

Opening remarks at the
Research Councils Forum

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First, let me reiterate the welcome that our new Regional Director, Rich Fuchs, offered during lunch. We sincerely appreciate the time that all of you have taken from your very busy schedules to participate in the research which Dr. Randy Spence has done on our behalf and which we will discuss tomorrow morning. As well, we are most grateful that you have travelled to Singapore to join us for two days to help identify regional and national priorities for science, technology and innovation in Southeast Asia.

Two years ago, IDRC established an entirely new program area called Innovation, Policy and Science. As we entered a new five-year cycle of programming, we thought it important that we begin to focus more of our research support on the capacities of our developing- and emerging-world partners to create scientific and technical knowledge and to benefit from it in their social and economic development.

At IDRC, we use the acronym “BRICSAM” to describe one of the major changes taking place around us. “BRICSAM” stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and Mexico. In just about every part of the world now, there are science, technology and innovation engines for economic growth. No longer is it just the North American and European economies that drive economic change.

Through our new Innovation, Policy and Science programming, we are interested to apply our modest research support investments to help our developing- and emerging-country partners navigate through and benefit from these regional players on their doorsteps.

In designing and developing this new group of programs, we were fortunate to be able to recruit Dr. Richard Isnor to lead this important new initiative. Richard has held science and technology policy and management positions in a variety of organizations, including Canada's National Research Council. While I look forward to participating in this fascinating discussion with you, I will now give the floor to Richard and ask him to describe his plans and programs for Innovation, Policy and Science.