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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 [74/239](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-fifth session a comprehensive report on the state of South-South cooperation. The report is focused on concrete measures undertaken by the United Nations development system to expand its support to South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives of Member States at the global, regional and national levels since the release of the previous report ([A/74/336](#)), including implementation of the recommendations contained in the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and contributions to global efforts to tackle the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The report also provides recommendations for the way forward, with South-South cooperation positioned as a key modality to help to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. The report should be read in conjunction with other relevant reports prepared for the twentieth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation.

* Owing to broad consultations and to technical reasons completion of the report was delayed.



I. Introduction

1. Member States have repeatedly attested to the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation as a growing dimension of development cooperation for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed development goals.

2. With the adoption of the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, the international community decided to work together through the modalities of South-South and triangular cooperation to leverage the wealth of resources, tangible and intangible, available among countries of the global South in support of national, regional and global development efforts. In the year following the convening of this landmark conference, the United Nations development system, along with State and non-State partners, have further leveraged South-South and triangular cooperation in supporting national efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. On the basis of survey data collected by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, there has been a surge in the number of activities, as indicated in section II of the present report. Over 140 policy dialogues and more than 175 programmes and capacity-building activities were convened by 27 United Nations entities to support the unabated growth of South-South and triangular cooperation. The conclusions set out in section V indicate that, against the backdrop of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, a number of measures have served to provide direction to further leverage South-South and triangular cooperation to help countries to recover better and to accelerate the attainment of the Goals, including strengthened partnerships; abundance and uninterrupted dissemination of technology-based solutions; and innovative resource mobilization.

II. Follow-up by the United Nations entities on the implementation of the recommendations of the outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation

4. In the year since the adoption of the Buenos Aires outcome document, United Nations development system entities have taken measures to expand engagement with Member States, and enhance the role and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation with regard to achieving the Goals and other internationally agreed goals.

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

5. Out of the 27 United Nations entities responding to the survey, 6 indicated that they had a specific South-South cooperation strategy in place. Other United Nations entities illustrated diverse modalities to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation as an area of engagement into their organizational workplans and monitoring frameworks.

6. The regional commissions continued to deliver their technical cooperation, under the regular programme of technical cooperation, through policy advisory services, capacity-building activities and field projects based on the direct demand of Member States. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) leveraged such resources to encourage the exchange of experts and experiences

among its member States in building national capacity, including on disability-inclusive policies and programmes and modern information, communication and geospatial technologies (see [A/74/6 \(Sect. 22\)](#)).

7. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)¹ and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)² have included clauses on South-South cooperation in their programmes of work and budgets.

8. In May 2019, States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) adopted resolution 75/3 (see [E/2019/39](#), chap. I.A), pursuant to which the regional mandates on South-South cooperation were strengthened and the Buenos Aires outcome document was translated for the Asia-Pacific region and which served to guide the work of ESCAP in South-South and triangular cooperation in the period 2019–2020. In addition, South-South and triangular cooperation has been incorporated into the ESCAP project management guidelines for staff and is a priority criterion for the allocation of funds for capacity-building activities in 2020.

9. The six interrelated integrated signature solutions³ of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) use South-South cooperation as an important modality. UNDP has also developed a new South-South cooperation marker to be better able to track, analyse and support South-South cooperation capacities and initiatives. At the second High-level Conference, UNDP renewed its commitment to supporting South-South and triangular cooperation.⁴ As of the end of 2019, UNDP had created 60 country support platforms and 78 country accelerator labs, compared with 50 country support platforms and 60 country accelerator laboratories indicated in the previous report on the state of South-South cooperation ([A/74/336](#)), which contribute to identifying, co-creating, replicating and scaling up South-South cooperation solutions.

10. Pursuant to decision 4/1 of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and in follow-up to the Conference, the strategy of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for South-South and triangular cooperation was developed by the Policy Coordinating Unit in 2020. The strategy provides a framework for UNEP to enhance support during the coming decade (2020–2030) for Member States so that they can benefit from coordinated and coherent South-South and triangular cooperation, in order to attain the objectives of multilateral environmental agreements and the 2030 Agenda.

11. Targeted interventions have contributed to accelerating direct and indirect support by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) for South-South and triangular cooperation within the overall framework of its new strategic plan (2020–2023). Its contributions, as identified in the UN-Habitat *Country Activities Report 2019: Supporting the New Urban Agenda*, provide clear evidence of the commitment by the agency to sustainable urban development in the global South.

12. In preparations for the fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to be held in March 2021, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States has launched a South-South cooperation track to scale up South-South cooperation in the implementation of the next programme of action for least developed countries during the remaining 10 years of the 2030 Agenda.⁵

¹ See [LC/SES.37/8/Corr.1](#).

² See [E/ECA/COE/38/12](#).

³ These pertain to poverty, governance, resilience, environment, energy and gender equality; see www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/six-signature-solutions.html.

⁴ See www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/speeches/2019/second-high-level-un-conference-on-south-south-cooperation.html.

⁵ See <http://unohrrls.org/unldc-v/>.

13. In the Programme Policy and Procedure Manual of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), relaunched in February 2020, a chapter was dedicated to South-South cooperation in the section on programme design. The chapter is supported by a full guidance note on South-South and triangular cooperation and a package of tools and support services, and its impacts are monitored and reported in the annual reporting processes of the organization.

