



**UNITED NATIONS  
SYSTEM-WIDE STRATEGY  
ON SOUTH-SOUTH AND  
TRIANGULAR COOPERATION  
FOR SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**



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## Spurring collective and coherent action: United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024

### I. Introduction

1. South-South and triangular cooperation play an important role in the global cooperation architecture for sustainable development. Its catalytic role as a complement to North-South cooperation has been recognized by major multilateral agreements such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40),<sup>1</sup> including other relevant agreements and United Nations outcomes.
2. The scale, scope, volume and number of stakeholders of South-South and triangular cooperation continue to witness exponential growth at all levels, underpinned by the promotion of partnership initiatives through mutual learning and the sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices by Southern actors. Today, “South-South cooperation is contributing to the transformation of the norms and principles of international cooperation”<sup>2</sup>
3. The United Nations system plays a critical role in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals.
4. Many efforts are already under way within the United Nations system to leverage South-South and triangular cooperation: to support and facilitate policy dialogues, provide technical assistance, provide normative support, forge collaborative alliances, broker knowledge, develop multi-stakeholder partnerships, and mobilize development finance from all sources, etc. The BAPA+40 outcome document reaffirms the key role of United Nations system entities in this endeavour, including United Nations country teams (UNCTs).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A/RES/73/291.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on the role of South-South cooperation and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Challenges and opportunities (A/73/383), para. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., para. 21.

5. However, the increased complexity of South-South and triangular cooperation activities requires the United Nations system to be more strategic, coherent, coordinated, agile, collaborative and results-oriented at all levels: national, regional and global. Thus, the United Nations Secretary-General, in his report on the state of South-South cooperation to the General Assembly, requested the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)<sup>4</sup> “to coordinate, in consultation with the United Nations agencies, the preparation of a United Nations system-wide South-South cooperation strategy.”<sup>5</sup> The BAPA+40 outcome document takes note of the measures taken to develop the United Nations System-wide Strategy on South-South Cooperation being led by UNOSSC through the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation while taking into account the on-going repositioning of the United Nations Development System.<sup>6</sup>
6. This first United Nations system-wide strategy, shaped within the landscape of existing strategic frameworks guiding sustainable development at the global level, has been developed by the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation by leveraging synergies of already-existing thematic South-South and triangular cooperation strategies developed by United Nations entities.
7. The ultimate objective of the strategy is to provide a system-wide policy orientation to United Nations entities in order to galvanize a coordinated and coherent approach to policy, programmatic and partnership support on South-South and triangular cooperation and increase impact across United Nations activities at all levels: national, regional and global. Implementation is governed by each entity individually, based on its mandate and programme of work.
8. Through the implementation of this strategy, United Nations entities will be better positioned to coordinate and harmonize policies and operational and programmatic support on South-South and triangular cooperation at the global, regional and country levels, with the aim of supporting the national priorities of countries of the South under national ownership and leadership and to drive forward the 2030 Agenda and the Decade of Action to deliver on the SDGs.
9. The Strategy will be implemented in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that poses serious challenges for the countries of the South and risks reversing the progress achieved

4 On the basis of its mandate as the focal point for coordinating, promoting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation for development on a global and United Nations system-wide basis.

5 A/72/297, para. 94.

6 A/RES/73/291, para. 27(f).

towards the realization of the SDGs in many of these countries. South-South and triangular cooperation during and after the crisis can lay the basis for longer-term cooperation on issues that will likely grow more acute after the pandemic has receded, as the world seeks new pathways towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. The members of the Inter-Agency mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation strongly believe that the Strategy could become an additional tool for the coordination of the UN entities efforts in South-South and triangular cooperation to respond to all the dimensions of the pandemic and for building back better thereafter.

## II. Guiding principles, overarching goal, key objectives and outcomes

### A. Guiding principles

10. In line with the principles of national sovereignty and ownership, developing countries themselves initiate, design and manage South-South cooperation activities. Financing and programme inputs are likewise the primary responsibility of developing countries. Upon request, the United Nations entities and other partners play facilitation and catalytic roles. The strategy will therefore be guided by the principles of South-South cooperation as outlined in the 2009 Nairobi outcome document<sup>7</sup> and reaffirmed in the BAPA+40 outcome document.<sup>8</sup>
11. More specifically, this strategy will also be aligned with:
  - a. national and regional development plans and priorities; mandates contained in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, including efforts to reposition the United Nations development system; and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework; and
  - b. areas identified by Member States in the BAPA+40 outcome document, various General Assembly resolutions, decisions of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and other intergovernmental agreed outcomes.

### B. Overarching goal and key objectives

12. The overarching goal of this strategy is to leverage South-South and triangular cooperation in supporting the efforts of Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms and di-

7 Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (A/RES/64/222, para 11).

8 A/RES/73/291, para 8.

mensions, to achieve all sustainable development goals, and to secure peace and prosperity while promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment<sup>9</sup> on a healthy planet. More specifically, key objectives are to:

- a. enable United Nations entities to better support Member States to engage in South-South and triangular cooperation consistent within their respective mandates and in accordance with the UN Charter and international norms and standards;
- b. ensure that the collective support of the United Nations system is aligned and consistent with the Nairobi and BAPA+40 outcomes, the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals, and national priorities of countries of the South;
- c. further incorporate South-South and triangular cooperation into the United Nations system policies, programmes, strategic frameworks and other planning instruments, as agreed by the governing bodies, and ensuring synergies with existing South-South and triangular cooperation strategies developed by United Nations entities;
- d. enhance contributions to the sharing of experiences and knowledge, joint programming and operational modalities; and
- e. ensure that the work of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation contributes effectively to relevant global and regional intergovernmental processes on South-South and triangular cooperation.

