



Concept Note

12th Edition of the High-level Forum of Directors General for Development Cooperation

(DG Forum)

General Information

- Date: from 17 to 19 March 2021
- Time: Details below in the agenda. All times indicated are EST.
- Venue: Online (Over Zoom)
- Co-organizers: The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the Islamic Development Bank
- Overall theme: Trends, Opportunities and Challenges on the Path to Sustainable Development: Strengthening South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation in the COVID-19 Context

Background

- 1) Developing countries, commonly grouped as the Global South, have increased the depth and breadth of their cooperation based on solidarity, shared values, common needs and interests through South-South cooperation (SSC). Several milestones, such as the historic Bandung Conference in 1955, the formation of the Group of 77, and the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (BAPA) adopted by the United Nations Member States in December 1978 (A/RES/33/134) have provided the necessary impetus for enhancing SSC.
- 2) BAPA charted a way forward in terms of promoting the development of stronger ties among the countries of the South, through enhanced technical, financial, social and political cooperation. Since then, SSC has become a significant tool to link countries, especially to share know-how, expertise, technology and resources in order to solve development challenges, while preserving the principles of solidarity and national ownership.
- 3) As a consequence of these high-level directions, the modalities, actors, and magnitude of SSC have witnessed impressively fast expansion, especially in the past two decades.



- 4) Traditional donors have taken note of how SSC has emerged as one of the effective modalities for solving development challenges and are increasingly supporting SSC through a modality or approach called triangular cooperation.
- 5) The international community met again in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 20 to 22 March 2019 in order to commemorate the 40th anniversary of BAPA at the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) to take stock of achievements, challenges and opportunities in SSC and TrC. The representatives of 145 Member States and the European Union, including the high-level participation from Member States such as 8 Heads of States, 2 Vice Prime Ministers, and 61 Ministers, attended BAPA+40. Member States agreed on an outcome document (A/73/291), which reinforces the long-standing principles of SSC as a solidarity-based development cooperation mechanism. The outcome document represents a forward-looking blueprint for the international community to consolidate its approach to the role of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals.

The Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic and the Role of South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation

- 6) In the shade of the BAPA+40 outcome document and the Decade of Action towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world, unexpectedly, began to deal with the global COVID-19 pandemic and its negative socio-economic consequences.
- 7) Many governments have instituted measures to slow the rate of contagion. Despite strenuous efforts and the introduction of various vaccines into the healthcare systems across the globe, many countries are continuing to struggle in containing the pandemic, with second and third waves beginning to take shape in several regions.
- 8) In addition to the impact on the healthcare system, the pandemic is also causing unprecedented damage to the global economy, raising concerns on longer-term effects on the progress many countries had made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is now apparent that a lot of the progress in terms of reducing poverty, alleviating hunger and strengthening health systems has been reversed¹, which will lead to a readjustment of priorities in the “Decade of Action”.
- 9) Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic at the national level, majority of the countries of both the global South and the North, also pulled together to address the fallout from this crisis, though it fell short of expectations. International cooperation

¹ World Bank, *Projected poverty impacts of COVID-19*, 8 June 2020. Available from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/projected-poverty-impacts-of-COVID-19#:~:text=Estimates%20based%20on%20growth%20projections,million%20under%20the%20downside%20scenario>.
 FAO, *Emerging data suggest COVID-19 is driving up hunger in vulnerable countries*, 9 June 2020. Available from <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1280414/icode/>



agencies, under the direction of their governments, airlifted planes full of supplies to many countries while also making available their emergency response teams, as well as their private sector players, to address immediate needs of countries in critical need.

- 10) Needless to say, since the start of the pandemic, many challenges emerged, responses were crafted, and lessons have been learnt with respect to various aspects of SSC and TrC in particular and development cooperation in general.

The High-Level Forum of Directors General for Development Cooperation

- 11) The upcoming 12th Edition of the High-level Forum of Directors General for Development Cooperation (DG Forum), bringing together the heads of development cooperation agencies and institutions and other partners, will be the first one to take place in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

- 12) It will provide an opportunity for the development cooperation practitioners to take stock of how SSC and TrC has performed since the start of the pandemic. Building on the outcomes of the DG Forum 2019, during which extensive discussions were held on the importance of stronger institutional arrangements—or national ecosystems for SSC and TrC, it will also provide an opportunity to assess progress towards implementing the BAPA+40 outcome document and exchange views on ways and approaches to strengthen SSC and TrC taking into consideration the new trends and opportunities as well as the evolving challenges that development cooperation may face in the medium-to-long term.

- 13) With this overall purpose in mind, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) will be co-organizing the DG Forum, this time virtually over Zoom due to travel restrictions, over a period of 3 days in March 2021.

- 14) The overall theme of 12th Edition of DG Forum will be “Trends, Opportunities and Challenges on the Path to Sustainable Development: Strengthening South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation in the COVID-19 Context”. The DG Forum is a space bringing together national implementing South-South and triangular cooperation agencies and institutions. Other SSC and TrC stakeholders and practitioners are also invited to the Forum.

Proposed Objectives of 12th Edition of DG Forum

- 15) Based on the above background, DG Forum aims to achieve the following objectives:
- i. To stock-take and reaffirm the achievements and challenges to implement the BAPA+40 outcome document, particularly focusing on the roles of development cooperation agencies and the need to strengthen institutional arrangements;
 - ii. To review the challenges and opportunities posed by the COVID-19 crisis on SSC and TrC to achieve the BAPA+40 outcome document; and



- iii. To share practical knowledge and experiences of effective SSC and TrC in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and for achieving BAPA+40 outcome document.

