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**High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation
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**Progress made in implementing decision 19/1 of the High-level
Committee on South-South Cooperation, with emphasis on
enhancing the role and impact of the United Nations Office for
South-South Cooperation, and in implementing the outcome
document of the second High-level United Nations Conference
on South-South Cooperation**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to decision 19/1 of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation in which the Committee requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report to the Committee, at its twentieth session, on progress made in implementing that decision, including actions taken on the recommendations and proposals made in his report SSC/19/2. It also responds to the related resolution 72/237 of the General Assembly. The present report thus highlights measures taken to enhance the role and impact of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and to improve the coordination and coherence of United Nations support to South-South cooperation. The report also responds to para. 36 of resolution 73/291, adopted by the General Assembly in 2019, by presenting how UNOSSC and United Nations entities contributed to the implementation of that resolution. A significant development in the period 2016–2020 was the formulation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation. The report concludes with a set of recommendations on the way forward.

*SSC/20/L.2.

I. Introduction

1. Developing countries have consistently expressed the need for United Nations support to South-South cooperation initiatives to eradicate extreme poverty and accelerate sustainable development across the Global South. In that overarching context, they requested the Secretary-General to present to the twentieth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation a comprehensive report highlighting progress made in the implementation of decision 19/1 that they had adopted at the nineteenth session of the Committee, including the actions taken on the recommendations and proposals that he had made in report SSC/19/2. The report also responds to the related resolution 72/237 of the General Assembly. The present report therefore highlights the measures taken to enhance the role and impact of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) as the focal point for promoting and facilitating South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation for development across the United Nations system. It also presents information on the support that United Nations entities provided to Member States towards the implementation of resolution 73/291 adopted by the General Assembly in 2019, as Member States had requested.

2. Central to the report are two pivotal events that significantly influenced the development landscape as well as South-South and triangular cooperation during the period 2016–2020. First, the year 2019 marked the beginning of a transformative period for South-South and triangular cooperation based on the deliberations during the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) and its outcome document, which the General Assembly endorsed in its resolution 73/291, as noted earlier.

3. Second, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has created unprecedented socioeconomic havoc in every country and every economy, with numerous adverse effects worldwide. In the wake of the first wave, the world economy contracted by 4.3 per cent in 2020. The concern now is that the modest recovery projected for 2021 will not suffice to make up for the losses incurred in 2020.¹ Equally troubling is the fact that 131 million more people lapsed into poverty in 2020, many of them women, children and people living in marginalized communities.² Despite current signs of economic rebounding, the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic could have lasting adverse effects on incomes and many other aspects of human well-being unless the world unites more to implement remedial measures with a sense of urgency. Alongside vaccines and stimulus packages, the world needs concerted measures during the current Decade of Action to make up lost ground and ensure resilience to future shocks. This is where South-South and triangular cooperation can have a significant impact.

4. Prior to the pandemic, during the nineteenth session of the High-level Committee and BAPA+40, Governments expressed a need for enhanced South-South cooperation through knowledge-sharing, peer learning and lessons on how to deal with shared challenges based on solutions that had worked. Clearly, the multiple and complex development challenges that the world faces cannot be solved by individual countries working in isolation. Governments have to cooperate more to revitalize economies, expand public investment, boost trade, provide solutions to tackle unemployment in the face of a growing debt crisis and ensure targeted support for communities most affected by the disease. If the virus is allowed to

¹ United Nations, *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2021* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.21.II.C.1).

² Ibid.

spread like wildfire in the global South, it will mutate again and again.³ The COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility⁴ could be a major game-changer in international development cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation, to ensure that rich and poor countries alike have immediate access to therapies and vaccines.

5. COVID-19 has spotlighted the overwhelming number of nurses, doctors and other essential workers from developing countries embedded in the workforce of developed countries. This global interdependence underscores the benefits of strengthening human solidarity as well as South-South and triangular cooperation by sharing vaccines and pooling resources to build back better from the pandemic. Between 2016 and 2021, the momentum for international cooperation and the scope and dynamism of South-South cooperation have been increasing amid many opportunities to be seized and challenges to be overcome.

6. Against that backdrop, section II of the present report summarizes the actions taken to enhance the role and impact of UNOSSC, leveraging the resources of the newly repositioned United Nations development system to support the South-South initiatives of developing countries towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Those actions include the establishment of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the development of the first United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation. Section III focuses on trends in United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation in the period leading up to and after BAPA+40. Section IV describes support by the United Nations system to South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives responding to COVID-19 and those for building back better from the pandemic. The recommendations set forth in section V aim to improve United Nations system-wide coherence to further enhance the contribution of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Those two modalities can play a key role in galvanizing local, national and regional measures in the response to, and the recovery from, the COVID-19 pandemic.

