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Operational activities for development: South-South cooperation for development

State of South-South cooperation

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution [73/249](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-fourth session a comprehensive report on the state of South-South cooperation. The report highlights follow-up to the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and is focused on, among other things, specific measures undertaken by the United Nations development system to enhance its support for South-South and triangular cooperation at the global, regional and national levels during the reporting period. It also contains recommendations for the way forward.

* [A/74/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. Four years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is evidence of progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and some positive trends have been noted. Notwithstanding such trends and the wide range of initiatives inspired by the 2030 Agenda, the shift in development pathways to bring about the transformation required to achieve the Goals by 2030 is not yet advancing at the speed or on the scale required ([E/2019/68](#), para. 7). Multi-stakeholder participation and enhanced cooperation are essential to achieve the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda, including leveraging knowledge and expertise in the global South.

2. Within that context, the year 2019 marks the beginning of a transformative era for South-South and triangular cooperation, with the conclusion of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, held in Buenos Aires. The significant gains achieved by many developing countries are contributing to the transformation of the norms and principles of international cooperation ([A/73/383](#), para. 4). Through the adoption of the Conference outcome document (resolution [73/291](#), annex), the global community, including United Nations entities and other stakeholders, underscored the immense potential of South-South and triangular cooperation to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

3. During the Conference, Member States agreed that the evolving international landscape was creating conditions conducive to promoting South-South cooperation, pursuing sustained economic growth and building national and collective self-reliance. South-South cooperation continues to expand and diversify in scope in order to, among other things, facilitate regional integration and interregional and intraregional connectivity, enhance productive capacities and provide innovative approaches for collective action. Specific measures taken by the United Nations development system include convening global and regional forums, building policy and institutional coherence, creating multi-stakeholder partnerships and monitoring and accountability frameworks, broadening the scale and flexibility of contributions and facilitating a focus on longer-term impact. South-South cooperation is emphasized in over 80 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities at the country level.

4. To influence the larger landscape of development cooperation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations entities, using South-South cooperation as a vehicle, have collaborated with regional bodies and fostered cooperation opportunities with Member States and other stakeholders. There was a surge in new partnerships and the development of knowledge products on South-South cooperation during the reporting period.

5. The present report concludes with a set of recommendations for consideration by the United Nations development system. The recommendations are the result of several consultations and lessons learned shared by actors implementing South-South cooperation initiatives.

II. Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and continued support to Member States for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Overview of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation

6. From 20 to 22 March 2019, representatives of 145 Member States and the European Union gathered at the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, hosted by the Government of Argentina. High-level participants included eight Heads of State, two Deputy Prime Ministers and 61 ministers.¹ Over 3,800 participants were registered, including representatives of 25 intergovernmental organizations, 32 United Nations entities and several non-governmental organizations. There was also extensive participation by regional organizations, think tanks and academic institutions. The event generated substantial interest globally.²

7. The theme of the Conference was “The role of South-South cooperation and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: challenges and opportunities”.³ The Conference provided an opportunity to ensure that South-South cooperation remained responsive to the evolving realities of global development and the changing needs of developing countries as they implemented the 2030 Agenda. It was also an opportunity to develop and strengthen frameworks for South-South cooperation and to improve systems and tools for reporting and for assessing the impact.

8. In the deliberations, the role of South-South cooperation as an important element of the global cooperation architecture for sustainable development was highlighted. The Conference gave the international community the opportunity to review trends and assess progress. Heads of delegations and other high-level officials noted that, while North-South cooperation remained the main modality for development cooperation, South-South cooperation had expanded its scope, facilitated regional integration and provided innovative approaches for collective action in recent decades. Participants recognized that South-South cooperation should not be seen as official development assistance and stressed that it was not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation. They acknowledged the need to enhance the development effectiveness of South-South and triangular cooperation, while acknowledging its voluntary, participatory and demand-driven nature. Developing countries were encouraged to develop country-led systems for data collection, quality assessment, monitoring and evaluation, as well as methodologies and statistics, in keeping with the principles of South-South cooperation.

9. Participants recognized the need to enhance capacity-building in developing countries through enhanced resources and expertise. Noting with concern increases in debt levels around the world, participants called upon borrowers and creditors to address challenges linked to debt sustainability as a matter of priority, in order to prevent a negative impact on long-term development and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. They also recognized that the shortage of resources continued to hinder the expansion of South-South and triangular cooperation and underscored the need to

¹ Participation of the least developed countries was supported by the Government of Norway.

² Some 70,000 page views were recorded for the website of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, and over 17.5 million people were reached through social media.

³ See www.unsouthsouth.org/bapa40.

further mobilize resources from all sources, whether public, private, domestic or international. They called upon multilateral, regional and bilateral financial and development institutions to consider increasing financial resources and technical cooperation. They also called upon Member States to explore new innovative financing mechanisms and called for the increased use of triangular cooperation, which offers an adaptable and flexible approach to evolving development challenges.

10. With respect to the role of the United Nations system, the Conference, in its outcome document, 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 cooperation and triangular cooperation, while reiterating that every country had primary responsibility for its own development (see resolution 73/291, annex). Member States urged the United Nations development system to enhance assistance for developing countries and to act as an enabler in seeking or facilitating potential cooperation partners in several strategic areas, in line with national development priorities, as well as to continue to support regional and subregional organizations in promoting sustainable development practices.

