areas, such as reporting and monitoring of disaster reduction risk, and sustain efforts. Sometimes, it may not pay back in terms of media coverage and public visibility, but ultimately sustained efforts are the only way to achieve real impact.
- ◆ In order not to be ‘more of the same’, MIKTA should make concrete and visible inputs to global policy. It could be in areas such as streamlining of reporting and monitoring, thus reducing information noise in the UN world by managing data in smarter and more effective ways.

One concrete proposal is that the Republic of Korea, during its MIKTA coordination, could help by managing big UN data in a more effective way by contributing its expertise and knowledge in the digital field.

The photo gallery and speakers’ bios are available at [this link](#). More information on [DiploFoundation](#).

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