14. In 2019, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) released the “IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development”. Under the strategy, IOM will continue to train and support national and local governments in implementing the migration-related Goals and undertake initiatives to assist developing countries in achieving them, including through South-South and triangular cooperation.

15. Following the Conference, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) began to develop a new strategy that would be released by the end of 2020. In order to support countries in achieving Goal 2, both IFAD and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) devoted significant, enhanced attention to South-South and triangular cooperation with well-defined priority areas: IFAD, through its strategic framework 2016–2025 and in the eleventh and twelfth sessions of its Replenishment Consultation;⁶ and the FAO, through its medium-term plan (2018–2021) and programme of work and budget for 2018–2019 and 2020–2021.

16. The World Food Programme (WFP) has been evaluating the implementation of its 2015 policy on South-South and triangular cooperation in 2020, and key findings will inform its new strategic direction beyond 2020 as a partner for building resilience. Also, 85 per cent of WFP country offices were engaged in South-South and triangular cooperation in 2019, at the request of host governments, marking a significant increase from 48 per cent in 2014.

17. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) promulgated its policy on South-South and triangular industrial cooperation in May 2019, aiming to align UNIDO services with global initiatives and actions in the field of South-South cooperation and to enhance its capacities to leverage additional, complementary resources to support Member States in achieving inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

18. The International Labour Organization (ILO) further integrated South-South and triangular cooperation in its strategic framework through the promotion of policy outcomes, including, the ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–2025,⁷ the ILO programme and budget for 2020–2021 and the ILO strategic plan for 2022–2025.⁸ ILO also integrated activities to support South-South cooperation through 23 projects⁹ during the biennium 2019–2020.

⁶ See <https://www.ifad.org/en/replenishment>.

⁷ It was to have been finalized at the March 2020 session of the Governing Council, which was not held owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19); see www.ilo.org/gb/GBSessions/GB338/lang--en/index.htm.

⁸ Established steps include supporting regional International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations initiatives that facilitate peer learning and the exchange of knowledge, information and practices to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; ensuring a multi-stakeholder approach of South-South and triangular cooperation that promotes the decent work agenda; and widening its scope in areas such as local economic development, city-to-city cooperation, and support for the social and solidarity economy, including with the private sector, to support partnerships driven by efforts in the global South and initiatives in the world of work, among others.

⁹ While there is a focus in the tripartite approach of ILO, addressing primarily Governments, employers’ organizations and trade unions, a large number of activities also address a diversity of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, academia, international organizations and the private sector.

19. Reflecting the commitment of the World Health Organization (WHO) to enhancing South-South and triangular cooperation to support member States in achieving their health development targets, the thirteenth General Programme of Work (2019–2023) is aimed at providing countries with the scope to learn from one another and identify critical data gaps and common mechanisms to strengthen data and health information systems across the WHO membership.¹⁰ With solid political backing from the States members of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), PAHO has pushed South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation to centre stage through its strategic plan for the period 2020–2025, on the theme “Equity at the heart of health”.¹¹

20. As a result of the ongoing repositioning of the United Nations development system, offices of the resident coordinators now benefit from greater prerogatives and partnership capacities to enable United Nations country teams to leverage South-South and triangular cooperation to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda. One of the key objectives of the development system reforms – to further integrate policy and operational capacities scattered across the United Nations system – can potentially transform the system’s ability to support South-South and triangular modalities.

21. The discussions and policy insights that emerged from the Conference also contributed to the analytical work of the Development Cooperation Forum. As the secretariat of the Forum, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs prepared the report of the Secretary-General on trends and progress in international development cooperation (E/2020/10). The report covered South-South and triangular cooperation, thus providing a basis for further discussion during the next high-level meeting of the Forum, to be held in 2021.

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

22. The Buenos Aires outcome document provided both Member States and the United Nations development system with the opportunity to maximize the added value of technical and development cooperation among countries of the global South for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. As indicated below, review of the strategic actions undertaken reveals the following enabling factors: (a) participation of developing countries in global and regional intergovernmental forums and regional consultations; (b) improved policy coordination; (c) partnerships to promote regional and interregional unity and cooperation; (d) support by all actors for initiatives on information and data collection; (e) facilitation of the replication or scaling-up of the most viable solutions and/or good practices; and (f) innovative finance mechanisms.

Enhance national, subregional, regional and interregional South-South and triangular cooperation

23. The year 2019 saw a surge in the number of policy dialogues and initiatives, as a follow-up to the Buenos Aires outcome document. On the basis of the survey response, 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 Goals.

24. Through its engagement in several inter-State consultation mechanisms on migration, IOM contributed to increased dialogue between migration stakeholders at the

¹⁰ See www.who.int/choice/demography/by_country/en/.

¹¹ See <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/51599>.

bilateral, regional and global levels in the area of migration policy. Launched in 2019, the Caribbean Migration Consultations process has provided 20 Caribbean Governments and 10 international organizations with an in-depth understanding of diaspora-related activities and projects that can strengthen the link between diaspora and development, and how these efforts can link to overall national development plans. In addition, a network on diaspora engagement for development was established by the process to further improve exchanges and integration with the Caribbean diaspora.

25. In the context of its Professional Development Programme, the World Intellectual Property Organization¹² continued to prioritize South-South and triangular cooperation to address the role of effective copyright in encouraging national creativity and development and to advise on establishing or strengthening a national copyright system for the protection and exploitation of copyright works through training programmes and workshops. Following the Conference, the Programme gained momentum and organized more than 20 courses on five continents, with 71 per cent of the courses held in developing countries.

