



DCF ARGENTINA HIGH-LEVEL SYMPOSIUM San Martín Palace, Buenos Aires 6-8 September 2017

*South-South and triangular cooperation for achieving the 2030 Agenda:
Building innovative and inclusive partnerships*

SUMMARY

The three-day symposium of the ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum came to a successful conclusion on 8 September 2017 in Buenos Aires, having gathered 120 high-level experts and multiple stakeholders from all regions to discuss challenges and opportunities in South-South and triangular cooperation, in the framework of sustainable development. The meeting benefited from strong engagement of the host Government, which leads several upcoming processes, including as Chair of the Group of 20 and host of the second United Nations High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40), to take place in Buenos Aires in March 2019. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which serves as DCF Secretariat, and the Argentine Government co-organized the symposium as a preparatory event for the 2018 high-level meeting of the DCF and as the first informal event to initiate global discussions and generate ideas in the run-up to BAPA+40.

Views ranged widely on the need or wisdom of attempting to further define South-South cooperation. However, all agreed on the need for a practical orientation to the preparations for BAPA+40, with the aim of producing an action plan in the spirit of the original Buenos Aires Plan of Action. The symposium identified five areas for further work in the preparations for BAPA+40 and in the daily work of South-South and triangular cooperation: (i) adjusting to the new context and global sustainable development frameworks; (ii) knowledge management and knowledge sharing; (iii) institutionalization; (iv) systematization of data and information; and (v) capacity development.

KEY MESSAGES

SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION:

1. *Are making a positive **development impact**, reducing asymmetries.*
2. *Have a key role in achieving the **2030 Agenda**, Addis Agenda and Paris Agreement on Climate Change.*
3. *Can contribute to a **new multilateralism** and drive the revitalization of the **global partnership for sustainable development**.*
4. *Have a strategic opportunity to mobilize **science, technology and innovation** as a key means of implementation.*
5. *Can be further advanced through **South-led and other multilateral development banks**, which collectively can play a potent role in creating and supporting **knowledge networks** across the South, as well as leveraging resources for **sustainable infrastructure**.*
6. *Provide **mutual learning** opportunities, including for the global South to lead on **assessing the impact / contribution** of development cooperation to sustainable development.*
7. *Promote **multi-stakeholder approaches** that need to be enhanced, building on **effective policy and legal frameworks**, including for blended finance and **engagement of the private sector**.*
8. *Allow for the role of parliamentarians, local authorities, women, civil society, youth and other stakeholders to be strengthened to increase **inclusiveness and accountability**.*
9. *Require **strengthened institutional structures** at all levels to enhance cooperation, with emphasis on continued **capacity building at national and sub-national levels** to support adjustments to the 2030 Agenda.*
10. *Would benefit from the global financial architecture reflecting the **new reality of South-South and triangular cooperation**.*

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

I. Achieving the 2030 Agenda, Addis Agenda and Paris Agreement: the role of South-South and triangular cooperation

South-South cooperation is experiencing remarkable expansion in scope and magnitude, including through intra- and inter-regional collaboration mechanisms. Recent inter-regional South-South summits¹ have set strategies and agendas, enhanced policy coordination and launched joint initiatives, which in turn have strengthened South-South trade, investment, infrastructure development and capacity building. An increasing diversity of actors, governmental and non-governmental, is engaged in development cooperation in the South-South space.

Both South-South and triangular cooperation are making a positive development impact, reducing asymmetries. Technical cooperation among developing countries has evolved, since the 1970s, into South-South cooperation, reflecting the accumulation of experiences, knowledge and resources in the global South, and an array of modalities and approaches. South-South and triangular cooperation have become increasingly important as a way to combat poverty and hunger, address climate change, support infrastructure development, and advance humanitarian assistance, within the broad framework of sustainable development.

“BAPA created a new paradigm of development cooperation.”

The importance of South-South cooperation in localizing the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement should be more widely recognized, yet not overstated. Its advance is not intended to substitute for North-South cooperation, which remains an important form of support for developing countries. Nor does it substitute for expedited progress in addressing the systemic issues.