### C. Outcomes

- 13.** Through enhanced coordination and synergies under the framework of the strategy, and considering linkages among economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, United Nations support will strengthen the effective delivery of the following outcomes:
- a. strengthened United Nations ability to respond to developing-country demands to address specific development challenges through South-South and triangular cooperation
  - b. strengthened institutional, human and technical capacities in countries of the South that benefit from United Nations support in South-South and triangular cooperation;
  - c. enhanced integration of Southern perspectives and needs into global and regional policies and international development cooperation;
  - d. improved exchanges of experiences, know-how and development solutions among developing countries and Southern institutions, professionals, civil society, academia and private-sector organizations;

- e. resources and expertise mobilized through South-South and triangular cooperation partnerships and strategic alliances; and increased impact of South-South cooperation as an important element of international cooperation for sustainable development

## III. Working definitions and principles of South-South and triangular cooperation

### A. South-South cooperation

- 14.** The BAPA+40 outcome document<sup>10</sup> sets forth the basis, rationale, principles and key actors of South-South cooperation:
- a. South-South cooperation is “a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national well-being, their national and collective self-reliance and the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals, according to national priorities and plans” (para. 8). Furthermore, “South-South cooperation should not be seen as official development assistance” (para. 9).
  - b. “South-South cooperation is conducted among countries of the South, including but not limited to the economic, social, cultural, environmental, and technical domains, that can take place in a bilateral, regional or interregional context in order for developing countries to meet their development goals through concerted efforts, taking into account the principles of South-South cooperation” (para. 7).
  - c. The outcome document recognizes “the value of inclusive multi-stakeholder approaches to South-South and triangular cooperation led by Member States whereby governments create enabling environments that mobilize collective action by a growing number of diverse actors in South-South and triangular cooperation” (para. 31)
- 15.** In the strategy, the operational definitions of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation are based on the 2016 framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation.<sup>11</sup> South-South cooperation is a form of partnership whereby two or more developing countries pursue, through concerted efforts, their individual and/or shared national development priorities through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organizations,

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, System-wide strategy on gender parity (6 October 2017), Available at [https://www.un.org/gender/sites/www.un.org/gender/files/gender\\_parity\\_strategy\\_october\\_2017.pdf](https://www.un.org/gender/sites/www.un.org/gender/files/gender_parity_strategy_october_2017.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> A/RES/73/291.

<sup>11</sup> SSC/19/3. Available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/081/68/pdf/N1608168.pdf?OpenElement>.

civil society, academia, the private sector and other relevant actors, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions and taking into account the principles of South-South cooperation. South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

## B. Triangular cooperation

16. “Triangular cooperation involves Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by a developed country(ies)/or multilateral organization(s).”<sup>13</sup> It “is a modality that builds partnerships and trust, between all partners, and that combines, including in the context of multilateral development cooperation initiatives, diverse resources and capacities, under the ownership of the requesting developing country, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; and that it provides added value by leveraging and mobilizing additional technical and financial resources, sharing a wider range of experiences, promoting new areas of cooperation, and combining affordable and context-based development solutions under flexible arrangements and agreed shared modalities.”<sup>14</sup>

## C. Principles of South-South cooperation

17. The implementation of the strategy by the United Nations entities will be guided by the standing principles identified in the 2009 Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation<sup>15</sup> as reaffirmed in the BAPA+40 outcome document.<sup>16</sup>

### Normative principles

- a. Respect for national sovereignty and ownership;
- b. Partnership among equals;
- c. Non-conditionality;
- d. Non-interference in domestic affairs; and
- e. Mutual benefit.

12 Ibid., para. 10.

13 Ibid., para. 11.

14 A/RES/73/291, para. 28.

15 A/RES/64/222, para. 11.

16 A/RES/73/291, para 8.

### Operational principles guiding United Nations support (Same as in the Framework of operational guidelines<sup>17</sup>)

- f. Mutual accountability and transparency;
- g. Development effectiveness;
- h. Coordination of evidence- and results-based initiatives;
- i. Multi-stakeholder approach; and
- j. Demand-driven nature of South-South and triangular cooperation.

## IV. Engagement in operational activities at the country, regional and global levels

18. The underlying objective of United Nations operational activities in support of South-South and triangular cooperation at the country and regional levels is to support the implementation of national development goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as agreed regional and subregional development agendas, by harnessing the unique role and comparative advantages of South-South and triangular cooperation during programme design and implementation. Improved coordination, coherence and contextualization will be at the heart of this effort, while recognizing the specific experience and expertise of United Nations entities derived from their respective mandates and policy frameworks. At the global level, efforts will be targeted towards providing support for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals.
19. The comparative advantages of South-South and triangular cooperation are, inter alia, multi-stakeholder approaches; low transaction and implementation costs; speed of service and project delivery; greater flexibility; use of national systems, capacities and demand-driven approaches; a focus on mutual benefit; equality of partners; complementarity of capacities; and relevance of solutions shared among partners of the South facing common development challenges.
20. South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation offer the United Nations system a unique opportunity to catalyze the modalities in supporting national efforts to achieve the SDGs. Therefore, the United Nations will provide necessary and enabling support to better leverage the wealth of knowledge, experience, technologies, and technical as well as financial resources to meet the development needs of the global South at the country, regional and global levels. Using its convening power, the United Nations system will play an import-

17 Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation (SSC/19/3, 14 March 2016)

ant role as a trusted partner, partnership builder, advocate for South-South and triangular cooperation, and solutions broker.