26. For sectorial interventions, UN-Habitat continued to act as a catalyst to influence urban policy reforms in developing countries by means of South-South and triangular cooperation. It used its convening power to promote dialogue among partners and practitioners in the context of the tenth session of the World Urban Forum – and in working with regional ministerial bodies – to promote mainstreaming of South-South and triangular cooperation in implementing the New Urban Agenda.

27. ESCAP continued fostering South-South cooperation through its partnership with ECLAC and the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation and by establishing a multi-donor Forum fund to support five key areas.¹³ In November 2019, the working group on South-South cooperation of ECLAC identified five areas¹⁴ of work that reflected the contribution of South-South and triangular cooperation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensured that the outcomes were disseminated among the countries of the region.

Innovative South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives to assist countries in achieving the Goals

28. Innovation in the following has resulted in a proliferation of transformative policy-related outcomes: national reviews and frameworks; investment and agricultural transformation; field projects; knowledge platforms; maternal health; older persons; and societal inclusiveness.

29. In 2019, between 10 and 22 per cent of the initiatives, under each signature solution of UNDP, utilized South-South and triangular cooperation to help countries to achieve their development objectives. A total of 113 of the 130 country offices of UNDP collaborated with national Governments and other partners in South-South and triangular cooperation activities in 2019, and in doing so supported partnerships with over 192 other countries through 1,143 initiatives. Of the initiatives, 55 per cent

¹² See the report of the Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (CDIP/25/2).

¹³ Trade and investment promotion; science, technology and innovation; infrastructure and transport; public policies and public-private alliances for sustainable growth; and public policies to reduce inequality and enhance social cohesion.

¹⁴ Strategically position South-South and triangular cooperation as a means for implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; create spaces for the coordination and sharing of experiences in risk mitigation between Central America, the Caribbean and Cuba, for example, in terms of drought, seismology and building technology and regulations; training to follow up on South-South and triangular cooperation at the local level; sharing of experiences in South-South and triangular cooperation with multi-actor partnerships (work with the academic and private sectors, among others); and training in the methodological development of projects.

focused on building capacity for South-South and triangular cooperation at the country and regional levels, 32 per cent contributed to knowledge brokering and 13 per cent facilitated partnerships.¹⁵

30. The ESCAP twinning programme for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and for the voluntary national reviews promoted stronger collaboration between developing countries and their institutions through South-South cooperation. In 2019, ESCAP piloted the programme in the countries of North and Central Asia and facilitated two sets of twinning exercises.

31. The United Nations Population Fund designed two innovative South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives targeting Goal 3 in 2019: one focused on maternal mortality reduction in African countries and the other on providing support to countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus for the establishment of their own networks of healthy aging centres aimed at promoting the physical and mental health of older persons, including the prevention of mental health illnesses.

32. In 2019, the World Food Programme (WFP) implemented three innovative initiatives for addressing country demands to facilitate South-South and triangular cooperation and to help them to achieve Goal 2: (a) South-South reviews¹⁶ that support country offices in identifying government demands and mapping concrete investment opportunities in South-South and triangular cooperation; (b) roll-out of the WFP first wave of South-South cooperation pilot projects in the field; and (c) “South-South Match.Com”, a knowledge platform that helps WFP country offices match country demands with country offers.

33. Following the Conference, FAO launched the “Hand-in-Hand Initiative” in September 2019, bringing together development actors, including countries in the global North and South, the private sector, development banks and financial institutions, to support South-South and triangular cooperation in accelerating the achievement of Goals 1 and 2.

34. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs continued to explore opportunities for systematic facilitation of South-South cooperation to implement peacebuilding plans aligned with national development strategies. Building on a side event at the Conference, the Department raised awareness and led a departmental mapping exercise to contribute to accelerating the use of South-South cooperation across the entire Department and the United Nations peace and security pillar.

35. In 2019, the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) fostered South-South and triangular cooperation by facilitating the deployment of 2,876 international United Nations Volunteers from the global South (67 per cent of all international United Nations Volunteers) to deliver on the United Nations mandate globally. They contributed their knowledge and technical skills to advance development plans, respond to emergencies and manage humanitarian crises, among other areas, while fostering national ownership.

¹⁵ The results are based on a systematic requirement of the UNDP results-oriented annual reporting process at the country level, building on country programme documents and integrated results and resources framework monitoring, using the data collected throughout the year by relevant units, for the purposes of performance assessment and lessons learned.

¹⁶ The Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries is an innovative methodology developed in-house by the World Food Programme (WFP). In November 2019, for example, the WFP country office in India conducted a review to step up the engagement with the Government of India in South-South and triangular cooperation. Recognizing the significant achievements of India in terms of food security and nutrition in recent years, WFP identified key opportunities in which the Government could share its experiences through intraregional collaboration in such areas as early warning and disaster risk reduction, social protection and school feeding, and the supply chain for emergency response.

Knowledge-sharing to galvanize efforts for implementing the recommendations of the Conference

36. With support from United Nations entities, Member States harnessed resources, including relevant knowledge networks, think tanks, and technical and research expertise, to galvanize efforts for implementing the recommendations of the Conference and internationally agreed development goals.

37. For example, in order to promote the strengthening of South-South trade cooperation, including under the Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries (see resolution 73/291, annex, para. 20), States members of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) initiated assessments of current trade and development issues and at the UNCTAD quadrennial conference planned for 25 to 30 April 2021,¹⁷ the aim will be to discuss policy options and formulate global policy responses to inject renewed impetus into revitalizing the Global System and highlight its importance as a unique platform for South-South trade cooperation.