Views range widely on the need or wisdom of attempting to further define South-South cooperation. Some viewed South-South cooperation as technical cooperation, capacity building and action for policy change, while others saw it as inclusive of trade and investment. Some called for greater shared understanding, definition and systematization, in order to further advance South-South cooperation. Others felt such a move would undermine the diversity and flexibility that are among its core strengths. **While many supported mainstreaming South-South principles into triangular cooperation, similar debate unfolded around defining triangular cooperation,** and whether it constitutes an extension or an expansion of South-South cooperation and the respective implications, particularly in terms of risks and opportunities.

The principles of South-South cooperation are a core strength. The value of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual were all highlighted. The diversity of actors and their approaches and modalities is a hallmark of South-South cooperation, which should be preserved, better documented and used to propel further progress.

South-South and triangular cooperation can contribute to a new multilateralism and drive the realization of the global partnership for sustainable development. South-South cooperation remains voluntary, collaborative and solidarity-based. South-South and triangular cooperation have deepened and broadened multi-stakeholder dialogue, knowledge sharing and mutual learning. They can help promote the shift from a narrow focus on financing to the broader partnership dimension and effective engagement of all stakeholders and means of implementation. They can help construct a

¹Examples: India-Africa Forum Summit; Forum for China-Africa Cooperation; Forum of China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC); Summit of South American-Arab Countries (ASPA).

new multilateralism, based on the reality of a multi-polar world. The Symposium underscored the potential for South-South and triangular cooperation to serve as a key plank in building a more integrated and non-exclusionary international development cooperation.

“We are building a community of equals.”

There is strategic opportunity in Southern efforts to mobilize science, technology and innovation as a key means of implementation for sustainable development. This is particularly important, given the centrality of science, technology and innovation in boosting productivity and economic transformation. Yet, there are persistently high levels of asymmetry between developing and developed countries in this space, marked by vast disparities in access and capacities.

Raising the visibility of South-South cooperation, and bringing greater awareness of its added value and impact on sustainable development, is a critical and common challenge. It is important to develop country-led systems to (i) evaluate and assess the quality and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation programmes at various levels, and (ii) improve data collection, methodologies and statistics, bearing in mind the principles and characteristics of South-South cooperation.

A second challenge is mobilization of financial resources to support the further growth of South-South and triangular cooperation. In this context, discussion also focused on diverse ways of bringing the private sector on board, to support sustainable development objectives. A third challenge is to strengthen oversight institutions, including Parliaments.

South-South cooperation should no longer be treated as a stand-alone framework; it can benefit from being situated within the larger global partnership for sustainable development. This comes with higher expectation for policy coherence. In this regard, some participants shared experiences in integrating South-South as well as triangular cooperation into their national development cooperation policies.

II. South-South cooperation, climate change and the New Urban Agenda

South-South and triangular cooperation stand out as cost-effective ways of sharing policies and solutions for interconnected issues of climate change and urbanization. The core challenge – and path forward – lies in strengthening the resilience of cities and transitioning their inhabitants to sustainable livelihoods.

With almost all the “mega cities” located in the South, peer-to-peer learning can be stepped up, and facilitated by others, including knowledge brokers. A significant part of this is to identify and share available knowledge, solutions and opportunities. The online platform, S-SMART, for instance, enables Southern partners to share experiences, connect with innovation and test new solutions. Two key considerations were stressed. First, solutions cannot simply be replicated: they need to be adapted to local conditions. Second, job creation and service delivery in rural areas could help reduce urban-migration and address some of the related challenges.

South-South and triangular cooperation should be further leveraged to bring the technical assistance and capacity building required to address climate change and urbanization challenges. Impact of, and opportunities for, South-South cooperation in this space could be greatly strengthened by providing capacity building support to develop climate change science and early warning systems. They could also build on the rich expert and knowledge exchanges taking place in the global South in support of rural development and food security.

Policy change will play a prominent role, especially in defining and implementing national policies related to energy, food security, finance, urban ecology and the environment. Policy dialogue among all countries (global, regional, sub-regional, bilateral), and sound education policies, will create new opportunities to raise awareness among the young generation, and yield new knowledge to support sustainable livelihoods.

The cross-cutting importance of risk management was stressed, alongside the need for adequate long-term public and private investments from domestic as well as international sources. Multilateral development banks are important providers of funds for climate action in developing countries. They could be further tapped to facilitate knowledge exchange in this area. The potential role of China's South-South Cooperation Fund for Climate Change was also highlighted.