II. Actions taken to enhance the role and impact of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation

7. Developing countries have long expressed their need to collaborate more to accelerate sustainable development within the framework of South-South cooperation, with coherent and coordinated support by the United Nations system. In 2016, in response to that justifiable demand, the United Nations proposed concrete ways to turn UNOSSC into: (a) a dynamic secretariat of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation; (b) an effective coordinator of United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation; (c) a builder of strategic partnerships to foster regional integration and other collaborative initiatives in the Global South; (d) a knowledge hub able to support the capacity development efforts of developing countries through the identification, documentation and dissemination of proven development solutions; (e) an effective advocate for the Global South on issues of critical importance to developing countries; and (f) an efficient resource mobilizer with the capacity to manage funds dedicated to the promotion of South-South and triangular cooperation.⁵ Based on its past experience, UNOSSC committed to maximize its impact

³ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14438.doc.htm>.

⁴ <https://www.gavi.org/covax-facility>.

⁵ See SSC/19/2, para. 24.

through the adoption of cost-saving strategies and the leveraging of the resources of its partners while focusing on the six priorities that were proposed in Secretary-General's report SSC/19/2.

A. Secretariat of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation

8. During the reporting period, UNOSSC continued to be an effective secretariat to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and a dynamic catalyst for South-South and triangular cooperation across the United Nations system. In 2018, the Office took on the task of serving as the substantive secretariat for the preparatory process of BAPA+40.⁶ It facilitated the production of many issue papers, policy briefs and reports, including the Secretary-General's comprehensive report for BAPA+40 (A/73/383) that guided the deliberations at the Conference and informed the intergovernmental negotiations of its outcome document in compliance with relevant General Assembly resolutions. It also organized preparatory dialogues that contributed to the identification of priorities that were ultimately included in the outcome document that Member States agreed upon by consensus.

9. Moreover, UNOSSC provided secretariat and policy support to intergovernmental bodies and United Nations entities in making informed and coherent decisions on South-South and triangular cooperation. It also organized meetings of the Bureau of the High-level Committee and provided related services. The secretariat work of UNOSSC also informed discussions by the Second Committee of the General Assembly on the contributions of South-South and triangular cooperation to United Nations operational activities for development towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.⁷

10. The Office also facilitated policy dialogues regarding South-South and triangular cooperation, including through the High-level Forum of Directors General for Development Cooperation and the high-level political forum on sustainable development, where support for South-South cooperation as an important element of the global development cooperation for sustainable development is emphasized.

B. Coordination of United Nations system support to South-South and triangular cooperation

United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation

11. Member States, in General Assembly resolution 72/237 of 20 December 2017, requested the establishment of a more formalized and strengthened inter-agency mechanism coordinated by UNOSSC to encourage coherence, coordination, joint support, and sharing of information on South-South and triangular cooperation development activities and results achieved by various United Nations entities. In 2018, UNOSSC, following consultations with United Nations agencies, established the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, with a membership of more than 30 United Nations agencies.

12. The effective coordination of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation enabled UNOSSC to facilitate the system-wide engagement of many United Nations entities in the BAPA+40 preparatory processes. The Inter-Agency Mechanism further enhanced the role of UNOSSC as a coordinator for the

⁶ See A/75/371.

⁷ See A/73/321.

promotion and facilitation of South-South and triangular cooperation for development within the United Nations system, including the preparation of sectoral and inter-agency reports on South-South and triangular cooperation. The Office also used the Mechanism as a channel to facilitate the mainstreaming of South-South and triangular cooperation into the corporate strategies and operational activities of United Nations entities.

13. As part of repositioning the UN development system, a review of UN multi-country offices (MCO) was undertaken. In this process, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Vice-Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), on behalf of the Core Group of the UNSDG, tasked UNOSSC to lead MCO review action area 7 on fostering South-South cooperation and cross-regional learning. Accordingly, UNOSSC worked with the Inter-Agency Mechanism, drawing on the views of the Development Coordination Office (DCO), resident coordinators and United Nations country team members to (a) review progress on the various commitments made by individual entities, and (b) develop a coherent system-wide approach to South-South and triangular cooperation and articulate what the United Nations development system had to offer. That would include recommendations for concrete actions that could be taken collectively by the UNSDG entities at the global, regional or country level in support of small island developing States and other countries covered by MCOs. The recommendations are now being implemented following the endorsement by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly of the full set of proposals aimed at strengthening the offer of MCOs.

United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation

14. Developing countries increasingly turn to one another for solutions to shared challenges in such areas as trade, investment and infrastructure development, and the United Nations system needs to respond in a coherent, coordinated manner. The UNOSSC was therefore requested, during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly and BAPA+40, to coordinate, in consultation with the United Nations agencies, the preparation of a United Nations system-wide South-South cooperation strategy.⁸ In response, in 2019, UNOSSC started the process of developing the strategy through the Inter-Agency Mechanism, guided by the principles of South-South cooperation as outlined in the 2009 Nairobi outcome document and reaffirmed at BAPA+40. Over 30 United Nations entities contributed to the preparation of the strategy through the Inter-Agency Mechanism. The strategy, which reflects contributions from 15 resident coordinators that were submitted to UNOSSC with the support of DCO, was discussed with Member States and adopted by the UN system in 2020..