11. In the outcome document, the Conference also reaffirmed the importance of the development of a United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South cooperation, which is being led by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation through the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, while taking into account the ongoing repositioning of the United Nations development system.

12. During three interactive panel discussions organized on the sub-themes of the conference,⁴ it was noted that South-South cooperation could have a positive impact on all of the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants expressed the need for new approaches to engage the private sector, including through blended financing and social impact investment, and for performance indicators for the private sector, such as measuring job creation, technology transfer, environmental sustainability and respect for local norms. Participants also emphasized the importance of developing a methodology to measure the impact of South-South cooperation.

13. Over 140 side events were organized by Governments, United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations, international financial institutions, academic institutions and other development partners to showcase their innovative South-South and triangular initiatives, practices and research. The events provided an opportunity to reach a global audience.

Highlights of commitments and follow-up by United Nations entities on South-South cooperation

14. The renewed commitment and guidance gathered through the Conference process will inform future global summits, the design of organizational strategies, follow-up to policy dialogues, outreach strategies and financial mechanisms. United Nations entities, in partnership with other stakeholders, committed themselves to enabling partners from the South to deliver more efficient South-South and triangular cooperation activities within the framework of the 17 Goals. United Nations entities

⁴ The sub-themes were “Comparative advantages and opportunities of South-South cooperation and sharing of experiences, best practices and success stories”, “Challenges and the strengthening of the institutional framework of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation” and “Scaling up the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in support of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation”.

displayed overwhelming interest in actively responding to the needs and expectations of the South. Some examples are highlighted below.

15. To promote South-South cooperation as a central element of global development cooperation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will prepare the second report on South-South cooperation in Africa with partners and engage, through the development of a regional and country-level action plan, its wide network of country offices to support Governments in implementing the Conference outcomes.⁵

16. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), along with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and other development cooperation partners, will hold the third meeting of the Asia-Pacific Directors General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation to translate the outcome of the Conference and provide further guidance on how to engage with regional and subregional organizations in promoting South-South and triangular cooperation in the region.

17. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) seeks to implement the Conference recommendations through follow-up to international conferences, dissemination of knowledge products, strengthening of its existing solutions portal, establishment of partnerships with multilateral development banks and exploration of cooperation opportunities with Member States.

18. In the light of increasing migration between developing countries, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is committed to expanding its partnerships with stakeholders interested in promoting South-South cooperation for good migration governance.

19. With 10 nations in the global South accounting for 84 per cent of all deaths from terrorism in 2017,⁶ the Office of Counter-Terrorism recognized the importance of South-South cooperation in addressing the devastating effects of terrorism and violent extremism on developing countries and launched a global project at the Conference. The project will involve mapping of the relevant best practices of countries and centres of excellence in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean and create a South-South knowledge-sharing platform, as well as a forum of experts to leverage the valuable counter-terrorism expertise available in the global South.

20. The World Food Programme (WFP) will organize regional dialogues, including in Panama and Senegal to promote intraregional support to strengthen partnerships with Argentina and China. It will also establish a global help desk on South-South and triangular cooperation to provide direct support to practitioners and will build a matching platform for such cooperation, which is an internal database of providers and good practices that will be available on the South-South Galaxy platform⁷ of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

21. In 2019, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) policy on South-South and triangular industrial cooperation⁸ was developed as a response to the call for strengthened support for South-South and triangular cooperation globally and on a United Nations system-wide basis.

⁵ See www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/library/reports/south-south-cooperation-in-sub-saharan-africa0.html.

⁶ See www.un.org/press/en/2019/dev3392.doc.htm.

⁷ www.unsouthsouth-galaxy.org.

⁸ See www.unido.org/our-focus-cross-cutting-services-partnerships-prosperity/south-south-and-triangular-industrial-cooperation.

22. South-South volunteering remains an important channel for building capacities through shared learning and equitable partnerships. The newly established chair of South-South cooperation, which the University of Buenos Aires launched at the Conference, is an important platform, and the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) is working closely with UNDP and the University to integrate volunteerism into strategies and activities.

III. Support of the organizations of the United Nations development system for South-South and triangular cooperation in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

A. Mainstreaming South-South cooperation into policy frameworks, planning and monitoring instruments of the United Nations development system

23. A review of activities reported by the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies provides evidence of the central role of the United Nations development system in advancing, coordinating and mainstreaming South-South and triangular cooperation throughout the reporting period. South-South cooperation activities of the United Nations system include financing, building networks, capacity-building, knowledge brokering, creating an enabling environment and developing multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

24. United Nations agencies and international organizations embrace South-South cooperation as an effective form of development cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Of the entities contributing to the present report, 23 have incorporated South-South cooperation elements into their strategies and monitoring frameworks for the 2018–2021 period. Importantly, South-South cooperation has expanded in areas such as migration, volunteerism, intellectual property, development and use of information and communications technology, and counter-terrorism. In addition, partnerships between the United Nations system and think tanks, training institutions, centres of excellence, online networks and platforms have extended the reach of South-South cooperation. Some illustrative examples are presented below.

25. In the regional commissions, South-South and triangular cooperation is an integral part of technical cooperation focusing on the implementation of legal instruments, norms and standards and relevant best practices. For example, countries in Central Asia and Eastern Europe benefited the most from the technical cooperation activities of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). They accounted for 26 per cent and 19 per cent of ECE technical cooperation activities, respectively, followed by the countries of South-Eastern Europe (9 per cent) and the Caucasus (8 per cent).