- 21.** The United Nations system's support for South-South and triangular cooperation will be guided by the key normative and operational guidance embodied in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, the Nairobi and BAPA+40 outcome documents and other United Nations policy documents adopted by Member States.

### Key considerations for United Nations system engagement in operational activities of South-South and triangular cooperation

Key considerations for the engagement of the United Nations system in operational activities of South-South and triangular cooperation include:

- a.** Alignment with national plans and priorities and support to regional efforts and agreements;
- b.** Response to the specific development challenges of developing countries;
- c.** Alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF);
- d.** Alignment with international, regional and national normative frameworks;
- e.** Leveraging of the unique role and comparative advantages of the United Nations entities;
- f.** Long-term engagement and sustainability;
- g.** Strengthening of human, technical and institutional capacity development;
- h.** Improvement of the exchange of experiences and know-how; and
- i.** Results-focused programming, monitoring and impact applicable to South-South and triangular cooperation.

- 22.** The increasing complexity and sophistication as well as the expanding scale of South-South and triangular cooperation call for improved institutional arrangements at the national, regional and international levels. The United Nations system will support Member States, at their request, to establish and strengthen national institutional arrangements for South-South and triangular cooperation.

- 23.** To enhance the understanding of all stakeholders (including Governments, the United Nations system, civil society, women and youth, etc.) with regard to the value of South-South and triangular cooperation for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations system will design and implement capacity development programmes on South-South and triangular cooperation. These initiatives will aim to deepen the understanding of the foundations of South-South and triangular cooperation and the modalities themselves in the context of the 2030 Agenda, build capacity to map South-South and triangular cooperation

solutions and initiatives with the potential for scaling up, and use South-South and triangular cooperation tools and methods to implement and scale up development projects to advance national development priorities.

### A. Country level

- 24.** The role of South-South and triangular cooperation in United Nations country-level work, upon request of the concerned country, will be largely catalytic, effectively leveraged to mobilize additional resources, including from the private sector -in accordance with the laws and regulations of programme countries, to implement South-South and triangular cooperation programmes and initiatives. The United Nations system plays an important role in this endeavour by ensuring that solutions and experiences generated through South-South and triangular cooperation will be brought to scale.

- 25.** South-South and triangular cooperation activities, when requested, will be aligned with existing inter-agency mechanisms and processes for country-level operations, namely, the United Nations resident coordinator system, the UNCTs, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework<sup>18</sup> and the companion pieces for guidance on this framework.<sup>19</sup>

- 26.** The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework provides the main entry points for United Nations system engagement and coordination of South-South and triangular cooperation at the country level. National planning processes also allow room for United Nations entities to coordinate their operational activities of South-South and triangular cooperation consistent with their mandates and national priorities.

- 27.** Consistent with strategic priorities defined through national planning processes of programme countries and the CCAs, the United Nations system will identify key priority areas for collaboration and engagement on South-South and triangular cooperation. Prioritizing these key areas will ensure greater development impact by creating synergies through which entities, within their mandates, will build a coalition around a priority area, each one with its specific experience, unique role and expertise.

- 28.** The United Nations framework of operational guidelines on South-South and triangular cooperation<sup>20</sup> is the main tool and reference manual on ways to further advance and leverage

<sup>18</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/cooperation-framework>.

<sup>19</sup> The companion pieces for the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guidance are currently being developed.

<sup>20</sup> SSC/19/3.

South-South and triangular cooperation. The guidelines identify entry points in analysis, planning, policy and programming as well as practical options for consideration by United Nations system organizations when incorporating, as appropriate, South-South and triangular cooperation into United Nations, national and regional planning instruments.

- 29.** Consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the engagement of the United Nations system in South-South and triangular cooperation at the country level, when and if requested, will focus on the following four main areas: common country analysis (CCA), capacity assessment, stakeholder engagement and programming.

### 1. Common country analysis

- 30.** Resident Coordinators and UNCTs undertake the design of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework based on the common country analysis (CCA). This analysis focuses on the main needs and development challenges the country faces, some of which can be addressed by South-South and triangular cooperation, including in complement and in synergy with other development cooperation modalities.

- 31.** The CCA will serve as a key entry point in this endeavour since it is a function of the independent, impartial and collective assessment of the United Nations system to identify: (a) the overall development bottlenecks and capacity gaps; (b) national, subnational and institutional capacities and coordination mechanisms, including the adoption of new technologies and data systems; and (c) emerging challenges, critical gaps and potential partnerships.<sup>21</sup>

### 2. Capacity assessment

- 32.** The BAPA+40 outcome document calls upon the United Nations development system “to assist developing countries, upon request, in building the human and institutional capacity needed to formulate and implement national development policies, strategies and programmes for South-South and triangular cooperation, including the sharing of good practices and experiences from the South, especially with the least developed countries, and in a manner consistent with their mandates and strategic plans, and to encourage the transfer of technologies on mutually agreed terms for the benefit of developing countries to address poverty eradication and sustainable development.”<sup>22</sup> Correspondingly, United Na-

tions system support to capacity development through South-South and triangular cooperation will be demand driven and anchored in country ownership, leadership, commitment and priorities.

- 33.** The ultimate goal of the United Nations engagement in the capacity assessment through the lens of South-South and triangular cooperation is to enhance and sustain national capacity to: (a) improve data collection and formulate, implement and monitor policies, frameworks and legislation (policy and normative capacity); (b) access, generate, manage and exchange relevant solutions and adapt to local circumstances (knowledge capacity); (c) connect, advocate for and engage in networks and in alliances with local, national and global actors (partnerships capacity); and (d) manage and implement programmes (implementation capacity) in a gender-responsive manner.