15. To maximize development impact, the strategy proposes actions for the promotion of South-South and triangular cooperation partnerships and encourages the consolidation of the efforts of United Nations entities towards establishing robust funding mechanisms, including through the exploration of new sources and instruments of innovative financing. It will also help to foster an understanding of the benefits of South-South and triangular cooperation and to identify entry points in policy, planning, programming and implementation processes at all levels. Another key element of the commitment of the United Nations system to South-South and triangular cooperation is manifested through the development of a South-South

⁸ United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on the state of South-South cooperation (A/72/297), para. 94.

cooperation strategy by six United Nations entities⁹ and through the incorporation of elements of South-South cooperation into the strategies and monitoring frameworks of 23 United Nations entities.¹⁰

16. The strategy further provides a system-wide policy orientation to galvanize a coordinated, coherent approach by United Nations entities to their policy and programmatic work on South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation. In order to operationalize the United Nations system-wide strategy, UNOSSC is finalizing an action plan through an inclusive and participatory process involving more than 30 United Nations entities.

C. Forging South-South and triangular cooperation partnerships

17. At a time when collective action was much needed to address many of the world's most urgent challenges, UNOSSC notably forged broader partnerships and encouraged them to integrate South-South approaches to development into such areas as migration, volunteerism, intellectual property rights, and the development and use of information and communications technology. That is an encouraging development, considering that developing countries host most of the world's migrants and are at risk of being left behind if they do not adjust to emerging technologies of the fourth industrial revolution through South-South cooperation and other collaborative alliances.

18. UNOSSC organized the eleventh High-level Forum of Directors General for Development Cooperation in Istanbul in 2019 with the collaboration and support of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and in coordination with the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency to support concerted policymaking. The Forum, which brought together the heads of development cooperation agencies and institutions and other partners, provided an opportunity for practitioners of South-South and triangular cooperation to reflect and exchange views on approaches to implementing the recommendations of BAPA+40. Forum participants committed to further strengthening the institutionalization of South-South and triangular cooperation, assessing the results, and promoting an inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach.

19. The Office provided guidance to Member States and the United Nations system to engage with multiple stakeholders through the Global South-South Development (GSSD) Expo. Since its inception in 2008, the GSSD Expo has engaged the private sector, civil society, and academic and philanthropic organizations, among others, to scale up concrete Southern-grown initiatives.

D. Capacity development through the sharing of knowledge and experiences

20. Responding to the calls at BAPA+40 to strengthen institutional capacities to maximize the benefits of South-South and triangular cooperation, IsDB, the South Centre and UNOSSC decided that it was imperative to have an effective "national ecosystem for South-South and triangular cooperation", comprising an institutional framework at the national level. Thus, the paper entitled "Developing national ecosystems for South-South and triangular

⁹ United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on the state of South-South cooperation (A/75/731), para. 5.

¹⁰ United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on the state of South-South cooperation (A/74/336), para. 24.

cooperation to achieve Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development” was prepared to advocate for a bottom-up incremental approach to strengthening such an ecosystem.

21. UNOSSC continued engaging in, inter alia, enhancing the institutional capacities of Member States and United Nations entities to design, implement and monitor South-South and triangular cooperation programmes through advisory services and reinforcement of the management practices of development cooperation agencies in charge of South-South cooperation. Examples include the Capacity Development in Management of South-South and Triangular Cooperation project implemented with the support of the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation (ABC) and JICA. Additionally, in partnership with the United Nations System Staff College, the Colombian Presidential Agency for Cooperation (APC-Colombia), IsDB and the South Centre, the Office also enhanced institutional capacities of many countries.

22. The capacity of young people to become the next generation of development actors is of critical importance to the Global South. UNOSSC, in cooperation with several partners, organized the training programme entitled South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Implementing the 2030 Agenda: Youth4South Edition in June 2019 in Istanbul. As a result, young professionals and young officials from national governments, technical cooperation agencies and related sectors exchanged views with their peers from other developing countries to adapt and apply South-South and triangular cooperation tools and methods in scaling up sustainable development solutions in their respective communities, institutions and countries.

23. The United Nations System Staff College, in close cooperation with UNOSSC, organized the course Catalytic Support to South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Implementing the 2030 Agenda in 2019. Building on a common understanding of the theory and practice of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, the course expanded its coverage beyond individual United Nations staff and United Nations country team members to Governments and institutional focal points.

24. South-South trust funds managed by UNOSSC provided support to develop the capacities of the National Public Health Laboratory in Sudan to identify the needs and gaps regarding COVID-19 testing. Building on past collaboration in the Arab States, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, UNOSSC and IsDB engaged with Sudan, Tunisia and the State of Palestine to provide emergency financial support in response to COVID-19.

25. UNOSSC acted as a facilitator and connector, enabling the exchange of knowledge, experiences and development solutions among countries of the Global South. The Office, along with its development partners, developed South-South Galaxy, a knowledge-sharing and partnership-brokering platform. The platform, launched in September 2019 during celebrations of United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation, responds systematically and efficiently to the needs of Member States, United Nations entities and multiple stakeholders to connect, collaborate and learn from one another. Engaging 45 United Nations entities, South-South Galaxy established a digital repository with information on more than 550 innovative solutions and 290 organizations by mid-2020. That improved access by national governments, United Nations country teams and other national partners to information and knowledge on South-South cooperation, especially on measures responding to the pandemic.