26. ESCAP adopted a regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.⁹ The road map contains calls for strengthened South-South and triangular cooperation partnerships and the deployment of new solutions between countries and across subregions. ESCAP uses a peer-learning and experience-sharing approach to assist developing countries with the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the Goals and to undertake voluntary national reviews.

⁹ ESCAP, document ESCAP/RFS/2019/INF/2. Available at www.unescap.org/apfsd/6/document/APFSD6_INF2E.pdf.

27. In the UNDP strategic plan for 2018–2021 (DP/2017/38), South-South and triangular cooperation is embraced as an essential driver to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. An extensive country presence and trusted local partnerships in more than 170 countries, with a systematic and designated South-South and triangular focus, provides UNDP with an additional advantage in working collaboratively with partner countries, anchored in its development offer, business model and programme modalities. UNDP draws on selected country offices to act as global drivers, connectors, knowledge hubs and centres of excellence. Through the Global Policy Network, the six signature solutions of UNDP bring technical expertise to strengthen institutional and policy capacities for countries. The solutions help countries to partner and share knowledge, scale up good practices and foster bilateral and regional partnerships for South-South and triangular cooperation. An emerging network of over 50 country support platforms and 60 country accelerator laboratories¹⁰ acts as a vehicle to help to develop, replicate and scale up solutions from the South, thereby contributing to the implementation of the Goals.

28. Building on its strategic plan for 2018–2021, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) undertook extensive consultations with its country offices to develop a strategy on South-South cooperation in countries with mature, institutionalized arrangements for the provision of technical assistance. It also launched a package of South-South cooperation tools and support services.

29. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States supported the inauguration of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, located in Ulaanbaatar. The think tank seeks to promote collaboration among landlocked developing countries and partners of the South to undertake quality research, provide policy advice and assist in capacity-building. It also provides a platform for those countries and partners in the South and the North to disseminate and share information and best practices and support the countries in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024.

30. The IFAD country strategic opportunities programme includes South-South and triangular cooperation, with relevant monitoring indicators. In agreement with Member States, integration of the modality increased from 50 per cent in the tenth replenishment of IFAD resources to 66 per cent under its eleventh replenishment for 2019–2021.¹¹

31. The International Labour Organization (ILO), in its development cooperation principles adopted in 2018, emphasized the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation as a strategic vehicle for promoting mutually beneficial learning and cooperation in support of the 2030 Agenda.¹² In 2018, the Governing Body of the International Labour Office agreed on the future steps for integrating South-South modalities into increased support for fragile-to-fragile cooperation in the framework of the ILO agreement with countries of the Group of Seven Plus.¹³ ILO, in partnership with the regional commissions, will expand its work on regional integration in Africa and beyond. In particular, its strategies will support micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in leveraging new trade routes and help to address policy, regulatory and non-tariff barriers.

¹⁰ See <https://acceleratorlabs.undp.org>.

¹¹ IFAD, document IFAD11/5/INF.2.

¹² See www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_631777.pdf.

¹³ See www.southsouthpoint.net/2018/12/11/ilo-and-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-in-2018.

32. South-South and triangular cooperation has been integrated globally into the thirteenth General Programme of Work of the World Health Organization (WHO), for 2019–2023. WHO will help to develop and scale up innovative solutions using various approaches, including South-South cooperation. It will also promote South-South cooperation in research and innovation and has incorporated the modality into its programme budget for 2018–2019.

33. The South-South Facility¹⁴ has been hosted by the World Bank Group since 2008 and is aligned with the Bank’s 2030 vision. Knowledge is identified in the vision as a core driver, and the key role of the South-South Facility as a mechanism that helps countries to address developmental challenges through knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer learning is underlined. The 16 active grants in the Facility’s 2018 portfolio support 39 World Bank projects, with a cumulative value of \$13 billion for the achievement of 14 Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁵

34. In the United Nations Environment Programme medium-term strategy for 2018–2021, South-South and triangular cooperation is emphasized as one of five operational principles for achieving the 2030 Agenda. UNEP, in its policy guidance document entitled “Integrating South-South cooperation in the UNEP programmes of work”, prioritizes stronger institutional support, provides systematic funding and seeks the development of communication and outreach tools for South-South cooperation.

35. Positioning volunteerism as an integral component of South-South and triangular cooperation, UNV has embedded the modalities in its strategic framework for 2018–2021. In 2018, 81 per cent of UNV volunteers were from the global South. The programme plans to work with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation to monitor the impact of such volunteerism.

36. In 2018, 94 per cent of WFP country strategic plans integrated South-South and triangular cooperation; 73 per cent of WFP country offices played an active role in assisting other countries in building and implementing national policies and programmes. Furthermore, the emerging network of WFP centres of excellence facilitates South-South cooperation on food security and nutrition through technical assistance for capacity-building and policy advocacy. Such efforts allowed seven countries to take ownership of their school feeding programmes. Also in 2018, support was extended to four African countries to connect smallholder farmers producing food and cotton to institutional markets.

B. Actions taken by organizations of the United Nations development system to effectively support efforts of Member States to achieve sustainable development through South-South and triangular cooperation

Policy dialogue and development

37. Extensive South-South policy dialogues and consultative processes were held both in the lead-up to the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and during the development of commitments in follow-up to its outcome document.

38. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs supported multi-stakeholder policy dialogues as part of the Development Cooperation Forum. The outcomes of

¹⁴ See www.southsouthfacility.org.

¹⁵ World Bank, *The South-South Experience Exchange Facility Implementation Progress Report 2018* (Washington, D.C., World Bank Group, 2019).

the 2018 Development Cooperation Forum informed both the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up, which offered venues for South-South learning and knowledge exchange in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

39. The Development Cooperation Forum has produced policy briefs in collaboration with notable scholars of the global South. The *Financing for Sustainable Development Report* of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development provided the latest account of development finance more broadly, as well as South-South cooperation in the context of international development cooperation. To galvanize national efforts, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will elaborate its work stream on South-South cooperation, including in the lead-up to the Development Cooperation Forum to be held in May 2020.

40. In 2018, UNICEF field offices reported over 100 policy dialogues on South-South cooperation at the regional level and two policy dialogues at the global level. Opportunities seized at global and regional forums further advanced the partnerships between China and countries in Africa. UNICEF and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation convened, in collaboration with the Governments of Argentina, Thailand and Uganda and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), a policy discussion on how to maximize the potential of South-South cooperation to advance the Goals for children in the areas of health, water and sanitation, migration and innovation.

41. In July 2018, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported more than 100 delegates from government ministries and think tanks in China and several African countries to explore the use of South-South cooperation to achieve a demographic dividend¹⁶ in African countries.

42. Incremental institutionalization of South-South cooperation initiatives at the regional level and their incorporation into policymaking is on the rise. For example, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has been instrumental in building capacities at the regional level. Some examples include the formulation of policies and engagement in negotiations on the African Continental Free Trade Area and promoting transparency and cooperation on non-tariff measures for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Southern African Development Community regions.

43. UNCTAD continues to capture and disseminate information on addressing national and regional developmental challenges in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. For example, South-South and triangular cooperation is regularly highlighted in the policy recommendations contained in the *Economic Development in Africa Report*¹⁷ and *The Least Developed Countries Report*.¹⁸

44. Over 40 high-level policy dialogues were organized by WFP centres and were aimed at strengthening South-South cooperation to wipe out hunger, leading to the establishment of new partnerships. For example, the Global Child Nutrition Forum was held in Tunisia, with 350 participants from 50 countries, who were encouraged to take ownership of their school feeding programmes. WFP also formulated comprehensive programmatic guidelines, tools and mechanisms to enable its country

¹⁶ A demographic dividend is the boost in economic productivity that occurs when there are growing numbers of people in the workforce relative to the number of dependants, brought about by declining fertility rates.

¹⁷ See <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/Publications/EconomicDevelopmentinAfricaseries.aspx>.

¹⁸ See <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/Publications/TheLeastDevelopedCountriesReport.aspx>.

offices to support host Governments. In 2018, 4 million children in 17 countries benefited from such efforts to strengthen national capacities.

45. More than 100 of the 130 UNDP country offices collaborated with national Governments and other partners in South-South and triangular cooperation activities in 2018 and, in doing so, supported partnerships with over 180 other countries through more than 900 initiatives. Building capacity for South-South cooperation at the country and regional levels accounted for 53 per cent of all initiatives, while UNDP also contributed to knowledge brokering for 36 per cent of initiatives and facilitated partnerships in another 12 per cent.

Innovative practices to support South-South cooperation

46. Innovation, in the field of technology, policy and digital solutions, resource mobilization and capacity development, has had a snowball effect leading to additional impacts. Several examples of innovative approaches and programmes being implemented by United Nations agencies to support South-South cooperation are outlined below.

47. The role of UNDP in providing an integrator function on the 2030 Agenda is at the heart of a new generation of United Nations country teams. UNDP offers expertise as a service to the wider development system, including through expanding support to legal and institutional frameworks for South-South, cross-border policy dialogue and learning, and networking in partnership with the United Nations Office for South-South Coordination.

48. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs initiative entitled “Partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals” follows up on over 4,000 partnerships registered to promote a focus on results and the exchange of knowledge. For example, the initiative “Parliamentarians advancing anti-corruption through the United Nations Convention against Corruption” will strengthen capacity, engagement and mechanisms focusing on the specific national development priorities of Pacific countries.

49. UNIDO has been innovative in establishing a wide range of centres of excellence and networks promoting the exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices, including the UNIDO Centre for South-South Industrial Cooperation, in China, the International Centre for Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development, in India, the UNIDO Network of Investment and Technology Promotion Offices and the UNIDO Network of Subcontracting and Partnership Exchange Centres. The UNIDO Network of Investment Technology Promotion Offices, in Bahrain, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Nigeria, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, offers platforms for the exchange of investment promotion policies and potential investment portfolios. Such initiatives enhance the capacities of UNIDO to provide South-South and triangular services and leverage additional complementary resources.

50. UNEP implemented its project on strengthening the institutional capacity of African and Asian countries for the enforcement of environmental legislation through South-South cooperation and its environmental governance subprogramme. The project enhanced the institutional capacity of countries to enforce environmental law through the exchange of information and the generation of a set of best practices.

51. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) launched its public procurement capacity assessment tool for infrastructure,¹⁹ which is designed to help Governments to identify the gaps that limit their ability to deliver a sustainable,

¹⁹ <https://cati.unops.org>.

resilient infrastructure. Following successful pilot work and research in partnership with the Governments of Brazil, Nepal and Serbia, the tool was used in Grenada and Kenya.

Knowledge-sharing for capacity development

52. With support from the United Nations development system, countries across the globe have made significant efforts to build institutional capacity for knowledge-sharing by both strengthening the enabling environment and upgrading related technical skills.

53. As an outcome of regional consultations facilitated by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation leading up to the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, the Asia-Pacific Directors General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation was established. The Forum provides a platform for the heads of development cooperation agencies in developing countries of the region to exchange knowledge, experience, lessons learned and good practices.

54. ESCAP launched a five-year regional capacity-building initiative through a series of regional forums to create a gender-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem, entitled “Catalysing women’s entrepreneurship: creating a gender-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem”. It is aimed at increasing access for women entrepreneurs to capital through innovative financing mechanisms and the use of business development services and financial technologies. The initiative is active in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Nepal, Samoa and Viet Nam.

55. As some emerging economies, including Indonesia, Mexico, Turkey and the Russian Federation, are intensifying their efforts to manage development cooperation, they have partnered with UNDP to strengthen their institutional capacity. In 2018, through the SSMart for Sustainable Development Goals system,²⁰ the African Solutions Platform²¹ and the WIDE Roster platform,²² UNDP ensured better access to development solutions and a national database of experts.

56. In June 2018, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IFAD and WFP launched the IFAD Rural Solutions portal, a web-based platform devoted exclusively to smallholder agriculture and rural agriculture that currently hosts over 40 innovative solutions. Within the framework of its decentralization plan, IFAD established three South-South and triangular cooperation knowledge centres, in Addis Ababa, Beijing and Brasilia, in 2018. The centres are designed to promote the exchange and mobilization of knowledge, expertise and resources from the global South to accelerate rural poverty alleviation, enhance rural productivity, advance rural transformation and promote investments between developing countries. Through its knowledge exchange platforms, FAO fosters the exchange of knowledge on poverty-related policies, strategies and programmes among countries of the South. In Latin America, WFP and the Governments of El Salvador and Peru adopted a plan to foster peer learning in social protection on shock-responsive safety nets.

57. WHO reported supporting 241 South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) continues to support the institutional strengthening of line ministries through its community of practice, with the goal of improving national governance and international cooperation for global health, as well as promoting health diplomacy and cooperation among countries. WHO is strengthening its human capacity to understand and promote South-South

²⁰ <http://global-ssmart.org>.

²¹ See www.southsouthworld.org.

²² <http://unossl.undp.org/GSSDAcademy2017/WIDE/default.aspx>.

and triangular cooperation initiatives and use the modalities as means to implement the 2030 Agenda at the country level.

58. The Latin American and Caribbean Network for Strengthening Health Information Systems²³ was established to strengthen health information systems and the availability of vital statistics. PAHO serves as its technical secretariat. The network is an open platform for learning and helps to transfer technology to participating countries.

Partnership building and resource mobilization to advance South-South cooperation

59. Member States at the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation called for enhanced partnership capturing the essence of the guiding principles of South-South cooperation.

60. More than 20 entities reported incorporating South-South and triangular cooperation elements into their capacity development and resource mobilization strategies for 2018 and beyond.

61. UNICEF field offices reported a total of 37 South-South and triangular partnerships that were formalized through a variety of agreements. For example, the Government of Thailand launched a South-South programme with UNICEF to strengthen the country's capacity as a global knowledge resource that could lend support to other countries in their own efforts to achieve the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

62. FAO has adopted a flexible approach to resource mobilization for the implementation of South-South and triangular initiatives, including funding from traditional partners, members of its several trust funds and direct financial contributions. Japan and the Republic of Korea are two of the key triangular cooperation partners that support FAO capacity development through South-South knowledge and technology transfers related to agriculture.

63. WFP is creating South-South and triangular pilot projects in the field through seed funding. For example, a contribution of \$1 million from China is being used to strengthen country capacities and drive tangible results in food security and nutrition, including technology transfers to enhance the resilience and livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

64. In the World Bank Group International Development Association 2018 report, South-South learning is highlighted as an important tool to help the world to address complex problems at all levels.

65. The Climate Technology Centre and Network is the operational arm of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change technology mechanism. UNEP hosts it in collaboration with UNIDO, with the support of a consortium of partners that are engaged in activities in over 150 countries. It promotes the accelerated transfer of environmentally sound technologies for low-carbon and climate-resilient development on a South-South and triangular basis.

66. UNEP has established several trust funds for South-South cooperation. It also established four partnerships²⁴ and is implementing 21 intraregional and interregional

²³ See www.paho.org/relacsis/index.php/en.

²⁴ The Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition, the China-Africa Environmental Cooperation Centre, the International Peatlands Initiative and the International Solar Alliance.

projects. Such activities are aimed at strengthening environmental cooperation and technology transfer to achieve nationally determined contributions.

67. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) seeks to enhance the intellectual property expertise of participating countries to promote social, economic and cultural benefits. “WIPO Match”, a tool supported by IDB, is aimed at fostering innovation and intellectual property-related projects in 57 of the Bank’s member countries, representing a market of 1.7 billion people. WIPO has partnered with some developing countries, including China and the Republic of Korea, to establish and manage funds-in-trust for the sustainability of its programmes.

