Global South-South Development Expo 2022

South-South Cooperation Directors General Forum for Sustainable Development

“Strengthening South-South and triangular cooperation institutional capacity and ecosystem for sustainable and resilient future in the context of COVID-19 and other global crises.”

14 September 2022, Co-sponsored by

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Concept Note

Background

In tandem with the increased magnitude of South-South cooperation in the past decades, several milestones—the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (1978)\(^1\), the Nairobi outcome document (2009)\(^2\), and the outcome document of the Second High-level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) in 2019\(^3\)—have given a necessary impetus to effectively leverage the cooperation modality to achieve sustainable development. The world has seen, however, in the last two years, the devastating socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 that have derailed progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted supply chains, forced millions of people into extreme poverty, increased debt across the Global South, and exacerbated inequality including vaccine inequity around the world. It has been clearer that the existing global systems are not resilient enough in major crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and global financial crises. With only less than nine years left to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, it is high time for the global community to come together and rethink our approach and find transformative and sustainable solutions needed to address the intractable development challenges.

High-level directions and commitments for South-South and triangular cooperation (SSC/TrC) have been further stretched and tested in this context. The twentieth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, held in June 2021, and its report\(^4\) reiterated the significant role and enhanced value of South-South cooperation during the pandemic by underlining the solidarity underpinning the cooperation modality that enabled developing countries to obtain vaccines, necessary medications, and personal protective equipment from their global Southern partners. With its expanded scope and solidarity-based cooperation models, South-South and triangular cooperation remain vital modalities of development actions to not only address the immediate impacts of the pandemic but also build resilience and transformational systems for the future.

\(^1\) A/CONF.79/13/Rev.1.
\(^2\) A/RES/64/222.
\(^3\) A/RES/73/291.
\(^4\) A/76/39.
The South-South Cooperation Directors General Forum for Sustainable Development (DG Forum) is an annual event organized by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) in cooperation with co-host organizations. First launched in 2008, it has been an important advocacy tool and platform bringing together leaders from cooperation agencies and institutions of national governments and other partners and providing an opportunity to exchange views on South-South and triangular cooperation approaches and methodologies. The eleventh annual DG Forum, held in Istanbul, Turkey in 2019, was the first DG Forum taking place after the BAPA+40 in March of the year. The Forum discussed ways and approaches to implement the BAPA+40 outcome document recommendations. The twelfth DG Forum, held online in 2021, was the first DG Forum taking place in the ongoing COVID-19 context. The Forum focused on how to move forward the South-South and triangular cooperation agenda for sustainable development through actionable and results-oriented solutions, particularly in the context of the response to the pandemic. Both the latest DG Forums highlighted the significance of stronger institutional arrangements and ecosystems for South-South and triangular cooperation at the national, regional and global levels with specific recommendations on how to strengthen the institutionalization of South-South and triangular cooperation for effective implementation of the BAPA+40 outcome document.5

The BAPA+40 outcome document explicitly “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”6 to effectively leverage South-South and triangular cooperation as a means of achieving sustainable development and future. While many efforts are underway within the UN system, the first-ever United Nations System-wide Strategy on South-South and Triangulation Cooperation for Sustainable Development, 2020-24, approved by the Executive Committee of the United Nations Secretary-General in 2020, aims for a more coordinated, systematic, and coherent approach in the UN’s policy, programmatic and partnership support to South-South and triangular cooperation among the Member States. It envisions strengthened institutional, human and technical capacities in countries of the South to plan, manage and monitor South-South and triangular cooperation, including mapping and matching capacity gaps and comparative advantages as well as mainstreaming in the UN Common Country Analysis and Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

Moreover, the UN Secretary-General most recently requested UNOSSC to “include in its forthcoming strategic framework more robust support for developing countries in establishing and strengthening national institutions to plan and manage South-South cooperation”7 in his report on the State of South-South Cooperation to the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly. In response to the request, the New Strategic Framework of the UNOSSC, 2022-2025, approved by the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS in February 2022, gives its priority to strengthening the capacities and ecosystem within the UN system and Member States that are more enabling South-South and triangular cooperation as one of its three outcomes and five services. The Strategic Framework takes an integrated approach to the capacity development of developing countries. It specifically aims to provide a package of UNOSSC’s integrated capacity development services to support Member States in addressing specific development challenges through South-South and triangular cooperation,

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6 A/RES/73/291, para. 27(c).
7 A/76/403, para. 81.
including a strengthened DG Forum and regional mechanisms, the South-South Galaxy, the Global Coalition of Think Tank Networks for South-South Cooperation and the Global South-South Development Expo (GSSD Expo).  

