



The EuroIndia Forum

ACTIVITY REPORT 2006-7

**Presented at the AGM on 9th of June 2007
by executive co-presidents Colette Mathur and Anand Mahindra**

La Rochelle, the 9th of June 2007

Dear fellow-members,

Last year, we both took over the executive presidentship from Mr Raymond Barre and at the time of relinquishing our one-year mandate, our thoughts and sympathy go to him who is consigned to his bed of suffering. We wish him the best that one can wish under such trying circumstances.

Without his foresight, his early encouragement and his dedicated support, the eventful and successful year that the Centre has just lived through, which we shall report about, would not have been possible. We shall for ever be grateful to him for it.

Indeed, the last one year has been a very exciting year and we are confident that in hindsight it will be seen as the year when the Centre actually took off. A word of recall is necessary for new members to understand where we come from:

As part of its strategic blueprint *Vision 2008*, the EuroIndia Centre had set its sight on organizing the first EuroIndia Forum as a prime means to achieve its sole statutory objective of bringing Europeans and Indians together again to join hands for a shared future.

To quote our founding co-President, Mr Raymond Barre in his message of support to a such a Forum:

"It is now time that for the Centre to reach a new scale in fostering a vibrant Euro-Indian dialogue, in line with the recent official proclamation of a strategic partnership agreement between the EU and India. Whereas I cannot but rejoice over such a happy development, I observe that our respective civil societies are yet to live up to this proclamation in terms of actual initiatives and realizations and I strongly believe that unless they own up to it, little concrete shape will be given to such of show of mutual political goodwill

Therefore, true to its primary role as catalyst of Euro-India dialogue and cooperation, the Centre ought to take the bold and timely initiative to organize a EuroIndia Forum where Europeans and Indians would share their world view, evolve joint initiatives and action plans in specific strategic areas"

Such a Forum must result in a congenial Euro-Indian institutional platform to facilitate the networking of all stakeholders - governments, business and civil society – around a theme of strategic importance and shared interest to both Europeans and Indians, leading to an action agenda.



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At the prompting of our executive co-President and with the full support of our founding co-president, Dr Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, it was decided that the theme of the inaugural Forum to be held in Goa would be:

Urban India 2020: Investing in the future of Indian cities Leveraging European expertise for their renewal

This would ideally be in sync with the recently launched *Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)* by the Government of India, which spells out the vision, the strategy, the resources and the timetable to address, for the first time in independent India, the key issues underlying the exponential growth of the Indian cities and to provide them with adequate infrastructure that satisfies their pressing needs.

To quote the Dr Manmohan Singh in his message of support to the Forum:

“Our government is sincerely committed to the goal of making our cities more humane and more modern. The JNNURM is committed to these twin goals of improving the quality of urban life for all our citizens, especially the homeless and the poor living in slums.

This challenging mission would be greatly facilitated if our cities could imbibe the vast experience and the state-of-the-art technologies and know-how that European cities have developed over decades of being confronted to similar social and economic pressures”

For this to happen, a congenial exchange platform had to be set-up that allows Indian cities and their stakeholders: elected representatives, civic officers, corporates, NGOs, experts, researchers, academicians and civil society personalities to imbibe the best of expertise and practices from their European counterparts. This was the very purpose of the EuroIndia Forum that was held in Goa on 8th-10th of February 2007.

The Forum attracted a select audience of over 200 participants:

- 39 representatives of cities, mostly partner-cities: Frankfurt, La Rochelle, Lisboa, Lyon, Zürich from Europe and Jaipur, Kochi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Goa from India.
- 95 corporate executives, mostly representing Forum partners:
 - Strategic Forum Partners: Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries, **Renault**
 - Forum Partners: **Alstom, Atherstone Capital Asia, Dexia, Housing Development Finance Corporation, V.S. Dempo & Co., India Brand Equity Foundation, Infrastructure Development Finance Corporation, Lafarge**, V.M. Salgaocar & Bro., Taj Group of hotels, Veolia Environnement, Zee Telefilms
 - Forum Carriers: Air France-KLM, Kingfisher Airlines
- 18 representatives of NGO's
- 14 researchers, academicians and experts

The Forum's Institutional partners were the Ministry of Urban Development, through M. Ramachandran, Secretary, the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, through Ajay Dua, Secretary and the Delegation of the European Commission to India, through Dr. Alexander Spachis, Minister Counsellor, Deputy Head of Mission.