26. Furthermore, knowledge exchange, mutual learning and partnership-brokering efforts in South-South and triangular cooperation were enhanced at the global, regional and national levels through the South-South Global Thinkers platform that enabled UNOSSC to

commission thematic research papers, produce handbooks on good practices (volume 3 in 2020), and publish the series South-South in Action, among others. The South-South Global Thinkers platform, a joint enterprise between UNDP and UNOSSC, pooled capacity and expertise from institutions to add to the knowledge base and advance Southern thought leadership on South-South and triangular cooperation. Voices of the Global South were better incorporated into the *Human Development Report 2020* through collaboration with the Human Development Report Office and South-South Global Thinkers to capture perspectives from think tanks in developing countries.

27. UNOSSC also served as a knowledge hub for South-South cooperation through its many publications. Recent products included *Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development*, volumes in the series South-South in Action and South-South Ideas, and research reports such as *Cooperation Beyond Convention: South-South and Triangular Cooperation in a Changing Global Landscape*, an independent report on South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, which reviews the history and transformation of those modalities. Such reports served as guidance to developing countries to better plan, design and implement South-South cooperation initiatives and to strengthen policy dialogues and build consensus on priorities, principles and opportunities.

28. Acknowledging the importance of digital transformation, UNOSSC prepared a report entitled *South-South Cooperation in a Digital World* with the Finance Centre for South-South Cooperation. The report contains an analysis of development prospects and trends impacting digital industries in the Global South and puts forward proposals for digital industrial cooperation among Southern countries.

E. Strategic outreach, advocacy and communication

29. UNOSSC continued to underscore the positive impact of South-South and triangular cooperation through policy advice and related services to Member States during United Nations processes on issues of critical importance to South-South solidarity, regional integration and international collective action. The Office rolled out an enhanced communications strategy, 2019–2021, that leverages both traditional and innovative electronic tools to share compelling stories and promote interaction among stakeholders. Emphasis is placed on advocating for the role of South-South and triangular cooperation towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Through that work stream, the Office also articulated the UNOSSC policy advisory services and other core areas of work; positioned the Office as a facilitator of partnerships to increase the understanding and visibility of practical expressions of Southern solidarity; and followed standard operating procedures in the dissemination of information on demand-driven initiatives and projects relating to South-South and triangular cooperation across the United Nations system and among development partners in all regions.

30. The Office upgraded its web portal (www.unsouthsouth.org) to provide a user-friendly platform for stakeholders to showcase their work on South-South and triangular cooperation in their respective focus areas.

F. Funding and efficient management of trust funds

31. UNDP continued to ensure the stable and predictable allocation of regular (core) resources to UNOSSC, enabling the Office to enhance its role and to have a positive development impact. UNOSSC remained an efficient and effective fund manager of South-South and triangular cooperation trust funds through its funding facilities and in collaboration

with Member States and the United Nations system.¹¹ It rapidly enhanced and expanded South-South and triangular cooperation through the management of the funds that promote multilateral cooperation and serve as laboratories of innovations for South-South and triangular cooperation. In 2019, UNOSSC demonstrated growth in resource mobilization from Member States in support of South-South cooperation. Through the trust funds and innovative programmes, it mobilized \$14.1 million and delivered \$12.3 million in non-core resources.

32. The South-South trust funds fast-tracked finance and in-kind support totalling almost \$12 million to 31 countries of the Global South to help them to respond to COVID-19. Those resources financed the supply of ventilators and personal protective equipment as well as measures to mitigate the socioeconomic impact among the most vulnerable groups. For example, the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund fast-tracked COVID-19 response projects totalling \$10.6 million for 14 Southern countries.

33. UNOSSC took measures to reinforce its approach to partnership-building and resource mobilization, including engaging with partners in government, civil society, academia and the private sector, to support the planned activities as set out in its strategic framework, 2018–2021. The non-core share of resources came from Member States and various other sources of funding, including: (a) contributions to the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation; (b) third-party cost-sharing; (c) parallel financing; (d) in-kind contributions; and (e) special fund management arrangements such as those of the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund and the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation.

G. Steps taken to enhance the performance of UNOSSC

34. As requested by Member States in resolution 19/1 of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and resolution 72/237 of the General Assembly, several measures were taken to enhance the role and impact of UNOSSC in the performance of its many functions described in the present report. In March 2016, the profile of UNOSSC was enhanced through the designation of the Director as Secretary-General's Envoy on South-South Cooperation. That designation allows UNOSSC to better coordinate support to South-South and triangular cooperation from across the United Nations system. Likewise, the Administrator of UNDP forged closer working relations with UNOSSC by giving the Director of the Office delegated authority to manage the procurement functions of UNOSSC that the Associate Administrator and the Bureau for Management had previously overseen. In addition, UNDP committed to continuing to host UNOSSC, and it financed the UNOSSC strategic framework for 2018–2021. The Administrator also appointed the Director of UNOSSC to be part of the UNDP Organizational Performance Group, which oversees the overall performance and effectiveness of UNDP. The details of further measures that UNDP took to improve the management, financial resources, transparency, accountability and efficiency of UNOSSC are described in the report of the Administrator (SSC/20/1) that is submitted to the twentieth session of the High-level Committee.