68. UNOPS successfully implemented several South-South projects funded by Brazil, India and Mexico, among others. It is currently working bilaterally with Member States to raise awareness, improve utilization and support the implementation of projects that are eligible to receive funding from the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund²⁵ and the India-Brazil-South Africa Fund.²⁶ It is also seeking to advance South-South and triangular cooperation through its social impact investing initiative and through its Global Innovation Centres.

69. The Global Water Operators’ Partnerships Alliance, launched by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), promotes and supports water and sanitation utilities worldwide. It seeks to contribute to meeting national and global water and sanitation commitments and relies mostly on South-South cooperation mechanisms, on the basis of solidarity. Since its creation in 2009, more than 50 per cent of the water operators’ partnerships are South-South partnerships.

70. In 2019, as part of the network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and as a follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean, a resource mobilization strategy is being developed to establish trust funds for South-South cooperation, with the participation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the European Union, Mexico, Uruguay and the German Agency for International Cooperation, among other partners.

71. The International Trade Centre (ITC) built a network of almost 1,600 Chinese and African companies and supported the participation of African companies at major business and investment events in China. Drawing on the inputs of more than 550 East African companies, ITC also launched a publication entitled “The power of international value chains in the global South”, developed jointly with the Research and Information System for Developing Countries, a think tank based in New Delhi.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

72. More than 20 entities reported incorporating South-South elements into their project management, monitoring and reporting guidelines. Some examples are described below.

73. In 2018, UNDP used its results-oriented annual reporting to review South-South cooperation results in more than 100 of its country office collaborations with national Governments and other partners.

74. The annual reporting on the implementation of the UNICEF corporate plan and country programmes includes four strategic monitoring questions on South-South cooperation, which facilitate evaluation. In Brazil, the UNICEF country office and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency are currently developing a framework for a monitoring, evaluation and learning system for their trilateral South-South cooperation programme. The system, once fully developed, will communicate with

²⁵ See www.unsouthsouth.org/partner-with-us/india-un-fund.

²⁶ See www.unsouthsouth.org/partner-with-us/ibsa.

and feed into the global South-South support and engagement of UNICEF, as well as the larger monitoring system of the Agency, which will cover the entire spectrum of the technical South-South cooperation agenda of Brazil.

75. WFP recognizes the role of technical vetting and risk assessment and management in project design and implementation plans. There is a need to increase awareness of the importance of monitoring, evaluation and reporting of South-South and triangular cooperation at all levels.

76. IFAD emphasized the need to conduct analytics on South-South and triangular cooperation activities, financial resources and their contributions to development results. To facilitate the opening up of future opportunities for innovative collaborations, IFAD is preparing a South-South and triangular cooperation database and dashboard to be integrated into its existing corporate information systems to fill that gap.

C. Experiences and lessons learned from optimizing engagement in South-South cooperation

77. United Nations entities recognized that the sustainability of South-South cooperation interventions remained a challenge. They highlighted limited human resource capacity and monitoring gaps for projects being implemented. They also underlined the need for dedicated teams at ministries for the coordination and implementation of South-South programmes.

78. The United Nations entities also highlighted the need for continued outreach and advocacy efforts to ensure a common understanding and conceptual clarity regarding both the successes and challenges of mainstreaming South-South cooperation within the United Nations and with partners. Some lessons are highlighted below.

79. During the reporting period, FAO conducted a strategic review of more than 100 South-South and triangular projects implemented during the past 20 years. The outcome of the review, a publication²⁷ launched at the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, highlighted key lessons learned, including the importance of national leadership and ownership in South-South exchanges, the flexibility of South-South and triangular cooperation approaches within and across countries and the importance of strategic alliances and engagement with diverse groups of actors.

80. UNEP concluded that developing effective tools and compiling data to monitor, report on and evaluate the impact of South-South initiatives had been challenging. It noted that monitoring and reporting had proved more successful at the subnational level.

81. Noting that new migration dynamics necessitated strategic and expanded partnerships among developing countries, IOM recognized the need to invest resources in comparative studies along with qualitative analysis on South-South migration.

²⁷ FAO, *South-South and Triangular Cooperation in FAO: Strengthening Partnerships to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals* (Rome, 2019).

IV. Enhanced coordination and coherence of United Nations development system support for South-South cooperation

82. During the reporting period, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation supported consultations to ensure systematic inputs by the United Nations development system in the process relating to the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

83. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/237](#), the Office established an inter-agency mechanism and coordinated the work of the network of focal points for South-South cooperation across the United Nations system. It also established the South-South inter-agency group on climate cooperation and supported the implementation of the South-South cooperation action plan, which is part of the climate change engagement strategy for 2018–2021.

84. The Office served as the substantive secretariat for the preparatory process of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions. Several reports, issue papers, policy briefs and dialogues were facilitated in preparation for the conference. To inform the preparatory process, the Office facilitated the preparation of my note on it ([A/72/711](#)). To guide the deliberations and meetings leading to the Conference and to inform the intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome document, the Office also helped to draft my comprehensive report for the Conference ([A/73/383](#)), entitled “Role of South-South cooperation and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: challenges and opportunities”. The Office also supported the drafting of my annual report on the state of South-South Cooperation ([A/73/321](#)), in close collaboration with relevant focal points in various specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system. The report informed the discussions and the intergovernmental negotiations on the resolution on South-South cooperation within the Second Committee.

