IMPERIAL COLLEGE BRAZIL FORUM

**Date:** 25th November 2011; 11am – 12pm.

**Venue:** Boardroom, 4th floor, Faculty Building, Imperial College, South Kensington Campus.

*Notes taken by Alexandre Strapasson and Felipe Nascimento, according to agenda topics.*

### Minutes of the 1st Brazil Forum Meeting

**ATTENDEES:** Alexandre Strapasson (Centre for Environmental Policy), Chairman; Allan Moreira Mulin Leal (Department of Earth Science and Engineering), General Member; Anna Batcheler (International Office), Member of Steering Committee; Arturo Castillo Castillo (Centre for Environmental Policy), General Member; Dr Christopher Bird (International Office), Member of Steering Committee; Felippe Augusto Coutinho Nascimento (Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering), Member of Steering Committee; Dr Frank Rosillo-Calle (Centre for Environmental Policy), Member of Steering Committee; Prof Gad Frankel (Division of Cell and Molecular Biology), Member of Steering Committee; Dr Gerard Gorman (Department of Earth Science and Engineering), Member of Steering Committee; Minister-Councillor Helena Gasparian (Embassy of Brazil in London), Special Guest; Dr Jefferson Gomes (Department of Earth Science and Engineering), Member of Steering Committee; Dr Jeremy Woods (Centre for Environmental Policy), Member of Steering Committee; Dr Peter Evans (Energy Futures Lab), General Member; Rajandeep Singh (International Office), Member of Steering Committee; Dr Rebecca Nadal (Faculty of Natural Science Administration), Member of Steering Committee; Prof Spencer Sherwin (Department of Aeronautics), Member of Steering Committee. **Total: 16 attendees.**

**APOLOGIES:** Arthur Fox (Department of Computing), General Member; Camila Paiva Almeida de Franca (Department of Earth Science and Engineering), General Member; Glaucia da Conceição Pereira (Department of Aeronautics), General Member; Prof Jeroen Lamb (Department of Mathematics), Member of Steering Committee; Lays Gierakowski (Department of Chemistry), Member of Steering Committee; Nicole Kalas (Centre for Environmental Policy), General Member; Dr Ricardo Pereira (Centre for Environmental Policy), Member of Steering Committee; Salla Eeva (Department of Earth Science and Engineering), General Member; Thais Lauer (Business School alumna), General Member. **Total: 9 apologies.**

**SUMMARY NOTES:**

Alexandre Strapasson welcomed all members to the first Brazil Forum meeting and thanked for their interests, motivations and voluntary efforts. He also thanked the Brazilian Embassy representative, Minister-Councillor Helena Gasparian (special guest) for her presence and kind support. Then, he introduced the agenda to all members, as previously sent and agreed by e-mail.
1. Introduction about the Brazil Forum initiative

A brief introduction about Brazil Forum was presented by Alexandre Strapasson in order to keep all members informed about the steps that were taken until its creation. In January 2011, Alexandre contacted Anna Batcheler (International Office) and proposed to start a Brazilian Society under the Imperial College Union (ICU), in order to assemble the students and organize academic activities of common interest. Most of Brazilian students joined such proposal, including some current Brazil Forum members e.g. Felipe Nascimento, Thais Lauer (alumna), Luis Rodrigues (alumnus), Gisela Schilling (alumna), and then a formal application was submitted to ICU in March 2011. However, in May 2011, ICU declined the Brazilian Society proposal, along with most of the new society candidatures.

After further maturing this initial idea of having a Brazilian community at Imperial College, Alexandre contacted Anna again to propose the creation of an academic forum about Brazil, rather than a student society. This new idea considered an academic community at Imperial College not only for the students, but also to academic staff, Brazilians and non-Brazilian, in a cross-disciplinary and inter-departmental approach. This community would be especially aimed at the interests of those working with Brazilian institutions or topics related to Brazil, or even those simply interested in participating for whatever reasons. Anna received very well this proposal, discussed it internally and then invited Alexandre to introduce the proposal to the FoNS Brazil Working Group in its following meeting on July the 14th, 2011 at the Faculty Building. The meeting was chaired by Christopher Bird, and Alexandre presented the Brazil Forum proposal and shared ideas with the attendees, who were only academic staff members at that moment, including representatives from other Faculties. The working group welcomed and fully supported the ideas proposed, as registered on the meeting’s summary.

