

“Transforming international development cooperation: from global dialogue to action”

2025 Development Cooperation Forum
United Nations Headquarters, New York, 12 - 13 March 2025

Concept note and provisional programme

Why this meeting matters:

The 2025 Development Cooperation Forum comes at a crucial moment: nearly 600 million people face extreme poverty by 2030 and developing countries grapple with annual SDG financing gaps of up to \$4 trillion. The international development cooperation system is faltering precisely when needs are greatest and priorities urgent.

The landscape of international development cooperation has transformed dramatically since the adoption of the 2030 and the Addis Ababa Action Agendas in 2015, becoming more complex with new actors, modalities and instruments. While this diversity brings opportunities, it has also increased the coordination burden and transaction costs for developing countries. The growing focus on global public goods and humanitarian emergencies, while crucial, has reduced support for countries’ long-term sustainable development priorities, including those of the most vulnerable.

Making development cooperation fit for purpose through fundamental reforms to ensure true country leadership and policy coherence is not just a technical challenge – it is imperative to ensure limited resources reach those most in need and drive real sustainable development impact.

This milestone meeting is happening in the run-up to the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development on 30 June - 3 July 2025, in which Member States are considering reforms to the development cooperation architecture. The Forum’s recommendations will serve as inputs to FFD4 discussions.

2025 DCF core objectives:

- Sharpen understanding of what international development cooperation must deliver in a world with rapidly evolving needs, priorities and vulnerabilities.
- Promote better alignment between international development cooperation with nationally identified sustainable development needs and objectives.
- Update and strengthen through universal participation the principles for effective, high quality and high impact international development cooperation based on lessons learned since the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda.
- Share practical approaches and successful experiences in applying these principles.
- Identify reforms needed at country, regional and global levels to create a more coherent and responsive development cooperation system.
- Generate concrete recommendations for action at country, regional and global levels.

Who should join:

The Forum thrives on diverse perspectives. We welcome government ministers and officials, development cooperation and agency leaders, civil society organizations, private sector and philanthropic representatives, local government leaders, parliamentarians, and international organizations, multilateral development banks and national development finance institutions.

This diversity of voices and experience is essential for developing practical and innovative solutions.

Day 1: Wednesday, 12 March 2025

10:00 AM – 10:30 AM: Opening Session

The Forum opens with welcome remarks by the President of ECOSOC, followed by a message from the UN Deputy Secretary-General (tbc), and then the introduction of the Report of the Secretary-General on trends and progress in international development cooperation by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

10:30 AM – 11:30 AM: Panel 1: Making development cooperation work for today's world

International development cooperation plays a fundamental role in achieving the 2030 Agenda, complementing the efforts of countries to mobilize resources domestically, especially in the poorest and most vulnerable countries. Persistent poverty and inequality, climate-induced disasters, and crises are all increasing demands on international development cooperation, raising questions on its practice and purpose. Different countries – least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), and middle-income countries, and countries in conflict or those emerging from conflict – face distinct combinations of these challenges. How can international development cooperation be most effective in a world characterized by systemic risk, multiple global crises and evolving needs, priorities and vulnerabilities? How can the international community ensure sufficient high quality and high impact international development cooperation with a primary focus on poverty reduction and economic growth, while also providing effective humanitarian support and crisis responses and ensuring the financing of global public goods?

Panelists will explore:

- What is the core purpose of international development cooperation in today's world?
- How to ensure that international development cooperation is guided by needs, priorities and vulnerabilities of developing countries?
- How to ensure sufficient high quality and high impact ODA with a primary focus on poverty reduction and economic growth, while also providing effective humanitarian support and crisis responses and ensuring the financing of global public goods (GPGs).

Chair

Mr. Bob Rae, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

10:30 AM– 10:45 AM: Keynote Address

Ms. Cristina Duarte, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa to the United Nations Secretary-General (tbd)

10:45 AM– 11:30 AM: Panel presentations

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM: Interactive Discussion

Including plenary statements of MS, stakeholders and CSOs

1:00 – 3:00 PM: Lunch Break

3:00 PM – 4:30 PM: Panel 2 Improving modalities to better respond to evolving needs, vulnerabilities and priorities

This panel will examine the use of different development cooperation modalities and how and under what circumstance these modalities can address the evolving needs and vulnerabilities discussed in Panel 1. Through practical examples and in-depth discussion, the session will cover conditions and contexts under which different modalities and instruments (e.g., grants, loans, budget support, blended finance) contribute most effectively toward different goals and priorities.