85. To explore policy options for developing countries to individually and collectively manage challenges and enhance benefits, the Office provided support to Member States and their groupings, at their request, for effective policy dialogues. The African Peer Review Mechanism of the African Union organized, in collaboration with the Office and with the support of IDB, a meeting on South-South technical cooperation in the context of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda, which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. In preparation for the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, the Office also partnered with ESCAP and the Government of Thailand to convene a regional consultation in which 33 countries and institutions participated. Consultations were also organized in collaboration with ECLAC and the Government of Cuba, as well as with the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The Office also collaborated with the Government of Egypt to organize a brainstorming workshop in Cairo.

86. The Office’s climate and sustainability programme continued to support Member States and strengthen the global momentum on South-South climate cooperation. The High-level Forum on South-South Cooperation on Climate Change was organized at the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Katowice, Poland, to engage the highest political leadership from the global South to promote South-South cooperation to maintain and strengthen momentum on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Together with the Commonwealth, two consultations were organized to discuss the specific peace and development challenges and learning demands of 31 countries. The Office continues its dialogue

with the secretariat and member countries of the Group of Seven Plus to implement a strong fragile-to-fragile learning strategy across continents.

87. To enhance cooperation at the regional level, the Office held the high-level forum of Directors General for development cooperation²⁸ on 30 November 2018, with the support of the Japan International Cooperation Agency and IDB. It was an occasion for practitioners to engage in the preparatory process of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and to exchange views and ideas about the themes of the Conference. The Asia-Pacific Directors General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation was convened twice in 2018. In partnership with the Department of ASEAN Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and the ASEAN secretariat, the Office issued a publication entitled *Mapping South-South Cooperation in ASEAN*, in order to compile initiatives in the region, and a paper on stemming illicit financial flows in Asia.

88. The Office successfully convened the 2018 Global South-South Development Expo, with more than 1,000 participants representing over 120 countries and more than 100 institutions. The Expo showcased over 250 South-South and triangular cooperation development challenges and 130 solutions. During the Expo a second volume of the flagship publication *Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development* was launched, featuring 107 good practices presented by Member States, United Nations agencies and other development partners.

89. To address existing knowledge gaps and respond more systematically and effectively in supporting developing countries' demands to connect and collaborate with and learn from potential partners, a global knowledge-sharing and partnership-brokering platform, South-South Galaxy, was initiated in 2018 by the Office following a consultation with over 15 United Nations entities. It was designed to ease the access of partners from the South to a broad range of knowledge, solutions, research, capacity development initiatives, experts and partners.

90. The joint project of the Office and UNDP, entitled "South-South global thinkers: the global coalition on think tank networks for South-South cooperation", established an online platform that offers think tank networks real-time opportunities for dialogue and networking, access to resources and tools, information about events, news and blogs. In 2018, think tank network members engaged in two online discussions, entitled "Investing in the Sustainable Development Goals through South-South and triangular cooperation: proven policies, legal practices and challenges" and "Role of South-South cooperation and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Eight research studies were commissioned under the initiative to strengthen evidence-based South-South policymaking processes. Two regional workshops were organized in 2018 to identify challenges and good practices in policy and legal areas. In addition, the Office signed a memorandum of understanding with the University of Buenos Aires to establish a chair of South-South cooperation at the University, a structure that will be replicated at other universities.

91. Following my request, the Office coordinated the development of a report entitled *Cooperation beyond Convention: Independent Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation*. In the report, the diversity of cooperative models and their impact on current global challenges are explored. The Office has also supported Member States, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, development partners and United Nations entities in the development of 10 publications on the theme

²⁸ The meeting was entitled "Towards the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40): the role of practitioners in scaling up the impact of South-South and triangular cooperation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

“South-South in action”, which showcase the successful policies, initiatives and activities that have led to the achievement of their development goals.

92. Capacity development initiatives on South-South cooperation included the “Youth4South” advanced young leadership programme in collaboration with various institutional partners, including IDB, UNFPA, the United Nations System Staff College, UNV, the China Institute for South-South Cooperation in Agriculture and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries. Youth4South implemented three training courses in China and Turkey focused on South-South and triangular cooperation in agriculture, rural development and reproductive health. Over 70 young professionals and officials from almost 50 developing countries in Africa, Asia, the Arab region, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States participated in the training sessions.

93. Through its regional presence, the Office is providing tailor-made, demand-driven support services for United Nations country teams and government focal points on South-South cooperation. The office for the region covering Arab States, European States and the Commonwealth of Independent States prepared four national-level stocktaking reports on trends and opportunities for South-South cooperation, two reports as part of the South-South in Action Series and a regional networking forum. Within the partnership initiative on South-South and triangular cooperation for agricultural development and enhanced food security, the Office finalized and consolidated a variety of products, including the mobile networking application for farmers, “Harvest IT”. The Office facilitated the opening of a dialogue between the African Union Commission and the ASEAN secretariat to promote interregional cooperation. The Office, through its Asia-Pacific presence, has also supported ASEAN in mapping South-South cooperation initiatives and mechanisms, as well as countries and partners in advocating their South-South cooperation good practices through the South-South in Action Series.