¹¹ See <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/our-work/south-south-trust-fund-management/>.

III. Trends in United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation leading up to and after the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation

A. Renewed commitment by the United Nations system regarding South-South and triangular cooperation

35. The scope and strategic focus of United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation expanded into geographic initiatives and strategic sectors including climate action, food and nutrition, social protection, peacebuilding, and the establishment of physical and online collaborative platforms. After the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation decided to hold the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in 2019, UNOSSC and many United Nations agencies supported the efforts of Member States to identify strategies and priorities that would enable Member States to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda through South-South and triangular cooperation.

36. BAPA+40 reaffirmed the key role of the United Nations funds, programmes, specialized agencies, non-resident agencies and regional commissions, including United Nations country teams, in supporting and promoting South-South and triangular cooperation. Focusing on a longer-term impact, specific measures that entities of the United Nations development system took in response included convening global and regional forums, fostering policy and institutional coherence, creating multi-stakeholder partnerships, and mainstreaming South-South and triangular cooperation into their monitoring and accountability frameworks.

37. Responding to calls of Member States to bolster coordinated and coherent support to South-South cooperation, 12 of 28 United Nations development system entities reported having a specific unit dedicated to South-South cooperation, “and 21 of 27 entities included South-South cooperation in their last annual report.”¹²

38. Member States urged the United Nations development system to enhance support for developing countries and to act as an enabler in seeking or facilitating partnerships, in line with national development policies.¹³ Hence, United Nations agencies emphasized South-South cooperation in over 80 United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. United Nations entities provided South-South cooperation support to Government partners in 72 per cent of all United Nations country teams, with the Asia-Pacific region leading with 83 per cent of support in that area.

39. UNOSSC increased its momentum in working effectively with international and regional actors to improve the understanding of the importance of international collective action in the Global South to address shared challenges through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and regional development frameworks such as Agenda 2063 of the African

¹² Economic and Social Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR), advance unedited version (A/75/x-E/2020/7), para. 263.

¹³ A/73/291, annex, para. 27 (d).

Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Community Vision 2025. UNOSSC collaborated with the African Peer Review Mechanism and other partners to organize an Experts' Meeting on the theme "Post-BAPA+40 roadmap: South-South cooperation for the implementation of the African Union Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development". The meeting emphasized the value of strategic partnerships with stakeholders of the South to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2063.

40. The year 2019 saw a surge in the number of policy dialogues and related initiatives by members of the United Nations development system, reflecting commitment to follow up on the BAPA+40 outcome document. As highlighted in the 2020 report on the state of South-South cooperation, more than 145 policy dialogues and 175 programmes and capacity-building activities on South-South and triangular cooperation were held by 27 United Nations entities, targeting the achievement of the SDGs.

41. Support for regional integration increased during the reported period. In the regional economic commissions, for example, South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation remained an integral part of technical cooperation focusing on the implementation of legal instruments, norms and standards, and relevant good practices. Harnessing renewed commitments after BAPA+40, the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation, an interregional partnership between the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ESCAP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), called for strengthening cooperation with international organizations, think tanks, civil society and the private sector to intensify concerted efforts and effectively conduct projects and forums. Each forum will serve as a platform for the countries to share their experiences as users of South-South and triangular cooperation, their institutional arrangements, policies and lessons learned, and ways to leverage multi-stakeholder partnership.¹⁴ The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia leveraged resources from its Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation to encourage the exchange of experts and experiences among its Member States and to build national capacity to improve coordination with external development actors for absorption of aid and assistance. The 2020 programme plan and budget for the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) noted that ECA would work to develop joint initiatives with other regional commissions to strengthen "the regional dimension of both global development and South-South cooperation".¹⁵

42. Regarding climate action, 2019 also saw growth and consolidation in the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), which brings together the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research to collaborate and synchronize activities.¹⁶

43. In the area of food and nutrition, the collaboration of the Rome-based agencies intensified in the fight against hunger, building on their joint roadmap entitled "Towards BAPA+40". Their commitment to South-South cooperation was guided by innovative mechanisms, such as brokering partnerships with the private sector and establishing blended finance mechanisms, furthering synergies among existing and upcoming projects to strengthen the capacity of host Governments and generate development benefits for the most

¹⁴ See United Nations, ESCAP, *Technical Cooperation Highlights 2018–2019*.

¹⁵ E/ECA/COE/38/12, para. 13.

¹⁶ See PAGE, "PAGE agencies meet in Geneva to design the Partnership's future beyond 2020", 9-11 April 2020.

vulnerable.¹⁷ Those initiatives are of critical importance because the world is not projected to achieve zero hunger by 2030.