38. The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism concluded the first-ever expert meeting on promoting South-South cooperation in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism in November 2019,¹⁸ within the context of the global project¹⁹ it launched at the Conference and contributed to the drafting of a road map for the way forward. The road map will build on the experience of the global South in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism and provide a framework for sharing successful policies and initiatives generated by the global South.

39. FAO plans to launch its revamped South-South and triangular cooperation gateway in September 2020. It will serve to promote knowledge-generation, learning, networking and the exchange of information in order to support good practices and innovations from the agrifood sector and facilitate matchmaking between seekers and providers of solutions.

40. The report entitled “Promoting health through South-South and triangular cooperation: selected WHO country case studies”, which was issued in 2019, provides examples of South-South and triangular cooperation, including in encouraging ownership by countries of the global South, promoting mechanisms for horizontal governance and decision-making, enhancing cost-effectiveness and allowing developing countries to play an important role as cooperation facilitators.

41. In 2019, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) convened the World Radiocommunication Conference, which is held every four years to review and revise radio regulations, the international treaty governing the use of the radio-frequency spectrum and the geostationary-satellite and non-geostationary-satellite orbits, which contribute to South-South and triangular cooperation.

Partnership-building and resource mobilization

42. Providing sustained financial support is integral to making South-South cooperation initiatives fruitful and impactful. More than 175 partnerships²⁰ were established for advancing South-South cooperation (directly or indirectly), while others have put in place various financing mechanisms through which South-South

¹⁷ See <https://unctad.org/en/pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=2324>.

¹⁸ See https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism.ctitf/files/20191122_Webstory_SouthSouthCoop_Final.pdf.

¹⁹ The Office of Counter-Terrorism of the United Nations launched its global project on enhancing the South-South exchange of expertise in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism between experts from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean.

²⁰ Total derived from responses by United Nations entities in the survey conducted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

and triangular cooperation are supported. Member States are increasingly engaged in such forms of financing mechanisms.

43. The ESCAP resource mobilization strategy 2020–2022 integrates South-South and triangular cooperation as a key partnership and development cooperation modality. The five ESCAP regional institutions that support its substantive divisions in their goals²¹ receive financial support from more than 25 Asia-Pacific developing and least-developed countries.

44. In April 2015, with a view to facilitating enhanced cooperation between countries of the global South and the full breadth of countries that are not members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a joint Russian Federation-UNDP trust fund for development was established, with a total capital of \$55 million until 2019. The trust fund supports development and technical cooperation activities in countries of the global South for projects in the sustainable management of water resources, area-based development, disaster risk reduction and recovery, climate change, sustainable energy and youth.²²

45. In 2019, UNIDO signed a funding agreement for several projects through a dedicated fund, the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund. Through a dedicated partnership trust fund, countries of the global South are able to support the programming and coordination of a number of projects under the Programme for Country Partnership and the UNIDO flagship event “Bridge for cities”.

46. During the 2018–2019 biennium, ILO regular budget resources allocated to South-South and triangular cooperation activities covered 44 initiatives in all five ILO regions with regional and global impacts.²³

47. ITU implemented many projects in technology transfer through triangular cooperation at the country, regional and global levels. For example, the European Commission and ITU co-financed a project entitled “Policy and regulation initiative for digital Africa” that was launched in 2019. With technology transfer from the European Commission, the objective is to create a more harmonized and enabling legal and regulatory framework across Africa for the use of information and communications technology to drive social and inclusive growth and deliver more equitable development.

III. Acceleration of efforts of the United Nations development system in furthering South-South and triangular cooperation during the coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) crisis

48. COVID-19 has affected each and every aspect of society and the economy. While countries are staggering to cope with its negative impacts, the crisis can also be viewed as a spur to innovation and the fostering of partnerships for Member States and United Nations entities as they pursue the voluntary, participative and demand-driven nature of South-South cooperation by sharing experiences and extending support. The pandemic could thus act as a key catalyst in promoting capacity development and accentuating the principles of South-South cooperation. Actions taken, including mobilization of resources and support to countries for the formulation of policies and strategies for social and economic security, have shown results on the ground.

²¹ See www.unescap.org/about/regional-institutions.

²² See www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/partnerships/russa-undp-partnership.html.

²³ See www.southsouthpoint.net/2019/10/31/south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-report-for-the-biennium-2018-19/.

49. PAHO/WHO has promoted the exchange of best practices and lessons learned in the response to COVID-19 by convening ministerial meetings with the health authorities of the Americas, and by participating in the meetings of the subregional integration mechanisms of the region, such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Southern Common Market and the Council of Central American Ministers of Health. Through frequent exchanges among representatives of PAHO/WHO, PAHO/WHO fostered institutional strengthening and capacity-building and facilitated the exchange of medicines and other medical supplies.

50. The ongoing resource mobilization efforts of FAO have focused on four main activities:

(a) Setting up a global data facility – in close collaboration with key partners such as WFP, the global Food Security Cluster and the partnership programme of the Global Network Against Food Crises – to support analysis and inform assessments and programming in contexts already experiencing humanitarian crises;

(b) Stabilizing incomes and access to food as well as preserving ongoing livelihood and food production assistance for the most acutely food insecure populations;

(c) Ensuring continuity of the critical food supply chain for the most vulnerable populations;

(d) Addressing FAO member country concerns about the effects of COVID-19 on their agricultural value chains through such projects as its first emergency project on desert locust control, a regional, South-South and triangular cooperation project on freshwater aquaculture value chain development in East European and Central Asian countries and a project in Madagascar on hybrid rice plantation.