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Noteworthy too was the presence reputed organizations such as the Indian Planning Commission, the Reserve Bank of India, United Cities and Local Governments, the European New Towns Platform, the French Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure, Tourism and Maritime Affairs, the British Council, the World Bank, Unesco, the International Federation for Housing and Planning, etc.

9 plenary sessions and 12 workshops were organized over two and a half days on different urban issues taking into account both Indian and European concerns, expertise and keenness to share knowledge and best practices. They involved 93 expert speakers, out of which 43 came from Europe, under a joint Euro-Indian chair.

30 members of the EuroIndia Centre, who took part, acted as blending agents between the two sides. About an equal number participated in the initial round of consultation that led to the definition of the Forum format. I wish here to thank them for their timely and pertinent involvement that has undoubtedly been paid back with the success of the Forum.

It was also very helpful in the ramp-up to the Forum that your Secretary General be invited again to the India Economic Summit in November last organized by the World Economic Forum where he could approach some of our future corporate Forum partners.

An informal dress code, the choice of sea-side resort in Goa as the venue and a rich Euro-Indian cultural entertainment programme helped create a unique atmosphere of friendship, informality and dialogue that contributed in no small measure to the success of the Forum: It ended with a standing ovation in the concluding session, thus deserving Dr Manmohan Singh's trust. Quote:

"I compliment the EuroIndia Forum and the leaders of the EuroIndia Centre for their dedication and commitment to promoting closer relations between India and Europe and enabling European expertise to become engaged in India's development and modernization"

From this maiden, in-depth and no-holds-barred exchange between European and Indian urban stakeholders emerged a strong Euro-Indian consensus on various key-topics which are listed in the Forum summary report and a few concrete initiatives that will need proper nurturing to show actual results at the next Forum, such as for instance reciprocal field study visits by Indian Partner-cities to their European counterparts or making the Centre a dedicated clearing house for Indian and European cities wanting to exchange and cooperate.

Thanks to the Forum, the Centre now enjoys a working equation with a dozen of major European and Indian cities. Besides their participation in the Forum, your Secretary General seconded by Mady Tissot, the local representative of CII and/or myself has visited each and every European or Indian city that stood candidate for partnering the Forum.

We are now busy following up with all of them in order to organize one or several return study tours by Indian cities to their European counterparts on some of the topics that were discussed at the Forum, with the assistance of CII. The topic that is slated to lead to the first such return visit by Fall would be "city heritage conservation".

We are working on what would be the template for the profile of European and Indian cities to be put on our Website with their needs and expertise for on-line matchmaking.

We are also organizing the circulation of the Euro-Indian exhibition of paintings by Subodh Kerkar and Luc Joly that was inaugurated at the Forum. It resulted from a unique dialogue between the two artists by way of an exchange of A-4 size original paintings over the Web. We hope to convince several of our Forum partner-cities to welcome the exhibition in their mist. Already the European



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Delegation in India has committed to put it up in several Indian capitals as part of its yearly India-wide cultural event.

This would hopefully further the budding momentum of Euro-Indian cooperation between cities, while giving concrete substance to the next Forum.

With former partner-cities showing willingness to attend the Forum again and 10 new cities joining as partners, the Centre has found the ideal way to expand its European and Indian reach, which we'll try to consolidate by inviting these cities to become members of the Centre.

Thanks to the forum, we have also developed high-level working relations with the European and Indian authorities, new companies and institutions of international repute, the list of which is mentioned above. Our endeavours will be to maintain and deepen these budding relations through their early consultation on the definition of the next Forum.

This was notably so through a circular questionnaire and through debriefing sessions that were organized by the Secretary General in Paris, courtesy Lafarge, in Delhi, courtesy CII, in Mumbai, courtesy IDFC, in Goa and recently through the recent mission of Colette Mathur to India.

This is why we propose that the next Forum be dedicated to the same urban theme in May 2008 at the same Taj Exotica venue in Goa. Its detailed programme is going to be submitted to you today for your advice that arose from the above exhaustive consultation, before the newly elected Board sanctions it for dissemination.

Considering the huge and untapped potential for Euro-Indian co-operation at the city-level, we may safely assume that a successful second edition of the Forum would make the Centre highly relevant and usefull to Euro-Indian relations and catapult it onto the high orbit that Dr Manmohan Singh, Raymond Barre and we had envisioned.