- 34.** Capacity assessment carried out upon request of the concerned countries and be based on consideration the specific needs of countries and respond to country-level circumstances. In countries facing development challenges, the purpose is to identify capacity gaps (human, institutional and organizational) that could be matched with resources available in other countries. In others, the purpose could be to help partner countries to define their comparative advantages and/or identify and document expertise and resources that they could share with others in similar development circumstances.

- 35.** Capacity assessment through the lens of South-South and triangular cooperation will focus on (a) the overall legislative, policy and regulatory environment in the country; (b) the internal functioning of formal and informal public or private agencies, organizations and institutions; and (c) the skills and knowledge of public servants, service providers, experts, technicians, etc. In the context of South-South and triangular cooperation, capacity assessment could also be thematic to determine a bottleneck in a sector or area considered strategic by the concerned country for its long-term development.

<sup>21</sup> The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance sheds more light on the CCA. See [https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/UN-Cooperation-Framework-Internal-Guidance-Final-June-2019\\_1.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/UN-Cooperation-Framework-Internal-Guidance-Final-June-2019_1.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> A/RES/73/291, para 27(c).

### Key catalytic actions to consider in capacity development on South-South and triangular cooperation

Key catalytic actions to consider are as follows:

- a. determine institutional, human, technical and technological needs of the country according to national objectives and priorities that can be met through cooperation with other developing countries;
- b. determine capacity assets in other countries, including neighbouring countries, and/or regions that can provide assistance with capacity development, including through peer learning;
- c. provide assistance in the identification of the productive and sustainable capacities with regard to the capacity to use, adopt, adapt and develop technologies to produce goods and services and address development challenges;
- d. provide support to the Government and other stakeholders in identifying the capacity assets in the Government, civil society, academia and the private sector that the country wishes to market or share;
- e. identify countries that could benefit from a country's expertise and/or technology as well as countries that could help to meet its capacity needs.
- f. identify areas for joint and collaborative activities that are best suited for matching needs and assets; and
- g. provide support for efforts to establish and/or strengthen national entities responsible for the coordination of South-South and triangular cooperation.

### 3. Stakeholder engagement

36. Stakeholder engagement is an important area of focus in the support of the United Nations system to South-South and triangular cooperation at the country level. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework is a vehicle for identifying development solutions through inclusive dialogue among a wide range of development actors and stakeholders that are critical in this endeavour. Thus, the United Nations system will actively seek, with consent of the concerned country, to engage with South-South and triangular cooperation actors under the coordination of the national government throughout the Cooperation Framework cycle, drawing on their comparative advantages and strengths, which are not limited to technical and financial resources.
37. The CCA will offer a unique opportunity to map key South-South and triangular cooperation stakeholders relevant to the implementation of the Cooperation Framework and national sustainable development goals. In this regard, the United Nations system, following the priorities defined by the countries, will actively engage, with the involvement of the national

government, with diverse actors spearheading South-South and triangular cooperation at the country level with the consent of the concerned country, including national institutions; technical cooperation agencies; centres of excellence and academic institutions; civil society organizations including women's organizations, youth groups and volunteer organizations; the private sector; and development banks and export-import banks.

### 4. Programming

38. Given its flexible cooperation modalities and intrinsic operational characteristics, the United Nations system entities will adopt, as appropriate, South-South and triangular cooperation among the delivery mechanisms and/or drivers of the strategic priorities identified in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Specifically, South-South and triangular cooperation will be integrated as operational tools into existing Cooperation Framework implementation instruments which are developed in full partnership with the national government, namely, the country programming instruments of the United Nations development entity,<sup>23</sup> cooperation framework results groups, joint workplans and joint-workplan annual reviews.<sup>24</sup> The latter two in particular can spur United Nations system collaboration on and coherence of South-South and triangular cooperation at the country level.
39. Consistent with its specific experience, area of expertise and mandate, each entity of the United Nations system will effectively leverage the vast technical know-how, knowledge, experience and technologies of the global South in the design and implementation of programmes at the country level in consultation with the concerned country. The United Nations system will combine capacity-gap assessment with comparative advantages (as formally defined by provider countries themselves) to identify a specific solution from the countries of the South, expertise or technology that could be shared/exchanged with the country(ies) under consideration. The United Nations system will promote the establishment and the use of centres of excellence of the South, knowledge hubs and networks to facilitate knowledge exchange, including agency-specific South-South knowledge-exchange platforms established for this purpose.

23 Country programming documents (CPDs) and country programming frameworks (CPFs).

24 See the "Cooperation Framework Implementation" section of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework guidelines. Available at: <http://www.actor-atlas.info/global-resource/unsdcfs>.

### Key catalytic actions to consider in programming

Key catalytic actions to consider in programming include:

- a.** ensure that solutions, knowledge, expertise and technologies related to United Nations agency-specific mandates and comparative advantages are identified for transfer/exchange and included in the United Nations system platforms for South-South knowledge exchanges and the provision of information about partnerships such as South-South Galaxy;
- b.** ensure that the proposed programmes identify opportunities for collective action of the South, peer learning, sharing of knowledge and experiences, and technology transfer.
- c.** ensure that the proposed programmes identify factors hindering mutually beneficial South-South and triangular cooperation and include measures to address them.
- d.** provide assistance to countries of the South in ensuring that measures are taken to determine whether South-South and triangular cooperation approaches to national programming are more cost-effective compared with those of other programming modalities; and
- e.** identify the most successful South-South and triangular cooperation programmes supported by UNCTs for possible scaling up in the country and beyond.