51. Building on Goal 11 and the New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat launched its COVID-19 response plan, in which it advocates addressing the urgent needs of the urban poor in 64 countries from Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The plan has been designed to support national and local governments to exchange information on innovative local solutions to protect their populations and prevent the further spread of the pandemic.

52. UNICEF used webinars²⁴ as platforms to leverage the power of South-South and triangular cooperation to facilitate the exchange of experiences in order to promote a better understanding of the challenges faced and solutions to maintaining essential health services and social protection for children, young people and their families; learning from countries that were successful in their cross-disciplinary responses; and country-to-country learning with regard to COVID-19 responses and recovery.

53. WFP launched a service offer in South-South cooperation with a specific focus on COVID-19 in order to support the operationalization of its COVID-19 medium-term programme framework. One of the projects undertaken through a service offer, for example, was the launch of a COVID-19 South-South opportunity fund to enable WFP country offices to realize South-South opportunities with host Governments in response to COVID-19 challenges. WFP is also launching an initiative on digitizing the WFP approach and business model for South-South knowledge brokerage in the context of COVID-19, which will serve to update the WFP model for knowledge-sharing through digital solutions that can be further explored in collaboration with the Office of South-South Cooperation.

²⁴ Themes included “COVID-19 experience of countries ahead of the global curve: country-to-country learning and South-South cooperation”; “Universal health Coverage and the coronavirus disease crisis (COVID-19): challenges and responses - maintaining essential health services while responding to COVID-19”.

54. Following a virtual meeting of the Group of Friends of Least Developed Countries convened under the auspices of Belgium and Turkey, the least developed countries issued a statement on COVID-19 in April 2020, in which they addressed burgeoning challenges and their need for a global stimulus package.²⁵ They urged the global North, global South and all partners to respond to the call for a scaled-up support package and its immediate implementation.

55. The 23 South-South and triangular cooperation projects,²⁶ covering 75 countries, across the five ILO regions, and the Turin office of the International Training Centre for the 2020–2021 biennium, as well as additional global activities, were adapted to respond to the current COVID-19 crisis in both format and content. They included effective virtual components²⁷ and were adapted to address the impacts of COVID-19 on workers, as well as post-COVID recovery strategies that promote an improved “normal” through decent work.

56. The International Trade Centre facilitated South-South collaboration to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in practical ways, including the donation of rapid diagnostic tests, and the donation and knowledge-transfer for in-house production of face masks and other personal protective equipment. The report of Alliances for Action entitled “Unsung heroes: how small farmers cope with COVID-19” has helped to connect farmer cooperatives and project partners from the global South to share and identify common issues and define a framework of response targeting post-pandemic economic recovery.

57. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the ITU-Arab Office and the Union of Arab Banks partnered to launch a joint pan-Arab initiative on digital economy, finance and commerce for the Arab region, which is aimed at boosting digital economy, e-commerce, and e-payments during COVID-19 and beyond.

58. On April 2, the International Institute of Online Education was co-launched online by the International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).²⁸ The Institute successfully launched its COVID-19 response training series with two webinars; both sessions attracted the active participation of faculty members from developing countries in Africa and Asia, providing practical experiences to address educational disruption during the pandemic.²⁹

59. At the request of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean³⁰ was launched to address the economic and social impact of the pandemic. Guided by

²⁵ See <http://unohrlls.org/custom-content/uploads/2020/05/Statement-of-LDCs-on-COVID-19-Broader-FINAL.pdf>.

²⁶ Projects that have been adapted to respond to COVID-19 include South-South and triangular cooperation in the following areas: capacity-building for building statistical databases on labour migration; promoting sustainable tourism and local development in rural areas; promoting decent work in refugee and mixed migration contexts; convening of a South-South and triangular cooperation forum on skills for the future of work in the Middle East and Northern Africa; promoting financial inclusion of women in southern Africa; and promoting the inclusion of vulnerable populations in technical and vocational education and training.

²⁷ Such as online platforms for exchange, virtual meetings and training.

²⁸ See <http://en.ichei.org/2020/04/03/international-institute-of-online-education-co-launched-online-to-support-remote-learning-in-developing-countries/>.

²⁹ The International Institute of Online Education focuses on providing support for online teaching platforms, learning tools, digital resources and other topics related to teaching and learning, which will help alleviate the disruption in higher education by enhancing the capacity of teachers to adopt tools to conduct online teaching.

³⁰ See www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19.

South-South cooperation principles, it serves as a platform for sharing knowledge, experiences in the context of analytical information on the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, including on the situation of health systems, the structure of the labour market, employment, education, industry, trade and macroeconomic policy, and for monitoring the evolution of the crisis and the short-, medium- and long-term measures taken by the Governments of the 33 countries of CELAC. The Observatory is coordinated by ECLAC, with the support of the United Nations resident coordinators of the region.

60. With the COVID-19 pandemic prompting a need for cross-border solidarity, ESCAP quickly developed a framework for a socioeconomic response to COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific, leveraging regional and subregional South-South and triangular cooperation and engaging a variety of stakeholders. In order to ensure a better recovery, such cooperation was embedded in three main streams of work, including social protection and resilience; fiscal and monetary stimuli; and connectivity and support for small and medium-sized enterprises.³¹ Using the ESCAP Rapid Response Facility, the secretariat of ESCAP provided technical and peer-to-peer learning support to developing countries in Asia and the Pacific, in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, in identifying socioeconomic responses, analyses and data to respond to COVID-19.