Once approval for the set up of the Brazilian community initiative was granted, Alexandre Strapasson, Anna Batcheler, Rebecca Nadal and Lucy Stagg defined the Brazil Forum administrative structure as formed by Chairman, Steering Committee, General Members and Partner Institutions. Subsequently, Alexandre was encouraged to lead it as the chairman. The International Office accepted to host Brazil Forum. Thus, an invitation message was sent to potential members to join this new initiative, as well as to set up the Brazil Forum website. The Embassy of Brazil in London and the Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain accepted the invitation to become partner institutions. Alexandre is also in contact with the British Embassy in Brasilia, which will probably become a member too.

After this introduction, Alexandre pointed out that Brazil Forum is a collective and institutional initiative for which he would like to contribute as a facilitator/moderator for its activities in a very horizontal way with all members. This would mean respecting the independence and privacy of any initiative from members of any Department. He commented that there are already many academics who have been involved with Brazil for many years (e.g. Frank Rosillo-Calle, Jeremy Woods, Spencer Sherwin, Jeroen Lamb and others), as well as Brazilian students and researchers based at Imperial College. He also mentioned that the Forum members are free to opt in or out at any moment, as well as to join the Steering Committee or stay as general member. There are currently only about 20 Brazilian students registered at Imperial College, although there is a tendency to increase this number in the coming years, especially because Imperial is already considered by Capes Foundation and CNPq as a pre-approved institution for the “Science Without Boarders” scholarship program. Hence, keeping the forum members motivated and committed is an important challenge in order to ensure the continuity of Brazil Forum, which aims to be a permanent community. The steering committee may reduce this risk over time; especially through a higher commitment of academic staffs and students who stay longer periods at the College, e.g., undergraduates and PhDs. Alexandre also thanked the kind support from Felipe Nascimento (PhD student) to Brazil Forum to date.
Brazil Forum aims to promote new synergies, share experiences, disseminate ongoing initiatives (e.g. research projects, signed agreements), organize events, intensify and promote new academic partnerships with Brazil, including with the private sector, support and encourage prospective Brazilian students, and to become the focal-point for Brazil-related subjects at Imperial College.

With regard to budget, given that this is a new and virtual initiative at the College, there is no specific funding assigned to it so far. However, the forum assembles many Departments with assigned budgets, it has been considered that there may be some funding available on an occasional basis, depending on the interest of participating Departments to a specific Forum activity. Another possibility would be inviting sponsors when carrying out events and workshops.

Minister-Councillor Helena Gasparian commented that Brazil Forum gains momentum on the prospective increase in the numbers of Brazilian students in the UK. The Embassy of Brazil in London supports Brazil Forum and is very interested in this initiative. She also commented on the “Science Without Borders” scholarship programme, recently launched by the Brazilian Government. Under this programme 10,000 Brazilian students are expected to come to the UK in the next four years; 8,500 should stay for a 1 year period, whereas approximately 4,000 students should join undergraduate, doctoral, post-doctoral and specialist programmes. ‘Science Without Borders’ aims to cover the technological gap of Brazilian universities/institutions. The priorities would be the hard sciences, such as engineering, technology and, to a lesser extent, innovation. A final agreement is to be sign in two or three weeks. She also pointed out that there will be many academic events between Brazil and the UK, including two workshops already forecasted to happen in Rio de Janeiro. Brazilian professors are coming into the UK for workshops too. The “Science Without Borders” scholarships will cover all tuitions fees, accommodation and a monthly stipend. The Brazilian program is not based on interchange (i.e., it is not a two-way program whereby British students would go to Brazil). Partnerships with the private sector may also be possible. For example, Petrobras has many workers undergoing training in a Northern England university for many years.

Helena also commented that, although the Embassy of Brazil in London has limited funds, it would be able to cover about three, and a maximum of five, flight tickets for potential events in partnership with Brazil Forum. However, she would have only 5 days to ensure this budget up for 2012. Hence, any Brazil Forum proposal should be sent quickly to the Embassy.

Christopher Bird, Spencer Sherwin, Peter Evans, Jeremy Woods, Frank Rosillo-Calle, Anna Batcheler, Rebecca Nadal and others made further comments about this Brazil Forum initiative and the Science Without Borders programme. Christopher said that the Brazil Forum initiative is a new experience for Imperial College and it may become a reference that could be replicable to other countries in the future.