### South-South cooperation within the framework of sustaining peace

- a.** The BAPA+40 outcome document underlines “the need to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for achieving sustainable development, and to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Good governance, rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms, equal access to fair justice systems, and measures to combat corruption and curb illicit financial flows will be integral to our efforts”. (para 14 BAPA + 40 Outcome Document)
- b.** South-South exchanges carried out in unstable or conflict-affected settings have proven to be important to conflict prevention and sustaining peace for three key reasons:
- c.** Regional and interregional exchanges have become more common around conflict-affected settings because neighbouring countries have a vested interest in preserving regional stability or at least preventing spillover effects beyond borders. Some actors in South-South cooperation have shown increased involvement in United Nations peacekeeping after transitioning to more stable societies, contributing towards normative debates regarding peace, stability and security. South-South cooperation stakeholders can share expertise and implement successful initiatives on demand in the context of capacity-building, institution-building and mediation.
- d.** South-South cooperation actors have increasingly linked and referred to some of their cooperation efforts as being directly or indirectly related to conflict prevention and sustaining peace. For example, several countries explicitly underscore the cross-sectoral humanitarian and peacebuilding focus of their South-South cooperation initiatives.
- e.** Many South-South cooperation partners now recognize that exchanges among developing countries can be a rich source of solutions not only for socioeconomic development but also for addressing peace and security challenges. For example, the Group of Seven Plus launched the framework for fragile-to-fragile cooperation for promoting experience-sharing, information exchange, and the devising of innovative solutions to recurring instability and for sustaining peace.

### B. Regional level

The engagement of the United Nations system in South-South and triangular cooperation at the regional level will focus on support to policy formulation, knowledge sharing, and promoting regional cooperation, including through implementation of regional agreements and policy frameworks.

- 40.** Given their mandates and focus on development issues that are regional in scope, regional commissions will play a key role in advancing South-South and triangular cooperation at the regional level, in partnership with other UN development system partners. Region-specific arrangements should be developed by Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs), once established.

#### 1. Support to policy formulation and regional cooperation

- 41.** Most South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives are developed and implemented within regions owing to commonality of history, language, culture, ethnicity, geographical proximity and economic complementarities. Regional institutions are important venues for policy dialogue, agenda-setting, policy coordination, and the design and implementation of regional programmes and initiatives. In this regard, United Nations South-South and triangular cooperation activities at the regional level will continue to be targeted towards promoting strategy and policy formulation and coordination; facilitating peer to peer learning and knowledge, expertise and technology sharing and supporting efforts towards regional dialogue and integration through the implementation of regional development frameworks, cooperation programmes, treaties and agreements.

- 42.** Coordination at the regional level strengthens the policy coherence and collaboration of United Nations entities in addressing regional development issues, including in support of SSC and TrC. This strategy will serve as a key framework for guiding the United Nations development system in addressing regional development issues through South-South and triangular cooperation mechanisms. The RCPs are, when established as proposed, set to provide the mechanism for adapting the strategy and its subsequent Action Plan, as appropriate, to the regional specificity and context for achieving strengthened policy coherence and collaboration of United Nations entities in support of South-South and triangular cooperation.

#### 2. Knowledge sharing

- 43.** A strengthened United Nations response at the regional level is essential to maximizing the impact of support for South-South and triangular cooperation in every country. The de-

### COVID-19 related regional Knowledge Management tools

- a.** The new global context of COVID-19 demands urgent measures from national authorities and accurate assessment of the mid- and long-term effects. To support country efforts in their COVID-19 response, the regional commissions have launched COVID-19 related Knowledge Management tools, such as observatories and policy trackers, in their respective regions.
- b.** The observatories and policy trackers are offered as regional public goods that monitor and share the public policies and measures that countries in each region are implementing to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic promoting therefore timely peer learning and providing the foundation for evidence-based analyses of the economic and social impacts that these policies will have at the national and sectoral levels, as well as identifying opportunities for SSTC in responding to the COVID-19 impacts.

mands of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the current Covid-19 crisis and the cross-border, subregional and regional challenges that countries face in their efforts to achieve the SDGs require a collaborative regional architecture and demand effective integration and system-wide coherence between the national, regional and global levels.

- 44.** Knowledge generated at the regional level plays also a significant role in informing the common country analysis carried out at the national level, which integrates now analysis of relevant regional, subregional and cross-border dynamics, enabling United Nations entities to identify opportunities to support cross-border dialogue and collaboration between countries, including through South-South and triangular cooperation and United Nations system-wide strategies. This joint work leverages capacities at the regional level to further tackle regional development challenges and foster regional integration through improved United Nations operational activities of South-South and triangular cooperation.
- 45.** Dedicated regional and sub-regional South-South and triangular cooperation forums have been established in some regions, under the auspices of the regional commissions, to provide mechanisms to share best practices and knowledge on South-South and triangular cooperation. These mechanisms can be further leveraged, as appropriate, for enhanced policy coordination and partnerships to assist member States accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda through increased use of South-South and Triangular cooperation.