III. Mobilizing science, technology and innovation through South-South and triangular cooperation

“No country is too rich to learn or too poor to teach.”

Several developing countries have built up significant STI knowledge, resources and capacity. Some have developed affordable, appropriate and replicable technologies and solutions in different fields, including health, where domestic production of low-cost drugs has had significant impact. Yet, key technological solutions and capacities lie outside the South. Global innovation systems continue to bypass developing countries, partly because of inadequate and uneven infrastructure.

The emergence of global innovation and research networks, and expansion of South-South and triangular cooperation in the STI realm, hold great promise. This process has created opportunities for developing countries to: access publicly available STI solutions; accelerate innovation; catalyse the use of technology action plans; mobilize technology centres and networks at national, regional and global levels; and facilitate joint R&D activities.

Triangular cooperation can be an effective framework for scaling up best practices, and fostering the development, transfer and adaptation of STI solutions. It can also accelerate the STI - SDG link, and help build new structural mechanisms and models needed to enhance the contribution of STI in solving some of the socio-economic challenges

Leveraging South-South and triangular cooperation, developing countries should continue to advance their own STI strategies, policies and funding programmes, integrating STI priorities in national development plans, strengthening learning and knowledge generation capacities, and boosting the role and effectiveness of Southern megacities as drivers of STI.

Integration of different STI solutions should be pursued, through interactive learning, information exchange, timely and targeted financial and non-financial cooperation, multi-stakeholder collaboration and successful transfer of appropriate technologies. Capacity support should be directed towards transitioning research and inventions from incubation laboratories to marketable products, with an emphasis on availability, cost and efficiency.

Sustainability of South-South STI initiatives deserves priority attention, including through mobilizing resources, scaling-up successful demand-driven initiatives, and moving from projects to operations, within applicable legislative frameworks and capacity. South-South cooperation should build on its strengths in adapting appropriate, affordable technologies and solutions to local contexts, helping countries to generate and sustain their own knowledge. This includes technology innovation that is based on indigenous knowledge.

The sharing of knowledge plus consolidation and pooling of efforts and resources among countries, cities and other actors in the South can boost STI's impact on sustainable development. Regional platforms should be used to share successful STI policies and strategies, explore new opportunities, and promote coordination and collaboration between different STI initiatives. Further action is also needed to bridge the STI divide through the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, the Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries and other initiatives.

IV. Role of multilateral development banks in South-South cooperation

Multilateral development banks are vital in localizing global goals, and have distinct features and comparative advantages in the South-South space, particularly at the regional and sub-regional levels. They support development cooperation and regional integration, mobilize development finance, and foster knowledge exchange and mutual learning. They are aligning their capacities and operations with the 2030 Agenda, placing greater emphasis on policies, programmes, and projects that contribute to sustainable development. They are strengthening their engagement with other stakeholders, while improving coordination and collaboration amongst themselves.

The rise of Southern-led and owned multilateral development banks demonstrates the deepening of financial cooperation among developing countries.² This process has strengthened the capacity of financial institutions generally to respond to local needs and demands of developing countries. This has enabled, for example, long-term infrastructure financing that would otherwise not be available. Several national development banks of the South have acquired considerable financial capacity to foster sustainable development. It is important that South-led development banks fully align their operations with the 2030 Agenda and the longstanding principles of South-South cooperation, strengthening also socio-environmental systems at the country-level.

Multilateral development banks should further support financial cooperation among developing countries, by establishing common reserve funds and related mechanisms, like the Caribbean Investment Facility. They should support capacity development at the regional, national and local levels to help combat illicit financial flows and tax evasion, as well as to foster the sustainable development impact of public private partnerships. The need for more transparent instruments used by multilateral development banks to raise finance for long-term economic growth and sustainable development was stressed.

Across the South, multilateral development banks can play a greater role in creating or supporting knowledge sharing and knowledge management networks for sustainable development. Multilateral development banks address knowledge asymmetries and information gaps, carrying out region-specific research and analytical work, and promoting regional cooperation and integration. Consistent with context-specific demands and levels of capacity, the banks' regional and sub-regional platforms should generate sustainable development resources and solutions, and accelerate the development, commercialization and transfer of STI solutions in the global South.

² Examples: Development Bank of Latin America; Islamic Development Bank; Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and New Development Bank.