The Forum will culminate with conclusions and recommendations on how to move forward SSC and TrC agenda for sustainable development especially in the context of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and building on the recommendations of the previous sessions of the Forum.



Programme of 12th Edition of DG Forum

Day 1: 17 March 2021

7.00 – 7.30 **Welcoming Remarks and Setting the Context**

- Content: During this session, speakers from the co-organizers will share welcoming remarks and provide introductory statements to set the context for this event, its purpose and intended outcomes.

7.30 – 8.30 **Session 1: Taking Stock of Achievements for South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation Since BAPA+40: How Far Are We in Achieving the Goals Set in the Outcome Document?**

- Content: The first session will provide an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved so far in achieving the goals set in the BAPA+40 outcome document with particular focus on institutional arrangements and roles of development cooperation agencies. What important strides have been made so far and what critical areas still need attention? What success factors can be prioritized in order to accelerate progress? What is the role that development cooperation agencies play in the progress?

8.30 – 9.30 **Session 2: Trends, Opportunities and Challenges Posed by the COVID-19 Crisis for South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation**

- Content: The second session will provide an opportunity to take stock of the various challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. International and regional development institutions and think-tanks will present how development cooperation, especially SSC and TrC, has played a role in addressing the challenges and taking advantage of opportunities in order to advance the development goals of beneficiary countries. In this context, the session will provide an overview of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis and discuss the possible way forward for SSC and TrC in the context of the COVID-19.

Regional Break-out Sessions

- Following the sessions of the plenary, participants will be invited to join the regional break-out sessions to conduct more in-depth discussions around the theme of the DG Forum from a regional and global perspectives. These discussions will provide the means to document the specific views of all participants in different time zones on how we can overcome challenges posed by COVID-19 and implement effective SSC and TrC actions and interventions in order to achieve the goals set by the



BAPA+40 outcome document. A 15-minute introduction session will provide the logistics information about these break-out sessions to the participants.

Day 1: 17 March 2021

10:30 – 12:30 **Break-out Session for the Americas**

Day 2: 18 March 2021

1:00 – 3:00 **Break-out Session for Asia**

8:00 – 10:00 **Break-out Session for Africa, Middle East and Europe**

Day 3: 19 March 2021

7.00 – 7.30 **Break-out Sessions Reports**

- Content: The rapporteur designated for each regional break-out session will share a brief about these discussions with key highlights and recommendations.

7.30 – 8.30 **Concluding Session: The Future of Development Cooperation: Insights on What to Expect in the Medium to Long-term and How SSC and TrC Should Be Positioned in the New “Decade of Action”**

- Content: Having taken stock of what has happened since BAPA+40 as well as understanding the trends and opportunities on SSC and TrC in the context of COVID-19, and building on the feedback from the break-out sessions, the concluding session will be a moderated discussion among all participants about the future of development cooperation with insights and key recommendations being shared by all participants.

8.30 – 9.00 **Closing Remarks**

Design of the DG Forum

PRE-FORUM: The concept note will be distributed and available online (<https://www.unsouthsouth.org/2021/01/13/2021-high-level-forum-of-directors-general-for-development-cooperation/>). For countries and organizations who are interested in presenting during any of the sessions, please inform the DG Forum Secretariat with a brief summary by 5 February 2021.

DURING FORUM: The DG Forum is designed to be interactive and action oriented. The Forum will provide ample time for discussion and interaction on effective institutionalization of South-South cooperation and



United Nations
Office for South-South Cooperation



triangular cooperation. The participants will also discuss how they work together effectively to implement the recommendations of the BAPA+40 outcome document. A document highlighting the conclusions and recommendations of 12th edition of DG Forum will be presented for the consideration of the participants.

POST-FORUM: UNOSSC, together with the key organizers of the DG Forum including the JICA and IsDB, will follow up on the agreed action items with the development cooperation agencies and provide any needed support to the extent possible and as necessary.

Participation Registration

Online registration for the DG Forum is required. Registration link:

<https://www.unsouthsouth.org/2021/01/13/2021-high-level-forum-of-directors-general-for-development-cooperation/>. Please click RSVP link. The actual Zoom link will be provided to confirmed participants a week before DG Forum.

Focal points from the UNOSSC (DG Forum Secretariat):

Overall Coordinator	Tarik Iziraren, Deputy Director for Policy and Strategic Partnership, UNOSSC
Information Focal Point	Yoko Shimura, Partnership Analyst, UNOSSC
Contact Information	Email: unosscc.dgspace@unosscc.org , yoko.shimura@unosscc.org Phone: +1 212 906 5609, +1 212 906 3642

Focal point from JICA

Focal Point	Sachiyo Yasunaga, Deputy Assistant Director, Office for Global Issues and Development Partnerships, Operations Strategy Department, JICA
Contact information	Email: Yasunaga.Sachiyo@jica.go.jp Phone: +81 3 5226 9175

Focal point from IsDB

Focal Point	Ahmed Faruk Diken, Senior Technical Cooperation Coordinator, MENA & Europe, Reverse Linkage, IsDB
Contact information	Email: ADiken@isdb.org Phone: +966 12 646 6825