44. In April 2019, the Division for Inclusive Social Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the ILO Social Protection Department joined forces to address the challenge of the lack of social protection, exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic in many developing countries. As a result, the partners implemented a joint project on achieving SDGs and ending poverty through universal social protection. The main objective of the project was to strengthen the capacity of Governments in that area. As a result of the project experiences, new practical tools will be developed and shared with more countries through South-South and triangular cooperation.¹⁸

45. UNDP created 91 support platforms supporting 115 countries and territories as of February 2021.¹⁹ These platforms contribute to identifying, co-creating, replicating and scaling up South-South cooperation solutions. In 2020, UNDP implemented over 1,300 South-South cooperation projects, accounting for 8 per cent of all projects.

46. With respect to peacebuilding, the 2019 Peacebuilding Commission Ambassadorial-level meeting on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, and the complementary provisions and principles of the twin resolutions on the 2015 review of the peacebuilding architecture served as the basis for the mainstreaming, by the Peacebuilding Commission, of South-South and triangular cooperation into its support of national priorities in accordance with the BAPA+40 outcome document. The Peacebuilding Commission country- and region-specific meetings and thematic discussions facilitated the sharing of experiences, good practices and expertise among conflict-affected countries, including through centres of excellence.

47. The establishment of physical and virtual mechanisms to facilitate the South-South and triangular sharing of knowledge and experiences also expanded. Many United Nations entities created multilingual, interactive virtual collaboration spaces. Examples include: (a) the South-South Meeting Point of ILO; (b) the Rural Solutions Portal of the International Fund for Agricultural Development; (c) WIPO Match of the World Intellectual Property Organization; (d) the Inclusive Policy Lab of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; (e) the UNIDO Centres for South-South Industrial Cooperation; (f) the South-South Experience Exchange Facility of the World Bank Group; (g) the South-South Cooperation Gateway of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); (h) the SDG Good Practices portal of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; and (i) South-South Galaxy of UNOSSC.

B. Triangular cooperation: complementing the strengths of multiple actors

48. Northern and Southern partners are joining hands to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda through multilateral alliances called “triangular partnerships”. The United Nations system recognizes that triangular cooperation “involves Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by a developed country(ies)/or multilateral organization(s) to implement development cooperation

¹⁷ See FAO, *Evaluation of the FAO Strategy for Partnerships with the Private Sector*.

¹⁸ See <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2019/04/universal-social-protection/>.

¹⁹ See <https://acceleratorlabs.undp.org/>.

programmes and projects.”²⁰ Experience continued to show that triangular cooperation is an investment in partnerships that encourages innovation and co-creation through mutual learning. For example, the Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation (GPI) is led by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The Core Group of GPI builds on the fresh momentum generated by BAPA+40 to take further steps to (a) deepen the engagement with all constituents around the effectiveness of triangular cooperation, and (b) explore the collection of data to generate an evidence base for informed policy action and peer learning on effective triangular cooperation.²¹ The Core Group of GPI is diverse; it includes Canada, Chile, the Ibero-American Programme for Strengthening South-South Cooperation, IsDB, Japan, Mexico, OECD and UNOSSC.

49. In supporting the implementation of BAPA+40 commitments, GPI developed a roadmap and action plan on triangular cooperation until 2022. It launched the publication entitled *Triangular Cooperation in the Era of the 2030 Agenda: Sharing Evidence and Stories from the Field*, which presents comparative advantages and opportunities of triangular cooperation, analyses challenges and opportunities to strengthen the institutional framework of that modality, and introduces voluntary guidelines for effective triangular cooperation.

50. In October 2019, OECD organized the fifth international meeting on triangular cooperation entitled “Implementing BAPA+40: What’s next for triangular cooperation?”, which brought together over 150 representatives of diverse stakeholders from 67 countries. Recommendations from that meeting focused on the mainstreaming of triangular cooperation, integration of development banks, and adaptation of triangular tools to favour peer learning and local ownership, among others.

51. The Regional Fund for Triangular Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean, established by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), seeks to promote public policies for sustainable development by implementing triangular cooperation projects. It provides the framework for cooperation involving recipient countries, Southern providers and Germany as a traditional provider.

C. Commitment of United Nations entities and countries to triangular cooperation as a development cooperation modality

52. Among examples of triangular cooperation partnerships facilitated by United Nations entities is the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) collaboration with the Government of Brazil in partnerships spanning different regions of the South from Ethiopia to Paraguay, from Yemen to Sao Tome and Principe, and from Nepal to Armenia to address child protection, health, early childhood development, social protection, water and sanitation.

53. APC-Colombia, JICA, ABC, IsDB, the African Peer Review Mechanism, GPI, the Pacific Islands Development Forum, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the Group of 77 and China collaborated with UNOSSC on the implementation of joint triangular cooperation activities.

54. A triangular cooperation project agreement was signed by FAO, China and the Netherlands in the context of scaling up the FAO-China South-South Cooperation

²⁰ United Nations, Note by the Secretary-General on the framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation (SSC/19/3), para. 11.

²¹ See <https://www.effectivecooperation.org/content/2020-2022-global-partnership-work-programme>.

Programme. The project aims to enhance aquaculture production and value-chain development in Ethiopia.