In the above context, the re-designed South-South Cooperation Directors General Forum for Sustainable Development (former High-level Forum of Directors General for Development Cooperation) will support the national ecosystem for South-South and triangular cooperation in countries of the South, on their request. The overall theme of this year’s DG Forum will be “Strengthening the South-South and triangular cooperation institutional capacity and ecosystem for sustainable and resilient future in the context of COVID-19 and other global crises.”

**Objectives**

National ecosystem enhancement matters to all South-South and triangular cooperation stakeholders—both providers and recipients—for successful engagement in and meaningful contribution to South-South and triangular cooperation. The South-South Cooperation Directors General Forum for Sustainable Development 2022 aims at supporting the Global South with their South-South and triangular cooperation capacity development and ecosystem enhancement by:

1. Identifying Southern countries’ pressing capacity development needs and gaps to better plan and manage South-South and triangular cooperation, including emerging demands in the context of COVID-19 recovery and other global crises;
2. Sharing good practices and experiences in strengthening Southern countries’ institutional capacities and national ecosystems, primarily from national development cooperation agencies but also from other sectoral agencies, covering different thematic dimensions and issues including, but not least, climate change, digitization, poverty eradication, and social protection;
3. Discussing the role of the UN system and multilateral organizations and sharing their efforts in building institutional, human and technical capacities within Member States and the UN system needed for South-South and triangular cooperation;
4. Providing inputs to the development of a capacity development service catalogue for SSC/TrC ecosystem enhancement, which pools capacity development services offered by broad SSC/TrC partners as resources for South-South peer learning, and the design of pilot South-South capacity development initiatives, which will be facilitated by UNOSSC with the support of interested partners.

Furthermore, the DG Forum 2022 will take stock of progress in implementing recommendations of the previous DG Forums. It is anticipated that relevant outcomes of the DG Forum 2022 could also inform intergovernmental processes and the UN policy documents and reports related to South-South and triangular cooperation.

The Outcome of the DG Forum will be specific recommendations and/or capacity development action plans to address the Southern countries’ capacity development demands and priorities to move forward South-South and triangular cooperation agenda for sustainable development at all levels (global, regional, and national) and by **all key stakeholders** (governments, UN system entities, and multilateral organizations, development banks, the private sector, think tanks and CSOs).

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8 DP/CF/SSC/7, para. 35.
Participants

Directors Generals of development cooperation agencies, national focal points for SSC/TrC, and other institutional partners from governments; representatives of multilateral and intergovernmental organizations, regional and subregional institutions; representatives of UN agencies including Regional Commissions, Development Coordination Office, and UN Resident Coordinators. Think tanks, academic institutions, and the private sector may also be invited as needed.

Organization

When and where? The DG Forum 2022 will be convened in conjunction with the eleventh GSSD Expo, which will be hosted by the Government of Thailand, in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok, Thailand from 12 to 14 September 2022. The Forum will take place in hybrid format on 14 September 2022, which will be the last day of the GSSD Expo 2022.

A pre-forum survey questionnaire will be sent out to participants to conduct initial mapping of i) Southern countries’ capacity development needs and gaps to better plan and manage South-South and triangular cooperation and ii) available capacity development providers—countries and agencies from both the South and the North—and training resources and service offerings on South-South and triangular cooperation institutionalization and ecosystem. The Forum discussions will be demand-driven and guided by the survey results and focus on 2-3 selected topics, which might include but not limited to the following:

- National SSC/TrC strategies, policies, and legal framework;
- National SSC/TrC coordination body/agency and human resources;
- Multi-stakeholders’ engagement and coordination for SSC/TrC;
- Design and implementation of SSC/TrC project;
- Monitoring and evaluation of SSC/TrC results and performance;
- Communication of SSC/TrC results;
- SSC/TrC financing mechanism;
- SSC/TrC information and databases;
- How to assess national ecosystems for SSC/TrC;
- How to leverage the UN system and multilateral organizations for SSC/TrC.

Moreover, the pre-forum survey will track and monitor progress on the implementation of the recommendations from the previous year’s DG Forum. The review of progress will be presented at the start of the DG Forum 2022.

Synergies with regional mechanisms for SSC/TrC? The regional mechanisms and dynamics for South-South and triangular cooperation among member states and the UN development system vary from one region to another according to their regional situations. The upcoming global DG Forum will ensure its linkages and maximum synergies with regional DG Forums and other regional mechanisms for South-South and triangular cooperation, where applicable, and their networks at national, regional, and global levels. In preparation for organizing regional DG Forums and regional mechanisms on South-South and triangular cooperation, regional and sub-regional dialogues and forums may be
convened or supported by the UNOSSC’s regional offices⁹, as applicable to the regional situation, with the partnership and participation of Member States and UN agencies at the regional and country levels including, Regional Commissions, Development Coordination Office (DCO) and Resident Coordinators (RCs). Among others, these dialogues may also support the implementation of global DG Forum’s recommendations and/or action plans, including pilot capacity development initiatives depending on regionally agreed interest and priorities. Outcomes of such meetings will be fed into the global DG Forum.