### Key outcomes at the regional level

- a.** Enhanced understanding of SSTC and strengthened contribution of SSTC to the formulation of regional and sub-regional policies and strategies through the conduct of research, analysis and technical studies
- b.** Strengthened coherence with regional institutions and easier joint identification of development challenges that are interregional in scope and have a SSTC dimension
- c.** Enhanced formulation and implementation of frameworks, agreements, treaties and action plans for sub-regional, regional and interregional integration through SSTC
- d.** Strengthened coordination of SSTC initiatives and exchange of experiences through regional and sub-regional forums
- e.** Enhanced development-related interactions among public and private organizations/institutions of developing countries to identify, negotiate, formulate and implement joint projects and programmes collectively agreed
- f.** Strengthened intra and interregional linkages between sub-regional and regional organizations with similar interests, mandates and complementary capacities

## C. Global level

### 1. Support to policy formulation

- 46.** At the global level, South-South and triangular cooperation activities of the United Nations will be targeted towards providing support for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals. This will be achieved through inclusive policy dialogue and coordination of the United Nations inputs to inform intergovernmental negotiations on resolutions and decisions on South-South and triangular cooperation within the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee) of the General Assembly as well as other intergovernmental processes such as the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up and the Development Cooperation Forum. The United Nations system will also strengthen cutting-edge research to inform evidence-based South-South policymaking processes and South-South initiatives. This research will, in turn, better inform global policy dialogues and agenda setting on South-South and triangular cooperation.
- 47.** At the global level, United Nations entities will also consider, as appropriate, to undertake the following actions:

- a.** set up relevant support structures, such as a dedicated South-South and triangular cooperation unit in each agency, and institutional focal points,
- b.** Incorporation of South-South and triangular cooperation into policies, programmes, strategic frameworks and other planning instruments, including appropriate indicators and methodologies
- c.** bolster advocacy, outreach and strategic communication on issues of critical importance to the South as well as to underscore the positive impacts of South-South and triangular cooperation;
- d.** Leverage existing UN fora and /or convene other relevant forums to, among other things, exchange views, lessons and experiences between national development cooperation agencies and institutions;
- e.** promote the sharing of information on South-South and triangular cooperation through existing United Nations mechanisms; ensure close synergy between planning and coordination frameworks dedicated to South-South and triangular cooperation at the country and regional levels; and
- f.** ensure, where appropriate, adequate funding from agency budgets.
- g.** Promote coordination and explore programmatic synergies in support to South-South and triangular cooperation with international organizations outside the United Nations development system

## 2. Knowledge-sharing

- 48.** South-South knowledge exchange is an important, dynamic pillar of South-South and triangular cooperation. It has gained prominence among developing countries because good practices generated from the global South have been increasingly recognized as cost-effective and easily adaptable and scalable. Exchanges of expertise and knowledge from the countries of the South offer viable pathways to address common challenges among the developing countries and to accelerate progress in the achievement of the SDGs.
- 49.** The United Nations development system plays an important brokering role in knowledge-sharing. At the global level, it will provide platforms, codify best practices and facilitate the sharing and exchange of solutions to development challenges highlighting how South-South and triangular cooperation can accelerate progress towards the implementation and achievement of the SDGs.

### Global South-South Development Expo (GSSD Expo)

GSSD Expo is a global annual event jointly organized by the UNOSSC, in cooperation with the Host Country, with full UN system-wide support and participation of all UN specialized agencies and programmes as well as strong support and partnership of other inter-governmental organizations and entities of the South. Launched in 2008, the GSSD Expo provides a powerful platform for development actors from various backgrounds to showcase their development solutions, celebrate successes, disseminate information, share knowledge and lessons learned, explore new avenues for collaboration and initiate new partnership efforts. The Directors-General Forum also provides an important opportunity for interactions between the UN entities and national cooperation and development agencies and institutions from the South and the North as well as other stakeholders on the implementation, monitoring and reporting on South-South and triangular cooperation policies, programmes and activities.

- 50.** Research on South-South and triangular cooperation would enable developing countries to better design, implement and assess the impact of their own South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives. Evidence-based research will also assist in strengthening policy dialogues at the regional and global levels in order to build consensus on the priorities, principles, opportunities, and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation.
- 51.** To enhance the sharing of knowledge and the connecting of partners in a more efficient, inclusive manner, digital platforms were also developed and deployed by United Nations entities. These digital platforms are offering transformational opportunities for development cooperation. They provide an accessible platform for multi-stakeholder engagement in knowledge-sharing, which also can ensure that all relevant information is securely digitalized and archived for future use. This will enhance the United Nations system support to South-South and triangular cooperation in a systematic, effective way and ensure that partners from the South can easily access and navigate a wide range of knowledge and information on good practices, research and experts.
- 52.** With the increasing proliferation of digital platforms developed by United Nations entities and other development actors, the users can benefit from a common space where countries of the South and development partners can exchange best practices on South-South and triangular cooperation, connect with multidisciplinary expertise and partners and with a large variety of solutions, and link up with viable funding mechanisms. South-South Galaxy could sever as this common space.

### South-South Galaxy<sup>25</sup>

UNOSSC, along with its development partners, has developed a global knowledge-sharing and partnership-brokering platform, South-South Galaxy, based on its consultation with over 15 United Nations entities. South-South Galaxy serves as a consolidated South-South solutions platform for partners of the South in the United Nations system and acts as a one-stop-shop for use by all partners. It complements, rather than substitutes for or duplicates, existing national and regional institutional arrangements. South-South Galaxy is being expanded through inter-agency collaboration. One of its distinctive features is the integration of an artificial intelligence function, which enables it to better “learn” about the interests and behaviours of the users of the platform in order to provide the most relevant content, real-time data and solutions so as to enhance user experience. Its objective is to eliminate a significant barrier to entry that many partners of the South currently face in accessing a reliable and diverse range of knowledge, information and partners.