61. The Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance, a UN-Habitat programme focused on strengthening public water utilities around the world and enhancing collaboration among them, together with thematic and regional partners, is exchanging knowledge and best practices in terms of responses to COVID-19 by water and sanitation operators. The webinars will serve to broadcast the information gathered from such operators around the world – at different phases of their involvement in addressing the pandemic and with distinct local conditions – in order to allow them to learn from one another.

IV. Advancing coordination and coherence within the United Nations development system and with Member States in support of South-South and triangular cooperation

62. As the focal point for promoting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation for development on a global and United Nations system-wide basis, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation continued to provide secretariat and policy support to intergovernmental bodies and United Nations entities to make informed and coherent decisions, including the provision of analytical reporting on South-South cooperation, and to galvanize the international community to follow up on recommendations in the Buenos Aires outcome document.

63. The Office continued to serve as the secretariat of the negotiations concerning the resolution on South-South cooperation before the Second Committee and provided policy advice and supported Member States in achieving consensus on the resolution.

64. The Office coordinated the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation and the formulation of the United Nations system-wide strategy, with the participation of over 40 United Nations entities at the global and regional levels. The strategy will be presented at the upcoming twentieth session of the High-level Committee for South-South Cooperation.

³¹ See www.unescap.org/resources/impact-and-policy-responses-covid-19-asia-and-pacific.

65. The Office also organized the eleventh high-level forum of Directors General for development cooperation in Istanbul on 13 December 2019, with the collaboration and support of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency and in coordination with the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency. The overall focus of the forum was to chart a post-Conference road map for South-South and triangular cooperation, aiming for effective institutionalization of South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development.³² Attended by over 80 Directors General for development cooperation, the forum provided an opportunity for practitioners of South-South and triangular cooperation to reflect and exchange views on ways and approaches to implement the recommendations of the Buenos Aires outcome document.

66. During the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Office engaged in 10 side events, advocating broader partnerships between different stakeholders, sustained policy dialogue and the sharing of experiences in the follow-up to Conference.³³

67. On the margins of the general debate of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, the Office, together with the Government of Argentina and other partners, co-hosted an interactive dialogue focused on strengthening the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and the follow-up to the main elements agreed upon at the Conference.

68. Pursuant to the proposal of the President of General Assembly, the Office organized a high-level meeting and interactive dialogue in January 2020 on the theme “Targeting poverty and hunger: South-South cooperation for rural food systems”.³⁴

69. On 12 September 2019, the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation was celebrated globally, highlighting a commitment to action in the follow-up to the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. Members of the United Nations development system, with the participation of the Secretary-General and the Administrator of UNDP focused on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the outcome document.³⁵

70. The Office led and coordinated the implementation of the South-South Cooperation Action Plan of the Secretary-General’s climate change engagement strategy (2017–2021). In that context, it organized the annual High-level Forum on South-South Cooperation on Climate Change during the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Madrid on 11 December 2019. The Office’s climate and sustainability programme continued to support Member States and strengthen the global momentum on South-South climate cooperation.³⁶ In 2019, it developed a series of initiatives highlighting the importance of sharing knowledge, best practices and experiences on tackling climate change in the context of the implementation of the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the implementation of the Goals.

71. The Office also convened many South-South policy dialogues and consultative processes that served as a source of ideas on how best to eradicate poverty and address other transnational challenges facing many countries of the global South. For example, under the South-South Global Thinkers initiative, it convened four policy

³² See www.unsouthsouth.org/2019/12/20/development-cooperation-agencies-chart-post-bapa40-roadmap/.

³³ Details on the events are available at www.unsouthsouth.org/2019/07/08/south-south-at-the-hlpf/.

³⁴ See www.unsouthsouth.org/2020/01/20/targeting-hunger-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-for-transforming-agriculture/.

³⁵ See www.unsouthsouth.org/south-south-cooperation-day-2019/.

³⁶ See www.unsouthsouth.org/template-item/south-south-cooperation-action-plan-for-climate-change-engagement-strategy-2017-2021/.

dialogues³⁷ with members of the Global Coalition. In addition, the Office continued its partnership with the Research and Information System for Developing Countries in India to support the Delhi dialogues in facilitating exchanges among think tanks on South-South cooperation.

72. Underscoring the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation for achieving the Goals, United Nations and regional entities fortified their support with formal agreements. UNV and the Office signed a memorandum of understanding in January 2019 for promoting volunteerism and engaging volunteers, and in September 2019, IOM and the Office signed a memorandum of understanding to support humane and orderly migration. The Regional Office of the Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology for Asia and the Pacific signed a memorandum of understanding in November 2019 to leverage technology for sustainable and peaceful development. In addition, the Office and the Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation signed a partnership agreement during the 2019 high-level forum of Directors General for development cooperation; a statement of intent was concluded between the Office, IsDB and the South Centre by which the parties agreed to work on a number of areas outlined in the Buenos Aires outcome document; and the Office and Partners in Population and Development signed a partnership agreement to expand South-South cooperation in the areas of reproductive health/family planning, population and development.

