

The Fourth International Conference on Federalism

Unity in Diversity: Learning from Each Other

New Delhi 5-8 November 2007

FACT SHEET

India announced its intention to host the next International Conference on Federalism at the Third Conference in Brussels in March 2005. The Inter-State Council Secretariat, Government of India, was identified as the central agency to organize the 2007 conference in India, and the Forum of Federations was invited to cooperate with Secretariat in the Forum's capacity as the permanent secretariat to the International Conferences on Federalism. This conference is the fourth in a series organized in partnership between host governments and the Forum of Federations. The earlier conferences were held in Canada in 1999, Switzerland in 2002 and Belgium in 2005.

About the International Conferences on Federalism

The triennial conferences provide a unique forum where practitioners of federalism, academics and NGOs are able to interact and learn from one another. The thematic work sessions are the core events of these conferences. Unlike academic conferences, no theoretical papers are either presented or discussed at the work sessions. Instead, state-of-the-art academic papers commissioned prior to the conference are expected to provide the background and framework for policy relevant discussions. These papers influence the selection of issues and case studies which inform discussions at the conference work sessions. Also unlike inter-governmental conferences, senior officials and ministers are not provided an opportunity to present existing government positions from prepared texts. Rather, senior practitioners are expected to actively participate in the interactive work sessions, where colleagues from around the world are exposed to diverse points of view and new insights as resulting from dialogue. Such a format allows for maximum active participation, while providing an opportunity for peers to draw inspiration from each others' experiences. The work sessions feed their conclusions to the topical theme based dialogue at a session held each day of the conference. The working days of the conference are capped

by plenary sessions where participating heads of state are invited to share their observations on issues of federalism.

The Fourth International Conference on Federalism

The Fourth International Conference on Federalism will be a two-and-a-half-day event to be held at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi. The conference is based on four broad themes and twelve subthemes. Each of these is developed by a panel of Indian and international experts. These experts are some of the leading authorities on different aspects of federalism worldwide. These papers will be peer-reviewed at a pre-Conference from 21 - 23 February 2007 before being published as background reading for the conference.

The theme papers are expected to provide a state-of-the-art overview of each theme, identify three policy relevant subthemes and provide a rationale for the selection of specific subthemes. The subtheme papers are expected to provide an overview of the subtheme and identify three generic questions that provide a framework for discussions at the work sessions.

The twelve subthemes form the basis of work sessions which are at the heart of the conference. The Pre-Conference will provide an opportunity for the selection of case studies and issue studies that will be used to stimulate discussion at the conference work sessions. These case studies are presented by more than one person so as to capture the diversity of perspectives. The work sessions are designed to be meaningful and inclusive such that they reflect the views of politicians, civil servants, academics, young professionals and other members of civil society. This is all the more important because the conference is designed to be practitioner-oriented. The conferences provide a forum for the sharing of best practices in federalism that ultimately contribute to better governance.

The structure of the programme for the conference is all follows:

On all three days there will be 1 Very Very Important Person plenary session, for a total of 3 sessions

On two days there will be 4 parallel theme sessions, for a total of 8 sessions

On two days there will be 12 parallel dialogue sessions, for a total of 24 sessions

Structure of the Conference

Day I

- Evening plenary with heads of state/government

Day II

- Morning work sessions: 12 parallel sessions

- Afternoon theme sessions: 4 parallel sessions
- Late afternoon with heads of state/government

Day III

- Morning work sessions: 12 parallel sessions
- Afternoon theme sessions: 4 parallel sessions
- Late afternoon plenary with heads of state/government
- Closing session

Day IV

- Outreach events

Themes and Subthemes

1.0 Building on and Accommodating Diversities

- 1.1 Nation building and diversity
- 1.2 Autonomy and diversity
- 1.3 Managing conflicts of diversity

2.0 Emerging Issues in Fiscal Federalism

- 2.1 Assignment system in federations
- 2.2 Resolving fiscal conflicts
- 2.3 Regional equity

3.0 Interaction in a Federal System

- 3.1 Anticipating and handling tension and conflict
- 3.2 Techniques, structures and processes
- 3.3 Accountability and transparency

4.0 Local Government and Federal Systems

- 4.1 Enhancement of democracy through empowerment of disadvantaged groups.
- 4.2 Functioning of local governments and their relationship with upper levels of government
- 4.3 Governance of megacities in federal orders