IV. South-South and triangular cooperation in responding to COVID-19 and in building back better from the pandemic

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the imperative for South-South and triangular cooperation

55. The onset of the pandemic in 2020 heightened the urgency for more inclusive regional and national policy responses to crises. The pandemic put to the test the reaffirmation by Member States at BAPA+40 of “South-South cooperation as a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national and collective self-reliance”. It made collaboration among countries of the Global South to address a common challenge in the spirit of solidarity more imperative. Without concerted action, the spread of the pandemic in developing countries could have a long-lasting, adverse socioeconomic impact, especially in countries with fragile and vulnerable economies.

56. Besides the health crisis and the human cost of the pandemic, most developing countries lack stimulus packages; the economic recovery will require significant international support and cooperation. The present report shows that there are opportunities within existing South-South approaches on which the development community could build in this regard. Such approaches include policy dialogues, technical assistance, financial support, peer-to-peer learning, exchanges of knowledge and networking. Several areas highlighted as priorities in the BAPA+40 outcome document, including trade and investment, climate action, health and education to reduce multidimensional poverty are also crucial to the response to COVID-19 in the Global South and the recovery efforts going forward.

57. The importance of multilateral approaches for the development of equitable access to affordable vaccines, treatment and medical supplies cannot be overemphasized. Funding of the COVAX Facility by developing countries in a position to do so encapsulates South-South solidarity and human solidarity in general.

58. Countries of the South looked to a repositioned United Nations development system to provide support for a robust response to COVID-19 and for meeting their longer-term development challenges. In response, the resident coordinators and the United Nations country teams worked with national governments and regional economic commissions in supporting Governments of the Global South through coordinated efforts. Going forward, the United Nations development system will work closely with national governments of the South, upon their request, to respond to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 in line with the UN Socioeconomic Response Plans coordinated by resident coordinators. The identification and documentation of the policies and strategies that developing countries] have used to prevent widespread infections will be useful evidence for future capacity development in responses to pandemics and other crises.

59. The 2020 Development Cooperation Forum Survey Study revealed challenges associated with COVID-19 response and recovery, emphasizing the role of the enablers of development cooperation in improving quality and impact for better results. National productive capacities can be bolstered by supporting Southern stakeholders in identifying the most pressing issues for the Global South to address through collaborative efforts and by enhancing linkages between actions taken, partnerships built and resources mobilized.

60. ESCAP developed a regional COVID-19 Policy Tracker²² and organized the Third Asia-Pacific Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Member States and leaders to learn from the experiences and good practices of other countries as they gradually emerge from the crisis and enhance their resilience.
61. ECLAC built the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean to support the review and follow-up of the public policies being implemented by its 33 countries to limit the impact of the pandemic and provide analyses of the socioeconomic impact that those policies would have at the national and sectoral levels.
62. The World Food Programme (WFP) supported its response to the pandemic through the COVID-19 South-South Opportunity Fund. The Fund helped seven host Governments in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Middle East to address critical areas of need to protect and enhance progress in meeting SDG 2 to end hunger, including measures to strengthen food systems, emergency preparedness and response, and school-based programmes.
63. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) embraced the BAPA+40 outcomes recognizing “trends towards rapid urbanization in developing countries” and “call[ing] for greater South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives aimed at eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions in urban and rural areas”.²³ Between March and August 2020, the UN-Habitat COVID-19 response “supported the overall response to the pandemic in 37 countries and territories and more than 250 cities, benefiting 6.8 million people, the majority being residents of slums and informal settlements”.²⁴
64. In 2020, ILO, with its International Training Centre, launched 23 South-South and triangular cooperation projects across five regions to cover 75 countries. Those global activities promoted peer-learning activities, training and capacity-building, joint research, fellowships and virtual study tours between countries of the South. The projects included innovative virtual components addressing the impacts of COVID-19 on workers.
65. In the area of access to and transfer of technologies, WFP launched a toolkit for designing and implementing South-South and triangular cooperation activities using digital modalities. The aim was to provide new step-by-step guidance for WFP practitioners of South-South and triangular cooperation on how to effectively design and implement South-South and triangular cooperation using remote means. The Pan American Health Organization, in collaboration with United Nations agencies, organized the exchange of good practices and lessons learned in response to COVID-19 with respect to different aspects of health emergency preparedness and response, particularly for countries of the Global South.
66. On digital cooperation, the United Nations development system “will support governments to rapidly design, adjust, scale up and implement cash transfer programmes to respond to immediate economic impacts of COVID-19”.²⁵ The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development South-South digital cooperation agenda for boosting new industrialization and integration opportunities among developing countries can provide a policy path to building resilience in the South.

²² See <https://www.unescap.org/covid19>.

²³ A/73/291, annex, para. 32.

²⁴ See <https://unhabitat.org/ar/node/143739>.

²⁵ United Nations, A UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19, April 2020, p. 14.

67. The World Trade Organization developed the Goods Trade Barometer and the Services Trade Barometer to provide timely and accurate information in handling the unprecedented disruption caused by the pandemic to the global economy and world trade, especially in the Global South.

68. The International Monetary Fund responded to the coronavirus crisis with unprecedented speed and magnitude of financial assistance to help countries to set the stage for economic recovery. The United Nations Capital Development Fund helped local governments to channel necessary resources to meet the needs of the immediate crisis as well as strengthen their capacity to deliver services to their citizens afterwards. The World Bank advised countries to scale up social protection programmes and leverage technology to ensure that cash transfers and stimulus packages reach citizens directly. It also made \$12 billion available for developing countries to purchase and distribute COVID-19 vaccines.