73. The Office for South-South Cooperation also largely benefitted from the cohesive and collaborative efforts of regional and interregional bodies. For example, it collaborated with the African Peer Review Mechanism and other partners on the organization of an experts meeting on the theme of a post-Conference road map on South-South cooperation for the implementation of Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The meeting emphasized the value of strategic partnerships with partners of the global South to further the process of development of Agenda 2063. As a result, the Office and Mechanism began working towards establishing a more formal partnership to further the development of Africa within the mandate of the Mechanism.

74. In 2019, the Office produced the first independent report on South-South and triangular cooperation, entitled *Cooperation beyond Convention: South-South and Triangular Cooperation in a Changing Global Context*. The report, officially launched during an event to commemorate the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation, provides a review of the history and transformation of South-South and triangular cooperation and an innovative analysis of local, regional and global cooperative initiatives undertaken in the global South to scale up the understanding of and support for models of cooperation. In addition, the Office, jointly with the Finance Centre for South-South Cooperation, produced a report entitled *South-South Cooperation in a Digital World: 2018 Annual Report in South-South Cooperation*, which provides an analysis of digital opportunities and challenges in the context of South-South cooperation.

75. By linking and connecting existing South-South cooperation platforms, South-South Galaxy³⁸ has strengthened inter-agency collaboration on South-South and triangular cooperation and has addressed the issue of the increasing proliferation of digital platforms developed by United Nations entities and other development actors.

³⁷ The policy dialogues were on the following themes: “South-South Global Thinker’s dialogue: reflections on BAPA+40 outcome document”; “Strengthening SDG 17 through South-South and triangular cooperation: plurality and the way forward from BAPA+40”; “Financing of SDGs: challenges faced by developing countries with regard to capital flight”; and “Spotlight on South-South cooperation in promoting and deepening trade and investment in Africa”.

³⁸ See www.southsouth-galaxy.org/.

Within three months of its global launch at Conference, South-South Galaxy had established itself as a fast-growing global repository of solutions and resources on South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation from over 180 registered institutions.³⁹

76. Through its regional offices, the Office supported countries and subregional and regional institutions to document, share and adapt South-South policies and practices in strengthening regional integration efforts, addressing topics of priority identified by each region. In the Asia and the Pacific region, it partnered with the Pacific Island Development Forum and launched a volume of the “South-South in Action” series, outlining the rationale and foundations of the creation of the Pacific Island Development Forum as a South-South institution, its values and its projects. In Africa, it launched a publication on the illicit financial flows in Africa, working with the Department of Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission, and organized a seminar and a side event on illicit financial flows with UNCTAD. In the Arab States, in Europe and in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region, 91 development solutions were sourced, documented and made available through South-South Galaxy, including a dedicated collection in the field of green agriculture. The Office further disseminated that knowledge through the organization of a special session of the Europe and CIS regional ministerial conference on the green economy, held in Tashkent in 2019. The session was convened under the auspices of the Office project on South-South and triangular cooperation among maritime-continental Silk Road cities for sustainable development in partnership with China Agricultural University and IFAD.

77. On a demand-driven basis, the Office supports countries in exchanging knowledge and development solutions in priority areas related to the implementation of the Goals. In that regard, it supports global and regional programmes, with coordinated assistance from the United Nations system, to engage government entities, intergovernmental organizations, non-State actors, technical institutions and individuals in cross-cutting thematic areas in advancing South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, including through the Global South-South Development Centre; the project on South-South and triangular cooperation among maritime-continental Silk Road cities for sustainable development; the Khajura Rural Municipality of Nepal focusing on South-South exchange with Yu-Xi City of China for agriculture advancement and supply chain development, supported by the WFP China Centre of Excellence; local connectivity enhancement in New-Koidu-New Sembehun, Sierra Leone; and green city development in Chust, Uzbekistan. Other programmes include the Youth4South Advanced Youth Leadership Programme; capacity development training for young government officials; academic fellowship and scholarships; youth entrepreneurship for the countries in the global South; and the Global South-South Development Expo. In addition, the Office facilitated and implemented thematic demand-driven programmes, including the Southern Climate Partnership Incubator; the South-South Cooperation on Peace and Development; and the World Green Economy Organization.

78. In 2019, the Office demonstrated growth in resource mobilization and human resource support from Member States in the context of South-South cooperation. Through trust funds and innovative programmes, it mobilized \$14.1 million and delivered \$12.3 million in non-core resources. Also in 2019, the Government of China provided \$300,000 in addition to its regular contribution, to support the South-South Cooperation Poverty Eradication Facility proposed by the Office under the overall

³⁹ The platform was introduced in the Asia-Pacific region at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Development Forum, with the support of the Government of Thailand and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and was launched in Africa in partnership with the African Union Commission and the African Private Sector Forum.

framework of the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation. The Office also mobilized \$459,000 from IFAD through the China-IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation Facility for the South-South Cooperation in Green Economy for Agricultural Development, a partnership initiative between the World Green Economy Organization, the Office and IFAD.

79. By the end 2019, the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund encompassed 46 projects that supported the national development goals of partner countries and the commitments enshrined in the 2030 Agenda on such diverse areas as climate resilience, energy, employment and livelihoods, health, gender and digital economies. The total amount committed by the Government of India by 2019 was \$25 million, including \$14 million towards approved projects and \$11 million towards proposals. In 2019, India made an additional allocation of \$14 million for CARICOM countries and \$12 million for Pacific island countries, under the India-United Nations Fund. The Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation supported 18 additional small grants projects in 2019 and focusing on small-scale, impactful catalytic projects, in particular in the production and sharing of knowledge and support for capacity-building in 143 countries. Another project, which serves to strengthen regional architecture in South-South and triangular cooperation, is helping 26 countries of the Latin American and the Caribbean region through subregional cooperation agencies.