- How to make support more flexible when multiple challenges overlap.
- Successful modalities, instruments and approaches to balancing and integrating support for immediate challenges with long-term sustainable development goals, leaving no one behind. What has worked so far and why?
- Conditions and contexts under which different modalities and instruments (e.g., grants, loans, budget support, blended finance) contribute most effectively toward different goals and priorities.

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Panel presentations

Interactive discussions

MS, stakeholders and CSOs

4:30 PM – 6:00 PM: Panel 3: What drives quality, impact and real country leadership in international development cooperation?

While the expansion of actors, delivery channels, and implementation entities has provided some developing countries with greater access to diverse sources of support, it has also increased coordination challenges, raised transaction costs, and complicated efforts towards country ownership and leadership. The increasing calls on more high quality and high impact international development cooperation have also intensified concerns around how the impact of development cooperation

is understood and measured – both to ensure value for money and to strengthen accountability and learning. Recent initiatives by MDBs illustrate ongoing efforts to shift institutional approaches from a focus on financing volumes toward a focus on the impact that financing creates. This panel will discuss:

- What are the challenges the increased fragmentation of actors in international development cooperation poses to country leadership in the development cooperation landscape.
- Which are effective ways a growingly diverse set of actors can shape their programs to better promote country-led, high-quality and high-impact development cooperation in different contexts.
- How to strengthen measurement of impact to improve the quality of development cooperation, support allocation decisions aligned with country priorities, and help assess synergies, as well as divergence and additionality, among different types of finance in international development cooperation.

Chair

Mr. Bob Rae, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Panel presentations

Interactive discussions

MS, stakeholders and CSOs

Day 2: Thursday, 13 March 2025

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM: Panel 4: Strengthening country-led coordination

Participants will share concrete experiences in strengthening national-led coordination, including through sharing examples of bringing together nationally-owned plans and financing strategies and country-led coordination platforms that support multiple partners – including bringing together MDBs, other public development banks, development partners, the UN system, and the private sector when appropriate. Countries will share experiences in designing and implementing nationally owned plans and financing strategies, promoting inclusive dialogue mechanisms that engage diverse stakeholders while maintaining strategic direction, and building robust institutional capacity for coordination and monitoring.

- How can countries design and implement nationally owned plans and financing strategies that effectively align with diverse development partners, including MDBs, UN agencies, and the private sector?
- What mechanisms have been effective in fostering inclusive dialogue among stakeholders while maintaining strategic direction and coherence in development cooperation efforts?
- What institutional reforms or capacity-building efforts have proven successful in strengthening country-led coordination platforms and ensuring effective monitoring of development cooperation?

Chair

Mr. Bob Rae, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Panel presentations:

Interactive discussions

MS, stakeholders and CSOs

11:30 AM – 12:45 PM: Panel 5: Strengthening the coherence of international development cooperation to make it fit for purpose

This panel will explore global and regional measures to strengthen the coherence of international development cooperation to better align with evolving global and regional challenges. At the regional level, cooperation platforms play a vital role in complementing national efforts by fostering trade agreements, cross-border investments, shared infrastructure, and coordinated industrial policies. For smaller developing countries, regional approaches are critical in accessing new markets, climbing the global value chain, and addressing transboundary challenges such as resource management and environmental sustainability. At the global level, there is a need for greater coherence among development cooperation actors, modalities, and purposes, ensuring efforts are driven by national priorities. This includes strengthening international platforms, including the UN system, to promote alignment with country needs, facilitate knowledge sharing, and foster updated principles as well as enhanced monitoring and accountability mechanisms to capture both financial and non-financial cooperation.

- How can regional cooperation platforms be leveraged to complement national efforts in areas such as trade, cross-border investments, and coordinated industrial policies?
- What concrete measures are needed to improve coherence among IDC actors, modalities, and objectives to ensure alignment with country priorities?
- How can international platforms evolve to facilitate knowledge sharing, promote updated development cooperation principles, and enhance monitoring and accountability frameworks for both financial and non-financial cooperation?

Chair:

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Panel presentations

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12:45 – 1:00 PM: Closing Session
