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Attention:
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Brief Report to Planning Committee Meeting (April 15 -16, 2005) on South Africa Node of the Millennium Project

The co-chairs of the SA Node of the Millennium Project (MP) regret not being able to attend this Planning Committee which would have been our debut participation with the broader network. We are making an effort to ensure that we can participate in future meetings. In the meantime, this report is offered as a brief report on the activities of our young Node.

Introduction

The SA Node of the Millennium Project (MP) was formed through the facilitation of Jerome C. Glenn, Director of the MP. A formal Memorandum of Understanding was signed in September 2004 between Jerome and the interim co-chairs of the Node – Bob Day, JP Landman and Geci Karuri – as well as the SA Futures Society. There was an understanding that more institutions and interested parties would be invited to sign the MOU and join the SA Node as the Node establishes itself.

The primary focus over the early months of the SA Node's existence has been in 3 areas:

- Setting up the internal / administrative organization of the Node
- Establishing the networks of the Node through national engagements
- Initiating external / broader linkages for the Node

1. Internal Organisation

The SA Node is set up in a fairly amorphous way in the sense that it is not rooted in any one institution. The co-chairs represent different sectors and interests, which is seen to be a point of some advantage. However it has been necessary to ensure that the Node establishes some basic administrative support and organization in order to efficiently handle its functions.

To this end, it was determined that the Node would require a secretariat to support it on basic administration (organisational, financial, etc.) and the critical function of managing communication with national stakeholders. From the experience to date, it has been concluded that a purely volunteer-based arrangement cannot achieve the desired results within an acceptable timeframe.

CSIR, a South African research council was chosen as an appropriate host for the secretariat, either as an incubator to get the Node up and running, or as a long-term host and champion. CSIR agreed to play this role. The Finnish Embassy which is supportive of the initiative has also indicated that they would be willing to make a co-contribution to support the establishment of the Node secretariat.

The CSIR is in the process of establishing the basic communications infrastructure for the Node in the form of a database of the network which currently comprises of more than 50 people from southern Africa (mostly South Africa at this stage), a listserv for members (which will be operational in April 2005), and a website. Mr. Bongani Memela has been tasked to act as the CSIR's contact person with the Node and his office is providing the secretarial back-up.

2. South Africa Engagement

Much of the activity in this area has been focused on identifying and linking to key persons and institutions in South Africa for participation in the Node network, and developing initiatives for collaboration.

In respect to the latter, the co-chairs of the SA Node identified two projects for the SA Node for 2005:

- Organise a series of workshops to develop scenarios for SA. These scenarios can be posted on the website, marketed through the listserv and can be used as a roadmap to monitor progress and direction of SA society. We will kick off by having a half-day workshop in Pretoria to review previous SA scenario exercises, what they have achieved and how matters have developed from then to now. The aim is to have the first workshop in May / June 2005.
 - The following are the envisaged **goals**:
 - To learn from past exercises by tracking the different scenario options and drivers; how they have been used or not; and how the current reality compares to the drivers and scenarios identified through those exercises.
 - To compile new scenarios from this past knowledge for use now.
- A second project will be to build relationships and networks between SA and Finnish institutions and role players in the field of futures studies as part of an effort to build considerably more foresight capacity here in SA and in the African region. Therefore, subsequent workshops on SA scenarios may include experts / stakeholders from Finland and other African countries such as Kenya. The objective would be to develop international co-operation and networking between particularly SA, Finland and African countries. One of the co-chairs, Mr Bob Day, has already established relations with the Committee of the Future of the Finnish parliament and with the Finland Futures Research Centre. These relationships can be leveraged further.

3. International / Broader Engagement

This has been deemed to be an important area of attention although there has not been much direct activity to date. There has been an effort to maintain linkage to the MP and its projects (surveys, and listserv), and also the Finland linkages referred to in the previous section.

Once the Node is established and functioning, it is the full intention of the co-chairs to extend activities into the region, beginning with Southern and East Africa where two co-chairs have extensive contacts.

We anticipate having much more actual future activity to report by the next Planning Committee meeting where we also look forward to meeting our international colleagues of the Millennium Project.

This brief report was prepared by the Co-Chairs of the SA Node of the Millennium Project:

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