94. The Office continued to serve as the fund manager of the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation. It provided support to Member States and the United Nations implementing agencies of the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund and the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation, in accordance with their respective guidelines.

95. In June 2019, the Office celebrated its second successful year of funding projects in the spirit of South-South cooperation under the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund. In 2018, a Commonwealth window was established within the Fund, representing \$50 million over five years, of the total of \$150 million being provided over a decade for project financing. The Fund is supporting 36 projects, with a total commitment of \$25 million to date, approved in partnership with Governments and nine United Nations agencies in 37 countries. Countries of the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation renewed their commitment to South-South cooperation in 2018, celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of its fund. In 2018, over \$37 million was contributed, and 20 partners and 32 unique projects have been supported, including 3 new projects in 2018. The Government of Qatar provided the Office with a grant of \$564,000 through its Qatar Fund for Development to bridge digital gaps and enhance the Office’s communications and conference management capacity. The Government of China made an additional financial contribution in 2018, on top of its annual pledge to the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, to strengthen its support for South-South cooperation with a focus on poverty education.

96. In 2018, the Office strengthened mechanisms for outreach, advocacy and strategic communication to support partnership and general advocacy for South-South

and triangular cooperation constituents, partners and practitioners, increasing awareness, visibility and web traffic. The Office engages United Nations organizations and Member States through its innovative web portal, which functions as a tool to link agencies and Governments, share knowledge and undertake outreach and advocacy on issues of critical importance to the South. The portal showcases the work of numerous stakeholders in South-South and triangular cooperation, including 14 United Nations system partners to date. It facilitates enhanced engagement and cross-pollination through traditional and social media channels to share relevant information and strategic messaging in the various focus areas of all partners. To make the portal accessible to all partners, Spanish and French versions were launched in 2018, and the process to add Arabic, Chinese and Russian versions was initiated. A dedicated web page was created, and social media tools were used to disseminate news and links related to the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

97. Drawing on the mandate and responsibilities outlined in the outcome document of the Conference, the Office will lead the development of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South cooperation, support policy dialogues, programmes and capacity-building, provide support to Member States to build South-South and triangular cooperation partnerships, and enable the sharing of good practices and experiences. As the secretariat of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and its Bureau, the Office will provide its support to Member States in fulfilling the mandate set out in paragraph 24 (l) of the Conference outcome document aimed at strengthening the role of the Committee. The Office will continue its support for the strengthening of relevant public research institutions, academic institutions, think tanks, knowledge networks and relevant regional or thematic centres of excellence. It will support efforts to mobilize resources to facilitate the effective and efficient use of financial and in-kind resources for the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation and facilitate, upon request, access to South-South cooperation funds for developing countries. In line with the important role accorded to triangular cooperation in the outcome document, the Office, as the United Nations focal point, will play an important role in promoting triangular cooperation.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

98. The second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and its outcome document marked an important milestone in consolidating the role played by South-South and triangular cooperation for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals. Member States and other stakeholders unanimously highlighted that South-South cooperation shared the same vision contained in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. I encourage all South-South and triangular cooperation stakeholders to join together in implementing the recommendations of the outcome document in a manner that will advance the attainment of the Goals by 2030.

99. Countries and regions of the South are intensifying their cooperation with each other and have embraced a multi-stakeholder approach to accelerate the realization of the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, I recognize the need for strategic and inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships that will tap into the comparative advantages of different stakeholders to support the implementation of the Goals at the national, regional and global levels. I also encourage the exploration of innovative approaches, including innovative financing models, in addition to conventional funding sources.

100. South-South cooperation policy dialogues, programmes and partnerships have progressively increased in scope and significance. I welcome the deliberate effort of

United Nations entities to leverage their support for South-South and triangular cooperation through its incorporation into relevant strategic frameworks and operations, as well as in their monitoring and evaluation frameworks. I reiterate my call for United Nations entities to continue to bolster their efforts in South-South and triangular cooperation at the headquarters, country and regional levels.

101. The present report highlights a notable rise in the development of qualitative knowledge products, emphasizing South-South cooperation as one of the vehicles for the achievement of the 17 Goals. I call upon United Nations entities to further enhance advocacy and outreach measures, both within and across organizations, to sustain and expand South-South cooperation initiatives.

102. United Nations bodies and various actors should strengthen their monitoring of and reporting on progress and their accountability, while bearing in mind the specific principles and unique characteristics of South-South cooperation.

103. I welcome the efforts of some developing countries, which designed methodologies in order to follow up on and monitor the impact of their South-South cooperation activities. I encourage countries of the South to engage in consultations on the basis of the mandate of the Conference outcome document with a view to establishing non-binding voluntary methodologies to assess the impact of South-South cooperation.

104. South-South policy dialogues at the regional level are making progress on ways to accelerate the implementation of the Goals. I encourage United Nations entities to equip their regional and country offices to optimize tailor-made and demand-driven support services to government focal point institutions on South-South cooperation.

105. South-South cooperation has expanded in scale, scope and dynamism, requiring the enhanced coordination and harmonization of efforts within the United Nations system. I welcome substantive inputs being provided by United Nations entities for the development of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation through the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, coordinated by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

106. I commend countries that have partnered with United Nations entities through financing facilities and trust funds to advance South-South and triangular cooperation to address development challenges. I encourage all countries to maintain and scale up their efforts in that regard.