V. Enabling South-South and triangular frameworks for multi-stakeholder approaches and more inclusive international development cooperation

The importance of inclusive, multi-stakeholder approaches in achieving the 2030 Agenda is widely known. While governments have the principal role of coordinating and leading development efforts, all actors and beneficiaries must be meaningfully engaged. This brings better and more sustainable results from development efforts, and supports country strategies that leave no one behind.

South-South and triangular cooperation must take inclusiveness to a new level. They can help shift the focus beyond expanding partnerships, to fostering quality multi-stakeholder engagement that can improve the livelihoods and wellbeing of people. Inclusion and participation of Parliamentarians, civil society, local authorities, women and youth, as well as private sector, are essential. CSO-to-CSO and people-to-people cooperation in the South should be strengthened. Solidarity, ownership and accountability in development cooperation will only come to fruition with this level of inclusiveness.

We should build on the progress in developing legal and institutional frameworks to foster effective multi-stakeholder approaches in South-South and triangular cooperation. Governments can create enabling environments to mobilize a broader range of actors, through laws, financing and structures. Discussion focused on how to leverage comparative advantages of different stakeholders and develop policy and legal frameworks applicable to them at the local, regional and global levels. The extent to which Government should broker multi-stakeholder partnerships was also explored.

Country ownership and fostering of national institutions must be at the forefront of South-South and triangular cooperation, with a vital role for Parliaments. Emphasis was placed on strengthening Parliaments as oversight bodies that play a meaningful role in monitoring, review and accountability of development cooperation, and on the need to step up sharing of best practices in this area.

Some local and regional governments in the South are using the SDGs to organize and enable their development cooperation. While some integrate SDGs into planning processes, just having the SDGs as a common language allows governments to arrange elements of their work and engage in more exchanges with national and international counterparts. Exchanges such as city-to-city cooperation offer new opportunities for knowledge sharing and mutual learning for sustainable development.

Participatory budgeting, that links public work projects to the SDGs, is one way of engaging people, beyond civil society organizations. One country shared its experience in creating and signing a 'national pact' on SDG implementation with citizens, civil society organizations and the private sector; the pact was developed through a series of national forums.

Through South-South knowledge exchange, countries are sharing best practices in engaging private sector, through micro-business and small- and medium-sized enterprises. Development cooperation can support efforts to engage the private sector in co-designing and implementing projects, and in strengthening capacities of government institutions, parliamentarians and civil society. The question of how governments can hold private sector accountable, and the promotion of human rights in South-South and triangular cooperation, was also raised.

Some private sector actors in the South are rethinking sustainable value creation, aligning their business practices and interests with the development priorities of their communities. Some are considering social inclusion a major track of resilience, competitiveness and productivity. Here too, the SDGs can offer a common language for private sector and government to work together and align objectives. The role of private sector in timely commercialization and transfer of STI solutions was highlighted. The need to further demonstrate the impact of private sector engagement in sustainable development of the South, including through blended finance, was also stressed.

South-South and triangular cooperation have an important role to play in developing infrastructure and energy sectors through public-private partnerships. China's Belt and Road Initiative and India's Pan-Africa e-network present large-scale examples. Participants shared diverse views on what constitutes public private partnerships (PPPs). Further deliberation is needed on different experiences in developing legal and regulatory frameworks for PPPs, that are stand-alone or incorporated into national development cooperation policies or frameworks.

Knowledge networks among Southern think tanks and academia are a dynamic manifestation of South-South cooperation, with great potential to contribute to sustainable development. They also play a direct role in growing South-South cooperation, and strengthening its impact, by providing courses for Southern actors on topics such as science diplomacy, intellectual property rights, commercialization of technologies, hydrology and capacity building.

VI. Building and strengthening institutions of South-South cooperation and reaching outcomes

The building and strengthening of institutions has been fundamental to the expansion of South-South cooperation since BAPA in 1978, with varying trends within and across regions. Institutions of South-South cooperation are proving instrumental in developing critical capacities, formulating policies and strategic plans, coordinating national and international stakeholders, undertaking analytical and assessment work and disseminating development cooperation data and information.