In the last one year, we focussed primarily on the Goa Forum and mobilized all our limited human resources to this end with success.

It has already started to pay off in terms of membership, as several of the leading protagonists of the Forum have already joined or have applied. Several of those new institutional parties that declared their satisfaction about the Forum, be it cities, commercial or non-commercial institutions may be expected to soon turn members, thus consolidating our membership and financial base.

The Forum has also enabled the Centre to register its first calendar year with a profit and 2007 is slated to be so too. This gives us some financial latitude to make the long needed investment in order to build an institution of international class.

Besides the Forum, a few other achievements are worthy of a mention:

- The Municipality of La Rochelle and the district of Charente-Maritime have finally decided to support the establishment of our European headquarters in La Rochelle. They both came up with a yearly subsidy of 14330 Euros each which has enabled us to recruit our first Europe-based assistant, Sylvie Fourdinier, who joined the Secretariat in Decembre 2006. Her prime responsibility will be to manage the Centre, look after its members and assist the Secretary General. This yearly subsidy is understood to be renewable every year for the next 2 years at least. It is to be noted that one third of our initially requested subsidy outlay has not been granted, which was meant to be the Region's share. This point will have to be looked into.



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- The Municipality also offered to provide a fully equipped-office free of charge in one of the most prestigious buildings of the City, the Big Clock, which is the 13th century tower guarding the gateway to the medieval city. The two lower floors have been earmarked for the Centre and freshly done-up to very comfortably house our offices and the nucleus of an Indian cultural centre, thanks to the loaning by our Secretary General of his personal collections of contemporary works of art, books and images on India. We'd like to thank him for his generosity and also thank "*L'Inde à La Rochelle*", a local association, who has proposed to run the cultural centre.

We shall propose that the Board passes a resolution complimenting the Mayor of La Rochelle and the President of the District of Charente-Maritime for their enlightened generosity. The Centre will endeavour to deserve their trust and involve local prime moving forces in its endeavours, as we've started doing with the enrolment of La Rochelle among the 5 partner-cities of the Goa Forum.

- The EuroIndia Newsletter is at last out with the assistance of founding member Ashok Kar, the Secretariat coordinator, and of P. Balakrishna, who provided the core content as our Chief Information Officer from Delhi. It is still a dummy which is not for public consumption. We would need your constructive comments before we release the first public issue. We'd like to emphasize that this newsletter will serve its declared purpose only if our members have at heart to provide most of the original content true to our motto "for the members by the members"
- The issue of the first EuroIndia publication is expected anytime soon, thanks to the protracted effort of member Shazia Aziz Wülbers. You will note the quality of the authors who accepted to write for the Journal, including some of our members, and the quality of the publisher, Sage Publications, that need to be thanked for their trust in the Centre. Thereagain, we enjoin our members to contribute to the Journal to make it a regular feature and a reference document on Euro-Indian issues and relations. In turn we may expect its eminent contributors to become members of the Centre.
- The first EuroIndia conference around our founding member Gurucharan Das was organized in Paris on the 24th of May on the occasion of the launch of the French edition of his remarkable book on India's economic reforms: "India unbound". It was organized with the HEC business school alumni association and the *France-Union Indienne* association. The success of the event has prompted us to institutionalize our partnership so that more such events can be organized in the future in Paris, giving a floor and an audience of prime quality to those of our eminent members who would like to share their views on India and Euro-Indian relations.
- Lastly, we'd like to welcome new additions to the team of the Secretariat, besides the two persons already mentioned, Mady Tissot, who has accepted to manage the next EuroIndia Forum, Rashmi Balakrishna who will assist the Secretariat from Delhi, along with faithful Neelima Kapur from Mumbai. We are presently looking for a person who would help the Secretariat run the exchanges between European and Indian cities on a daily basis in the aftermath of the last Forum, thus paving the way for a succesful second Forum.

We need another succesful year to go to consolidate this year's watershed achievements. We therefore need supporting members and the same drive from the leadership to take our Centre to new heights.

In this respect, we are pleased to inform you that Jamshyd Godrej, our fellow founding member, has accepted our joint request to take over from Anand Mahindra, whose corporate responsibilities make it impossible for him to carry an active co-presidentship for a year more. We urge you to elect



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him to the Board and to the co-presidency and to rally around him in support to make our collective endeavours successful.

Colette Mathur
Co-President

Anand Mahindra
Co-President

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