- 53.** The BAPA+40 outcome document requests the United Nations development system “to continue its support to the strengthening of relevant public research institutions, academic institutions, think tanks, knowledge networks and relevant regional or thematic centers of excellence, as institutional spaces for knowledge development and sharing on South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives.”<sup>26</sup> Further, it recognizes “the role of the United Nations regional commissions in supporting South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives...by ongoing activities” relating to “knowledge networks” and “by continuing their technical, policy and research support for countries of their regions and by cooperating, as appropriate, with United Nations country teams to continue to support the capacity of Member States in areas in which South-South and triangular cooperation could have the highest development impact.”<sup>27</sup>
- 54.** In this regard, the United Nations entities can build on the South-South Global Thinkers Initiative, a global coalition of think-tank networks on South-South cooperation that involves over 250 think tanks and research institutions, mostly from the global South, to jointly conduct evidence-based analysis, research, dialogue and advocacy to inform policymaking on South-South and triangular cooperation in the context of supporting the achievement of the SDGs. UNOSSC and UNDP jointly support the secretariat of the South-South Global Thinkers Initiative. The initiative will draw upon the United Nations Global Platform, which will serve as a source of data and information for official statistics and big data.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/south-south-galaxy/> <https://www.southsouth-galaxy.org/>.

<sup>26</sup> A/RES/73/291, para. 27 (b).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., para. 27 (i).

### United Nations Global Platform

The statistical community created the United Nations Global Platform, which provides to Member States a collaborative tool for the development of official statistics by using cloud services, enabling international digital collaboration on new data solutions for SDG indicators. In addition, regional hubs of the Global Platform have been established, which facilitate South-South and triangular collaboration on projects on big data and data science and provide training in this area.<sup>28</sup>

### Key outcomes at the global level

Key global outcomes include:

- a.** enhanced awareness of the role, value-added/contribution of South-South and triangular cooperation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
- b.** strengthened support for the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals;
- c.** enhanced coherence and coordination of United Nations support at the global level;
- d.** strengthened capacities of Member States, the United Nations system and other partners in South-South and triangular cooperation;
- e.** enhanced partnerships, means of implementation, visibility and resource mobilization; and
- f.** dynamic knowledge-sharing platforms established.

## V. Partnerships and funding mechanisms for South-South and triangular cooperation

### A. Partnerships

- 55.** An important aspect of the United Nations role in South-South and triangular cooperation at the global level will be to support Member States in enhancing and expanding their South-South and triangular cooperation efforts through strengthened partnerships, strategic engagements and the mobilization of resources, including through South-South and triangular cooperation financing mechanisms. This will be achieved through strengthened mechanisms for outreach, advocacy and strategic communication to increase awareness and support partnership and general advocacy for South-South and triangular cooperation among constituents, partners and practitioners.

<sup>28</sup> Note by the Secretary-General on the report of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics (E/CN.3/2020/24). Available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/51st-session/documents/2020-24-BigData-E.pdf>.

- 56.** Partnerships between governments, private and public sectors, social and other partners plus the engagement of the global South bring the SDGs closer to achievement. Within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation, multi-stakeholder partnerships can act as instruments that help to improve the impact and actions in the field through peer-to-peer learning. A broad spectrum of multi-stakeholder partners may be engaged, including:
- a.** government institutions;
  - b.** subnational entities, local authorities and parliaments;
  - c.** intergovernmental organizations;
  - d.** civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and other stakeholders;
  - e.** providers of private-sector and innovative sources of funding;
  - f.** academic, scientific and technological communities;
  - g.** foundations and think tanks;
  - h.** worker and employer organizations; and
  - i.** women and youth groups and organizations.
- 57.** To develop South-South and triangular partnership initiative in a robust way, certain actions are recommended:
- a.** identify the needs and capacities of all partners in South-South and triangular cooperation;
  - b.** develop clear, realistic goals for South-South and triangular cooperation partnership in consultation with concerned countries and based on existing databases in the United Nations system;
  - c.** build trust and solidarity as well as mutually beneficial South-South and triangular cooperation partnership initiatives;
  - d.** strengthen institutions based in the South that foster multi-country cooperation; and
  - e.** promote peer-learning and joint monitoring and accountability.
- 58.** The added value of South-South and triangular partnership initiatives must be clear, including how these initiatives can contribute to delivering results that a single partner could not achieve on its own.
- 59.** South-South and triangular cooperation partnership initiatives should be sustainable, and resource mobilization plans should be developed.

## B. Funding mechanisms

- 60.** To better harness the complementary contribution of South-South and triangular partnerships to sustainable development and maximize the development impact of South-South and triangular cooperation, United Nations organizations and their partners have established a number of centres of excellence, financing facilities, trust funds and other mechanisms. United Nations entities will work to raise the visibility of new and existing funding mechanisms for South-South cooperation. The United Nations system will also play an important role in partnering with countries of the global South to support the implementation of projects under various South-South trust funds.
- 61.** United Nations entities will explore synergies to finance South-South and triangular projects and programmes, capitalizing on their respective areas of expertise.<sup>29</sup> They will also encourage the establishment of multi-partner or multi-stakeholder financing facilities as well as cost-sharing arrangements with South-South providers as a means to diversify the resource base of their South-South and triangular cooperation programmes, ensuring their long-term sustainability and avoiding fragmented utilization.
- 62.** To ensure adequate resourcing of the increasing number of initiatives that focus on South-South and triangular cooperation, the United Nations system will explore new sources and instruments of innovative financing for funding the SDGs at the global, regional, national and subnational levels, as appropriate. Such partners could include new financial institutions from countries of the South and non-state actors such as philanthropic foundations, the private sector and impact investment funds, including from the developed partners.
- 63.** UNOSSC plays a key role in coordinating the various initiatives and funding mechanisms existing within the United Nations system. In this regard, UNOSSC, in coordination with other members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, will act as a hub in raising awareness among the United Nations entities about existing funding opportunities to support South-South and triangular cooperation activities.

<sup>29</sup> United Nations entities will set aside resources for South-South and triangular cooperation in their respective areas of competence. See South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2011/3).

### Trust funds supporting South-South and triangular cooperation

- a. United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund
- b. United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation;
- c. India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund;
- d. India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation; and
- e. Pérez Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation.