2. Presentation of the official website and discussions

An overview of the website was presented by Alexandre. The website is already online, in bilingual edition, with minor reviews still required. The team responsible for constructing the website was composed by Alexandre, Anna Batcheler and Lucy Stagg, with contributions from Rebecca Nadal. All members were listed on the website (currently 36 members, including 4 alumni). It was agreed to include a link to the Brazil Forum on the A-Z webpage at Imperial College main website, and another link on the International Office webpage.
Members were requested to send information about ongoing projects related to Brazil, which will be added to the “Research” link on the Forum website, including agreements and briefing about research projects and theses. Information about the Science Without Borders would also be added to this website.

Spencer briefly commented that the Department of Aeronautics is setting up an agreement with the University of Sao Paulo in order to have a joint PhD program in Aeronautics. However, it has not been signed yet. He intends to include a link for Brazil Forum on its Department’s website as soon as the agreement is signed. Alexandre commented that the Centre for Environmental Policy (CEP) and Energy Futures Lab (EFL) are also trying to make an agreement with the University of Sao Paulo (USP), more specifically with the Institute of Electrotechnics and Energy (IEE), on energy and environmental issues, with which Jeremy is also very involved.

Anna proposed to include a student blog on the Forum website in the future, with some comments from current students about their experience at Imperial College, for example.

3. Brain storming session and identification of key potential future activities and projects

Anna, Spencer and other participants suggested that the Brazilian alumni should be involved in the Brazil Forum. Nowadays, former students are possibly working in many strategic areas in the private sector, governmental agencies, NGOs or academia. Therefore, they could possibly contribute with further links between Imperial College and Brazil. It would be useful to identify what they are doing now as well. This could give an important contribution to the Forum and to Imperial College as whole. Thus, a huge network could be built using Brazil Forum as a platform. Therefore, the person responsible for alumni affairs at Imperial College should be contacted in order to check if it would be possible to identify all former Brazilian students, as well as their current activities. Their names would be listed in the Brazil Forum website as Brazilian alumni then. Business School and CEP may also give some contributions regarding the alumni relationship. Some recently former students are already Forum members.

It was also proposed a key yearly meeting organized by Brazil Forum, for example by means of a ‘Brazil-UK Conference on Science and Technology’ (illustrative title), possibly open to external guests. Additionally, a launching ceremony was proposed.

Distinguished Brazilian authorities and academics could be invited to small workshops or classes by various Departments in partnership with Brazil Forum, whenever possible, even symbolically, since this involvement may contribute to disseminate the Forum initiative throughout the College.

Some participants, especially Peter Evans, Spencer Sherwin and Jeremy Woods, proposed that Brazil Forum could invite and involve the private sector in its activities. Industries could be important partners of this Forum, potentially joining it as members. This initiative could then raise funds for new research projects and partnerships. Peter mentioned that projects with the private sector could be encouraged and promoted by the Forum as well.

It was proposed to inform “Reporter” (Imperial College newsletter) about Brazil Forum and to publicise this initiative throughout the College. Members were also encouraged to disseminate the Brazil Forum initiative and its website to people with potential interest on it.

Linkedin, Facebook, Twitter may also be explored by Brazil Forum in the future.
4. Brazil Forum plans for 2012, including its launching ceremony

The first yearly Conference is forecasted to the second semester of 2012.

The launching ceremony is forecasted to the first semester of 2012, depending on the authorities’ agendas. Helena informed that Mr Aloisio Mercadante, the Brazilian Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI), may come to London in January or February 2012, and then visit Imperial College. In addition, Mr Carlos Henrique de Brito Cruz, Science Director at FAPESP, may also come to London, possibly in late February or March 2012. Therefore, there is a possibility to have the launching ceremony with one of these two authorities, together with the Brazilian Ambassador and some British authorities as well. However, given that these months are yet of very short notice to organise a proper ceremony, the event’s date will depend on further confirmations and the timetable at Imperial College. Helena would send news about this issue in the coming weeks and will try to include this topic in their agendas, if possible.

Alexandre asked for volunteers to help in the organization of the launching ceremony. Felipe Nascimento (PhD student), Rajandeep Singh (International Office), and Allan Leal (PhD student) would be keen on that.

The chairman thanked all members for their active participation and then closed the meeting.

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