- The African Directors General Forum will be organized, in collaboration with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the African Union Development Agency (AU-NEPAD) (Date TBC).
- A network of African Directors General will be convened, in collaboration with APRM, in preparation for the regional DG Forum.

Africa

Arab State, Europe and CIS

By tapping into the strong presence of the African Union in the region and its leading role of promoting unity and solidarity of the African countries,

- The African Directors General Forum will be organized, in collaboration with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the African Union Development Agency (AU-NEPAD) (Date TBC).
- A network of African Directors General will be convened, in collaboration with APRM, in preparation for the regional DG Forum.

By tapping into the UNOSSC regional office’s solid network with Directors General in the regions and working relations with UN regional collaborative platforms (RCPs), but bearing in mind the complexity of the two regions,

- The 2nd Inter-regional Dialogue will be organized, with participation of Member States and UN agencies at the regional and country levels (Date TBC).
- Sub-regional and thematic dialogues with Directors General will be organized (Date TBC).

Asia and the Pacific

Latin America and Caribbean

By tapping into the strong leadership of ESCAP and supporting the processes led by ESCAP, including the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD) and the regional DG Forum,

- The regional DG Forum will be organized by ESCAP with support from UNOSSC (12 September 2022).
- A roundtable on Network for South-South Cooperation in Asia-Pacific (24 March 2022) was organized by ESCAP, with support from UNOSSC, as an associated event to the 9th APFSD.
- A roundtable for SDG 17 was co-organized by ESCAP, UNDP, UNIDO, where SSC/TrC was discussed, during the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) (28-31 March 2022).

By tapping into the strong regional mechanism for SSC/TrC, led by the UNECLAC, UNOSSC HQ will consolidate the regional inputs including from the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2022 (7-9 March 2022) and other meetings of UNECLAC its Committee on South-South Cooperation, where applicable, through close communication with UNECLAC.

Global DG Forum
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What to expect after the DG Forum, now as part of the UNOSSC’s integrated CD service? UNOSSC will follow up on the agreed action items and provide needed support to the extent possible, in close cooperation with governments, the UN system agencies, multilateral organizations, and other partners. Among others, UNOSSC will produce a capacity development service catalogue for SSC/TrC ecosystem enhancement, based on the capacity-building needs and assets identified through the Forum discussions and the pre-forum survey. The catalogue will compile and present available capacity development service offerings and training modules from different countries and agencies on strengthening SSC/TrC institutionalization and national ecosystem. UNOSSC will also facilitate pilot South-South capacity development initiatives, upon request, by mapping and matching Southern countries with the available capacity development service providers compiled in the catalogue.

UNOSSC, as a convenor and facilitator, will mobilize necessary partnerships and provide its coordination, programmatic and technical support for joint planning, pooling of resources, and the implementation and monitoring of the pilot capacity development initiatives, which could be scaled up as a more comprehensive South-South Capacity Development Facility.

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⁹ UNOSSC has its regional presence in Africa, Arab State, Europe and CIS, and Asia and the Pacific regions. Regional recommendations from the Americas will be consolidated by the HQ through its direct communication with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).
UNOSSC's Integrated Capacity Development Service

UNOSSC aims to provide integrated capacity development service through which Southern countries can benefit from “South-South peer learning and support” throughout their journey to enhance their institutional capacities and national ecosystems for South-South and triangular cooperation. A key aspect of this integrated capacity development service is to enable the continuous mapping and matching of capacity development providers and training service offerings, based on capacity development needs and priorities identified by Southern countries, as a process. The DG Forum will play a pivotal role, in this process, as a platform where Southern countries conduct the continuous mapping and matching exercise together and generate recommendations and action plans, that will guide the design and implementation of the South-South Capacity Development Facility.

**Linkage to the South-South Galaxy?** The South-South Galaxy platform will enable sharing of relevant outcomes of the global and regional DG Forums and other regional mechanisms with broader South-South and triangular cooperation actors. The knowledge-sharing feature of the platform will capture and share the information of the available capacity development providers and good practices in strengthening South-South and triangular cooperation institutional capacities and national ecosystems including, the upcoming capacity development service catalogue for SSC/TrC ecosystem enhancement. The partner brokering feature of the South-South Galaxy will help broader partners’ uptake of the capacity development service catalogue for SSC/TrC ecosystem enhancement by connecting capacity development providers with Southern countries keen to improve their South-South and triangular cooperation capacities through South-South peer learning and support.

**Hosting and sponsoring arrangements?** The DG Forum 2022 will be organized by UNOSSC with the host arrangement by the Government of Thailand, in partnership with the ESCAP. This year’s DG Forum will be also supported by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The DG Forum is open to expanding sponsoring arrangements with interested South-South and triangular cooperation partners in future years.

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