80. The fifth International Meeting on Triangular Cooperation organized by OECD in Lisbon highlighted the need for a mindset shift from ad hoc project approaches to inclusive partnerships. As a follow-up, the Office moved forward with the implementation of the recommendations in the outcome document on triangular cooperation, working closely with all stakeholders and creating new partnerships with over 15 entities,⁴⁰ including, the Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation, the Colombian Presidential Agency for Cooperation, IsDB and the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

81. The Office rolled out an enhanced communications strategy, 2019–2021, that leverages both traditional and innovative interactive electronic tools, such as social media, for sharing compelling stories and promoting interaction among stakeholders. In particular, the strategy serves to advocate for the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda; articulate the Office policy, mandate and core areas of work; position the Office as a facilitator of partnerships to increase the understanding and visibility of practical expressions of solidarity in the global South; and provide standard operating procedures in the dissemination of information on demand-driven initiatives and projects relating to South-South and triangular cooperation within the United Nations system and among partners in all regions.

82. The need for South-South and triangular cooperation has never been greater than today, when all countries around the world are collectively putting up their greatest fight against COVID-19. The Office has continued to provide 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. The India-United Nations Development

⁴⁰ For example, the Facility for Capacity Development through South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Science and Technology is now in its second phase, supported by the Republic of Korea; the global green economy agenda is being supported through a project with the World Green Economy Organization, based in the United Arab Emirates; with a secondment from the Pacific Islands Development Forum, a Pacific subregional office of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation was created in Suva; and the Government of Thailand seconded three officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Asia-Pacific regional office of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

Partnership Fund, managed by the Office,⁴¹ is working rapidly to support projects responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in five countries, and leveraging the strengths of the United Nations system to fast-track and implement transformative projects upon the request of national Governments.

83. The International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology and the Office are teaming up, in particular to map and share developing country responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in the areas of science and technology. The Centre and the Office are preparing joint publications that will help Member States, United Nations entities and other partners to feature and share policies, programmes and initiatives. The immediate focus is on strategic recovery, facilitating ways to tackle the new challenges associated with COVID-19, while assisting Member States to achieve development goals. The Office also cooperated with partners such as IsDB to support African and Arab countries in addressing the adverse effects of the pandemic.

84. South-South Galaxy conducted a mapping of health authorities, mainly the ministries of health, across countries of the global South, including their responses and efforts to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of the mapping exercise is to provide a dynamic repository of efforts to address the outbreak and enable countries to quickly access information, compare practices and learn from one another through South-South knowledge exchanges. The mapping also includes official donation platforms established by Governments, where available. These exercises will facilitate the scaling-up of efforts and allow countries of the global South to adequately mitigate the risks of the pandemic ahead of time.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

85. The present report has shown that there is a marked increase in the number of policy dialogues and partnerships on South-South and triangular cooperation. It is encouraging to see that Member States and other stakeholders are taking more and more interest in South-South and triangular cooperation and are willing to coordinate their collective actions towards the implementation of the Buenos Aires outcome document recommendations. I encourage all actors of South-South and triangular cooperation to continue their engagement in this regard, benefitting from the generation of evidence-based knowledge on South-South and triangular cooperation to inform their policy dialogues.

86. I encourage Member States to provide their full support to United Nations entities, specifically towards the establishment and/or strengthening of centres of excellence in the global South and think-tanks, and I encourage those organizations to increasingly support closer collaboration for the development or strengthening of their collaborative networks, joint work programmes and financing mechanisms.

87. Ensuring adequate resources is a crucial element for the achievement of the Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, in particular in 2020, with the start of the decade of action. I invite United Nations entities, regional bodies and multiple stakeholders to strengthen their efforts in mobilizing resources to accelerate the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the countries of the global South.

88. National institutions for the promotion of South-South and triangular cooperation are key instruments for the utilization of the great potential of these modalities of cooperation for sustainable development. In this regard, I invite United Nations entities and other stakeholders to support the efforts of developing countries

⁴¹ See www.unsouthsouth.org/2020/04/29/india-un-development-partnership-fund-building-pandemic-responses-through-south-south-collaboration/.

in building the needed human and institutional capacities to formulate and implement national development policies, strategies and programmes for South-South and triangular cooperation. Capacity-building is also critical to meet the common goal of ensuring optimal impact for countries and their people, through inclusive and sustainable investments that help to leave no one behind.

89. While the COVID-19 pandemic has posed many health, economic and social challenges to developing countries, many of these countries have put in place and implemented policies that have proven effective in limiting the spread of the pandemic and in addressing its economic and social impacts. I encourage countries of the global South to share their experiences and expertise in this regard by using different United Nations platforms, including the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation.

90. Countries of the global South have shown solidarity through the modality of South-South cooperation in order to limit the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. I encourage such countries and their partners from the global North and other stakeholders to harmonize their support by using United Nations mechanisms, including the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation.

91. I am encouraged by the fact that United Nations entities have provided critical support to the countries of the global South in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic and social consequences. United Nations entities remain committed to continuing their coordinated and transparent actions in helping those countries to recover better through the economic recovery and the protection of livelihood that take into account the long-term objectives of reducing the likelihood of future shocks and improving the resilience of societies.
