

Bank Information Center
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors
March 22, 2005

Present:

Jonathan Fox (chair)
Marianne Ginsburg
Robin Broad
David Hunter
Manish Bapna (ex-officio)
Bruce Jenkins (reporting)

Absent:

Frances Seymour
Atila Roque

1. Call to order: Jonathan Fox convened the meeting at 9:30am at BIC's office building at 733 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC.

2. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the January 18, 2005 Board meeting were approved with minor modifications. The minutes will be posted on BIC's website.

3. Strategic Plan:

The Directors welcomed the revised draft of BIC's strategic plan for 2005-2008 and again complimented Manish and the staff for all the energy that has been devoted to this effort. A number of issues arose in the Board discussion. One set of issues centered on whether certain past and current work areas of BIC—such as BIC's *convening role, strategic partnerships with traditional allies, and advocacy leadership*—were adequately reflected in the current draft. The Directors also noted that the strategic plan deserved a well-formulated and formatted summary that clearly emphasized the areas of work BIC will be continuing and strengthening, what areas represent new directions, and the requirements needed to implement the plan. The Directors also discussed the process for final approval of the plan. Manish will review and revise the strategic plan in light of the discussion and will circulate a draft summary for Board consideration.

Additional key points emerging from the discussion on the strategic plan include:

- *Information collection:* Concern was expressed whether the strategic plan focused sufficient attention on information gathering at the MDBs. This is an important role for BIC and the SP should reflect the needed investment in time and energy in performing this function. This role and the investment required should also be reflected in program workplans.
- *Advocacy strategy and leadership:* The SP does not explicitly mention a G-7 strategy. BIC has been a player together with other northern NGO partners in influencing G-7 governments. The SP seems to reflect a shift in emphasis to concentrating solely on developing country civil society groups as key partners. If this is a conscious shift in strategy, it should be made explicit. Such a shift leaves a gap, and this gap will need to be filled by others. It would be helpful to emphasize that BIC will continue to play a strategic role in convening and in helping lead strategy around the Banks.

- *Core partnerships:* It was agreed to pay special attention to the issue of core partnerships and see if the right North-South balance is reflected. Moreover, further elaboration of the issue of “institutionalizing” core partnerships would be useful.
- *BIC’s policy on sources of funding:* The following is a draft statement emerging from the Board’s discussion: “BIC is funded primarily by grants from private foundations. BIC neither receives nor seeks funding from the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) or the United States government or from entities financed by the MDBs or the US government. BIC will consider soliciting funds from non-US government sources on a case-by-case basis. BIC’s Executive Director will consult with the Board prior to acceptance of any funds associated with non-US governmental sources.”
- *Board role in monitoring SP:* Board discussion of a monitoring report of implementation of the SP is welcome. It is important to periodically discuss issues with the Board. It was recognized that the SP is a living document, flexible enough to reflect potential new priorities and opportunities.
- *Review process:* The Board discussed whether BIC should publicly release the entire SP as opposed to a detailed summary of the SP. The format of the summary was important for clarity of expression. It is a challenge, but the summary needs to be clear on (a) what is being continued, (b) what is new, and (c) key challenges and requirements to implement. The Board agreed that, at a minimum, it should approve the revised summary.

4. Finance: Manish reported that BIC ended its fiscal year 2004 with a surplus that could be utilized, in part, to finance staff expansion, particularly at the senior level. It was agreed that David and Francis would work with Manish to consider how best to pursue this issue.

5. Employee Handbook: The Board looks forward to reviewing the revised handbook for BIC employees. The Directors requested that proposed changes to BIC’s current employee policies, practices, and benefits be highlighted in a cover note for further discussion.

5. Board development and BIC officers: BIC’s By-Laws provide for three officers: Secretary (Manish), Assistant Secretary (Bruce), and Treasurer (Frances). It was agreed that David would review the By-Laws and make a proposal for potential updating and revisions. Regarding Board procedures, Jonny agreed to draft a short note on the desired number of meetings per year. Regarding Board development, the Board asked Manish to prepare a new member “packet” that would include key information on the organization, its articles, by-laws, sample outputs, and strategic plan.

6. Discussion with staff: The Board welcomed the desire of BIC staff to have a wide-ranging conversation regarding some of the political issues surrounding the multilateral development banks, in particular the appointment of the World Bank’s new president. The Board’s discussion of the strategic plan (item 3) consumed more time than originally planned and the meeting with staff will have to be postponed to a later date.

7. Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of BIC’s Board of Directors was scheduled for September 2005 and it was decided that this would be a longer meeting – consistent with the desire to have fewer formal (but slightly longer) meetings each year. (note to be prepared)

8. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1pm.