69. UNOSSC leveraged established partnerships to facilitate support among countries of the Global South to contain the spread of COVID-19 through policy dialogues and peer-to-peer support among multiple actors. That engagement was encouraged in a resolution adopted by consensus in the Second Committee, which focuses on the contributions of South-South and triangular cooperation in the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁶

70. In efforts to mobilize monetary and other resources to strengthen the preparedness and response capacities of countries globally, including vulnerable developing countries of the South, the UN launched the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund and is grateful to donor partners and institutions that have come forward to assist developing countries to combat the pandemic.

71. To address COVID-19 related challenges, “developing countries have responded to support each other, particularly least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing States (SIDS) and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), with agility and solidarity...within the framework of South-South cooperation”.²⁷ Several instances of such cooperation, including triangular cooperation, were presented through my 2020 report to the Second Committee on the state of South-South cooperation.

72. The United Nations development system has endeavoured to bring Southern perspectives and development solutions to the forefront by tapping into the comparative advantages of different stakeholders. The pressing challenge today is to pool isolated resources available through the ever-expanding architecture of South-South and triangular cooperation in meeting the development needs of Member States.

V. Recommendations

73. Within the context of the broader reforms of the UN development system, the recently agreed United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation has the potential to enhance the role and impact of UNOSSC and to galvanize the expertise of many United Nations organizations to support the South-South initiatives of Member States. All relevant United Nations entities are fully committed to implementing this strategy at the headquarters, country and regional levels in line with their respective mandates and strategic plans. This should help to maximize development impact through measures such as the

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Webinar: Health and Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 – Challenges and Opportunities for NGOs and CSOs in the Global South, 20 October 2020.

establishment of robust funding mechanisms through inclusive partnerships involving Governments and the private sector.

74. The report also shows that UNOSSC had an impact on the work of many United Nations policymaking bodies and the High-level Forum of Directors General for Development Cooperation to elevate the contribution of South-South and triangular cooperation towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. UNOSSC also coordinated United Nations support to South-South cooperation in addition to spurring the sharing of knowledge and experiences to foster human and institutional capacity development in the developing world. Member States in a position to do so are encouraged to contribute more to the work of UNOSSC to ensure that the Office has the human and financial resources necessary to do its work more effectively.

75. The establishment of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation by UNOSSC and United Nations organizations was an important milestone for the UN in this area. Looking ahead, it offers opportunities to use digital and other technologies to refine the South-South and triangular cooperation methodologies, including coordinated policy dialogue and the sharing of knowledge and experiences. It also allows members to increase support to developing countries towards the mobilization of collective action informed by knowledge products that are based on data and analysis of effective policies and strategies that are responsive to global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. The developing countries that have been more effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and those that have had notable success in the provision of social safety nets or in addressing such hazards as floods, droughts, wildfires, pests and earthquakes can inform new forms of South-South peer learning going forward.

76. In line with the earlier recommendation on the need for United Nations entities working in similar sectors to harmonize their support to the South-South initiatives of Member States, the present report shows that Rome-based agencies undertook joint South-South cooperation initiatives to support the implementation of the priorities in food and nutrition that are set out in the BAPA+40 outcome document. More United Nations entities can maximize the impact of their work through similar collaborative programmes.

77. The report has highlighted that developing countries increasingly trade and invest more within the Global South. Those countries can further bolster aspects of South-South cooperation focused on the creation of an enabling environment for enhanced economic cooperation through policy measures to integrate South-South cooperation into United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. Such policy measures should spur the provision of adequate investments in public goods, health and the preparation of a skilled workforce that most developing countries need to gainfully participate in regional and global value chains to create jobs and eradicate poverty in all its dimensions.

78. I commend countries of the Global South that showed solidarity with one another to control the spread and limit the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, I encourage countries of the South, their partners from the North and other stakeholders to increase their support to developing countries and vulnerable groups through United Nations mechanisms established for that purpose, including the COVAX Facility and the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, where appropriate. Such joint efforts should leverage the expertise and other resources in the Global South to ensure more equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and to lay the foundation for stronger alliances in addressing other existential threats to humanity as we build back better and stronger from the pandemic.

79. I welcome the measures taken by partners in developed countries such as OECD members to foster triangular cooperation through concrete plans to follow up on BAPA+40 through multi-stakeholder partnerships inclusive of the private sector, with a focus on peer learning and local ownership, among other priorities. Such partnerships can reinforce human solidarity and envision practical policies and strategies to reduce inequalities and extreme poverty. Such measures need to build on current lessons about increased interdependence in our globalized world, as illustrated by the thousands of doctors, nurses and other essential workers from the Global South who are firmly embedded in the workforce of many developed countries.

80. During the current Decade of Action, South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation supported by the United Nations system should have greater development impact. That can be achieved by the twentieth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation through, for example, the consideration of measures that are calibrated to enable LDCs to graduate from that status and to empower other developing countries to escape the middle-income trap.