- 64.** UNOSSC will continue managing trust funds for South-South cooperation as well as facilitate the sharing of relevant information, experiences and best practices in public-private financing partnerships and other similar cooperation mechanisms among United Nations entities.
- 65.** UNOSSC also will support the efforts of countries from the global South to collaborate with United Nations entities to reinforce or establish financing facilities as well as cost-sharing arrangements with South-South providers to advance the achievement of SDGs through South-South and triangular cooperation.

## VI. Monitoring, evaluation, reporting, coordination, governance and accountability

- 66.** The overall roles of the United Nations system in supporting and promoting South-South and triangular cooperation include convening, brokering partnerships, documenting solutions and development success stories, facilitating regional and global sharing of experiences and best practices, and mobilization of resources, all of which are delivered based on the request and leadership of Governments. In this regard, United Nations entities are encouraged to review their existing South-South and triangular cooperation processes, structures and strategies, and to contextualize and implement, at the request of the concerned countries, the proposed outcome areas and key deliverables in their respective work plans, based on their mandate, capacities and resource base.
- 67.** All members of the United Nations system share ownership of this strategy and are committed to its successful implementation. UNOSSC, in coordination with the members of the Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, will have the overall lead to coordinate and guide the implementation of the strategy, and it will coordinate the global advocacy efforts within and outside the United Nations.

### A. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the strategy

- 68.** The United Nations system will enhance the availability of its data to measure the results and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation programmes and policies developed to support national efforts.
- 69.** UNOSSC, through the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, will design and coordinate the implementation of a monitoring and evaluation framework for UN's contribution to South-South and triangular cooperation, as mentioned in the strategy.
- 70.** The monitoring and evaluation framework for this strategy will be designed based on the deliverables set out in its Action Plan. It will provide a set of non-mandatory indicators for the UNS to collect and analyze relevant information that will complement the existing indicators used by each entity of the United Nations system to report on its South-South and triangular cooperation work. The monitoring and evaluation framework will include a clear baseline and target(s) for each non-mandatory indicator in order to track progress and conduct meaningful assessments of the achieved results by each entity.
- 71.** Within the lifespan of this strategy, provision will be made to conduct a mid-term review and a final independent evaluation at the end of the strategy cycle in order to assess key results vis-à-vis the expected outcomes and targets, identify lessons learned and inform decision-making to further enhance United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation. UNOSSC, through the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, will be responsible for the development of the terms of reference for, and coordinate the oversight of, the final independent evaluation.
- 72.** At the country level, the monitoring and evaluation framework for South-South and triangular cooperation will be part of the existing overall United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework review, and reporting will complement the ongoing work of the Cooperation Frameworks and will be aligned with the existing monitoring and evaluation systems and processes of the United Nations entities, as agreed to by the governing bodies. Results will be captured, monitored and reported through those same mechanisms. It is recommended that, whenever possible and according to the available resources, final evaluations of South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives under this strategy be conducted in order to assess key results. Making final evaluation reports available is encouraged so as to create a shared and open repository that can be used for secondary analysis across countries and complement research in different thematic areas that is taken forward by research institutions and think tanks from the South and the North.

## B. Reporting

- 73.** Reporting on the progress in the implementation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation will be undertaken within already-existing reporting mechanisms to avoid the creation of additional mechanisms, which will have financial, organizational and staffing implications. In this regard, the United Nations entities will contribute to the preparation of the annual report of the Secretary-General on the state of South-South cooperation as requested by the General Assembly. UNOSSC will coordinate the preparation of this report as per its mandate.
- 74.** UNOSSC, through the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, is responsible for consolidating inputs and documenting and reporting on progress in the contribution of the United Nations system to delivering on the 2030 Agenda through South-South and triangular cooperation.

## C. Coordination, governance and accountability

- 75.** For South-South and triangular cooperation to have the intended impact, it is necessary to improve overall system-wide policy frameworks, governance, coordination mechanisms and dedicated resources.<sup>30</sup>
- 76.** At the national level, the United Nations engagement and support to South-South and triangular cooperation are elaborated and coordinated through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for those governments that agreed to include SSC dimension in the Cooperation Framework.
- 77.** The RCPs, when established as proposed, will coordinate and follow up on the implementation of the strategy in collaboration with South-South and triangular cooperation focal points in the wider United Nations system at the regional level. UNOSSC regional Offices will support these efforts in line with the framework of the Action Plan and the corresponding monitoring and evaluation framework.
- 78.** At the global level, the United Nations system, with support from UNOSSC and in coordination with the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, will take advantage of opportunities to harmonize work.

- 79.** Coordination within the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation should not be limited to information-sharing but also include promoting, whenever possible, joint planning, prioritization, pooling of resources and achievement of common results, with a view to enhancing inclusiveness and consistency while avoiding duplication.
- 80.** The governance of the United Nations system-wide strategy for South-South and triangular cooperation will be rooted in existing global, regional and national mechanisms and reinforced by the Executive Committee chaired by the Secretary-General.
- 81.** In the context of this strategy, partnering United Nations entities will be accountable for effective facilitation, brokering of solutions, partnership-building, analysis and monitoring of the progress made in the use of South-South and triangular cooperation, building on the existing framework for operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation.<sup>31</sup>
- 82.** An action plan for the implementation of this strategy will be developed in close consultation with all United Nations entities and attached to this strategy in order to set out specific deliverables, responsibilities and reporting.
- 83.** The successful implementation of the United Nations strategy will depend directly on effective and efficient collaboration between United Nations entities as well as coordination of the priorities and actions outlined in the strategy and the accompanying action plan.



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