Regional South-South institutions are forging collaboration, mutual learning and knowledge sharing. They generate vital knowledge and data through their analytical work, showcasing the impact of South-South cooperation. For instance, the Ibero-America General Secretariat (SEGIB) facilitates, amongst its country members, joint mechanisms for systematization and measurement of South-South and triangular cooperation, building national capacities, cohesion and collective standing on these issues. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) advances progress in the political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards. Other examples of platforms facilitating dialogue and/or multi-stakeholder engagement include the BRICS Forum, China-Africa Business Council, Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and India-Africa Forum.

There was consensus on the need for evaluation as a regular practice, though having a shared evaluation methodology was not seen as desirable by many participants. This is because countries conceptualize, evaluate and assess their South-South cooperation differently; the diverse treatment of forms of economic and financial cooperation is one example. The extent of civil society involvement in evaluation and assessment also varies across countries. Several partners shared country-led approaches to evaluate and assess the impact of their South-South and triangular cooperation.

South-South cooperation principles were highlighted as a mainstay of approaches to evaluation and assessment. Manuals for the execution of South-South and triangular cooperation, focusing on ways to embed these principles into practice, have been prepared by some countries and some regional platforms such as the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). While not strictly comparable, evaluation and assessment criteria provided by some developing countries explicitly include such principles as demand-driven cooperation, self-sufficiency and the development of national capacities and institutions to carry forward and sustain projects. Examples of using local technologies to improve cost-effectiveness and results were provided.

Evaluation experiences have tended to emphasize processes, covering activities and outputs, more than results and outcomes. Yet, with more Southern agencies striving to assess how their efforts are

bringing about results, this is incrementally changing. Different approaches are used for different modalities of South-South cooperation. There is opportunity for all actors to build on the experience of Southern partners in demonstrating, in qualitative terms, the large-scale impact of small-scale projects, including those focused on policy change.

To fully assess the impact of their development cooperation, Southern agencies are broadening the scope for evaluation, to include household incomes, social inclusion, women and youth empowerment and efforts to tackle inequality. They are prioritizing the scaling up and replication of best practices, fostering inclusive development by involving local leadership, civil society and others, and creating platforms for learning and knowledge exchange. Participants welcomed the idea of a bank of best practices, to build the evidence of impacts and provide ways to link up Southern countries with proven/sought-for experience in different areas. The United Nations was called upon to further support Southern partners to enhance the evidence base on the value added of South-South cooperation in achieving sustainable development results.

VII. On the road to BAPA+40, and beyond

The DCF Argentina Symposium served as the starting point for inclusive dialogue in the run-up to the Second United Nation High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40). The Conference itself would be an opportunity to demonstrate the contributions of South-South and triangular cooperation to sustainable development and to set up support programs, actions and policies that can increase the impact, scope and sustainability of South-South and triangular cooperation over time.

“We invite the entire international community to be part of this process, and to make BAPA +40 a driving force in the strengthening of South-South Cooperation, by further promoting multilateralism, regional integration and collective pursuit of sustainable development.”

There was a strong call on the United Nations system to take the lead in demonstrating its concrete contributions to South-South and triangular cooperation at the local, national, regional and global levels since BAPA. Such rigorous stocktaking would support action-oriented discussion on the future role of the United Nations system in this space. It would also enable a more informed debate on the question of upgrading or transforming the UN Office for South-South Cooperation into a specialized agency or into a higher department or office. The role of the United Nations development system and its funding in middle-income countries was also highlighted by many participants, in the context of the ongoing reform processes and re-positioning of the system for the 2030 Agenda.

The symposium identified five areas for further work in the preparations for BAPA+40 and in the daily work of South-South and triangular cooperation: (i) adjusting to the new context and global sustainable development frameworks; (ii) knowledge management and knowledge sharing; (iii) institutionalization; (iv) systematization of data and information; and (v) capacity development. All participants agreed on the need for a practical orientation to the preparations for BAPA+40, with the aim of producing an action plan in the spirit of the original Buenos Aires Plan of Action.

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What is the Development Cooperation Forum?

The Development Cooperation Forum reviews the latest trends and progress in international development cooperation, facilitating coordination across diverse actors and activities. The DCF brings together ministers and senior experts from developing and developed countries, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, international organizations and development banks, local governments, philanthropic foundations and private sector. Since its launch in 2007, the DCF has served as a trusted, open and inclusive space for all stakeholders to share their experiences, good practices, challenges and solutions.

The 2018 High-level Meeting of the DCF will take place on **21-22 May** at United Nations Headquarters in New York.



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