



South-South cooperation for development

Distr.: General
11 May 2023

Original: English

High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation

Twenty-first session

New York, 30 May–2 June 2023

Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

Measures taken by United Nations organizations to implement decision 20/1 of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation through support for South-South and triangular cooperation to bolster human solidarity and accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Global South and beyond

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to decision 20/1 of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. It provides an overview of the support provided by United Nations organizations to South-South and triangular cooperation from June 2021 through March 2023. It presents multiple examples of ways in which United Nations organizations have expanded the scope and reach of their South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives reflecting their respective mandates and comparative advantages in addressing the challenges facing the global South. An encouraging development over the past two years has been the growing momentum of United Nations organizations to further institutionalize South-South and triangular cooperation as an integral part of their policies, strategies and programmes, indicating that those modalities can complement, without replacing, other forms of development cooperation. The report concludes with several recommendations to enhance South-South and triangular cooperation through stronger institutional mechanisms and partnerships, inclusive of civil society, academia and the private sector.

* SSC/21/L2/Rev.1.

** The present report was submitted for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.



I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted in response to decision 20/1 of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, makes clear that many United Nations entities have continued to integrate support for South-South cooperation into their policies and workplans in addition to strengthening related institutional mechanisms. Their operational work has supported national institutions and networks of Member States to advance South-South and triangular cooperation and has fostered capacity development in addition to transfer of technology, while raising funds and forging partnerships for the same purpose. The report thus highlights the renewed dynamism of South-South cooperation as developing countries collaborate in efforts to address current crises, recover and build forward better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In that context, it presents numerous South-South initiatives that Member States could build on as they envision more robust action plans during their deliberations at the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit, the South Summit and the Summit of the Future in 2024. Doing so would leverage the renewed commitment of developing countries to South-South cooperation and energize measures to eradicate poverty and accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. At the time of the twentieth session of the High-level Committee, the COVID-19 pandemic was at the forefront of concerns and the Committee emphasized the importance of interdependence, solidarity, multilateralism and equity in addressing the pandemic and the pre-existent climate change crisis. These principles still apply in addressing not just the ongoing impacts of the pandemic but also economic and gender inequalities and challenges posed by the war in Ukraine and other conflicts that have caused inflation, food and energy shortages, debt and an immigration crisis.

3. The effects of such shocks have underlined the important role that South-South cooperation can play to address the deteriorating conditions for millions of people of the global South. According to the Multidimensional Poverty Index of 2022, 1.2 billion people in 111 developing countries live in acute multidimensional poverty and half of them are children under the age of 18.¹

4. Amid the challenges, regions and countries of the global South have emerged as leading voices of global governance, as champions for new platforms and institutions to address these crises, and as agents of development action for the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed development goals. As underscored during the fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Doha in March 2023, the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in supporting the least developed countries is of the utmost importance in order to confront global challenges and achieve the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. Equally important is South-South cooperation aimed at meeting the specific needs of other countries in difficult development circumstances, such as landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries.

5. The present report highlights numerous actions and initiatives undertaken by the United Nations development system as part of an ongoing search to expand multilateral solidarity through South-South and triangular cooperation in support of the 2030 Agenda. Section II responds to the High-level Committee's requests for information on the integration of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation into the policies, strategies and workplans of United Nations organizations. Similarly,

¹ United Nations Development Programme and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2022: Unpacking deprivation bundles to reduce multidimensional poverty* (New York, 2022), p. 2.

section III reviews the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation into the operational work of United Nations organizations. Section IV highlights progress in supporting Member States to better manage their own networks and institutions, focusing on effective policies and programmes for South-South and triangular cooperation. Section V reports on initiatives by United Nations organizations to promote greater access by developing countries to digital and other enabling technologies. Section VI looks at United Nations support to COVID-19 response and recovery through South-South and triangular cooperation, while section VII reviews the ongoing challenges and progress in mobilizing resources in support of South-South and triangular cooperation. Finally, section VIII offers some conclusions and recommendations for consideration by the High-level Committee.

6. The information in the present report is illustrative rather than exhaustive. In preparing the report, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation relied on the information from 20 United Nations organizations that responded to its survey carried out in January/February 2023.

II. Continued integration of South-South and triangular cooperation into the policies, strategies and workplans of United Nations organizations

7. The survey conducted by the Office for South-South Cooperation showed that, since the previous reporting period, a significant number of United Nations development entities had further integrated South-South and triangular cooperation into their policies, plans and strategies at all levels.

8. All five United Nations regional commissions supported policy dialogues and adopted South-South and triangular cooperation as a core approach to working. For example, the Economic Commission for Europe technical cooperation strategy and resource mobilization strategy now incorporate South-South and triangular cooperation.

9. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Strategic Plan for 2022–2025, its integrated results and resources framework and related development indicators include South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as fundamental approaches to development cooperation and as integral to the way in which UNDP works and monitors progress at the global, regional and country levels.

10. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) strengthened South-South and triangular cooperation as modalities of engagement and results accelerators under its strategic plan for 2022–2025, along with robust indicators to guide country programming. Its strategy includes specific guidance and data collection requirements for South-South and triangular cooperation.

11. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) rolled out its South-South and triangular cooperation implementation plan for 2022–2025 in early 2022. In the plan, South-South and triangular cooperation are key implementation modalities of initiatives such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, the work of FAO on food loss and waste and on water and drylands and the One Country One Priority Product five-year programme.

12. In 2022, the World Food Programme (WFP) started updating its earlier 2015 policy on South-South and triangular cooperation, based on the recommendations of an independent evaluation in 2021. The process, which included a survey of more than 300 internal stakeholders and an information session with the WFP Executive Board, will be finalized in June 2023.

13. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) adopted a new South-South and triangular cooperation strategy in December 2021 dedicated to increased partnerships across the global South for improved sharing of knowledge and innovations and greater policy engagement. Its flagship modality of engagement with member countries, country strategic opportunities programmes, now systematically incorporates South-South and triangular cooperation elements as complementary mechanisms to improve national development plans.

14. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has included in its 2022–2026 medium-term strategic plan a focus on the role of WIPO in facilitating and strengthening horizontal cooperation among its Member States and in ramping up efforts leading to improved South-South and triangular cooperation. The WIPO Development Agenda Coordination Division acts as the main focal point to deal with and follow up on its South-South and triangular cooperation activities.

15. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) established its Office of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in early 2022 to lead, promote, coordinate and support the endeavours of the organization in the field of South-South and triangular industrial cooperation. The Office operates under the direction of the Director General and the Chief of Cabinet.

16. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has continued to support the implementation of its strategy for cooperation among countries for health development, which strengthens South-South and triangular cooperation at the country and subregional levels by increasing the funds for the strategy's funding mechanism.

17. In 2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) advanced South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as key components of its mandate and strategic direction. For example, IOM acknowledges that most migrants move within the global South and its strategy for the Pacific for 2022–2026 highlights the need to enhance South-South and triangular cooperation, promote knowledge exchange and strengthen policy harmonization across the Pacific, particularly regarding the transnational elements of human mobility related to climate change and disasters.

18. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction recommended to the Chair of its support group that South-South and triangular cooperation be part of its mandated priorities, which was approved in 2021 and is now in force.

19. The strategic framework of the Office for South-South Cooperation for 2022–2025 is now being implemented across work programmes for three interlinked, interdependent outcomes: (a) advancing South-South and triangular cooperation policymaking and implementation; (b) strengthening the capacity of United Nations entities to provide support for South-South and triangular cooperation to developing countries; and (c) enabling developing countries to implement the 2030 Agenda through harnessing South-South and triangular cooperation knowledge exchange and capacity development and facilitating technology development and transfer.

20. In coordination with the Development Coordination Office, the regional commissions and the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, the Office for South-South Cooperation is well advanced in the preparation of guidelines to implement the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development for United Nations country teams and regional collaborative platforms, the regional commissions and the regional offices of United Nations entities and programmes. The objective is to support the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation into the common country analyses and the United Nations sustainable development

cooperation frameworks under the leadership of the United Nations resident coordinators.

21. As the guidelines are being finalized, United Nations entities are already applying them to ensure that their country programme documents are informed by the system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation. Similarly, the Office for South-South Cooperation is working with the regional commissions and the Group of Friends of the Voluntary National Reviews to compile a handbook to support the documentation for voluntary national reviews submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The handbook will provide guidance on the incorporation of South-South and triangular cooperation into the preparation of the reviews.

22. During the reporting period, the Office for South-South Cooperation has coordinated the implementation 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 in collaboration with the Development Coordination Office. It has also developed indicators that are included in the indicators of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group common output indicators to monitor South-South and triangular cooperation in the work of the United Nations country teams. Furthermore, it has strengthened efforts to streamline data collection to track progress in the implementation of the strategy through ongoing monitoring processes, such as the quadrennial comprehensive policy review surveys of partner-country Governments, United Nations entities and resident coordinators conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

23. Most United Nations entities incorporate specific references to indicators or activities related to South-South and triangular cooperation into their country programme documents. For example, UNDP has introduced a South-South cooperation marker into its reporting systems and in 2021, 80 per cent of UNDP country programme documents cited activities focusing on South-South and triangular cooperation. UNFPA, like UNDP, now has a specific South-South and Triangular Cooperation Office. In addition, it has focal points designated in the regional offices and some country offices. Its corporate planning and programming system is now also able to collect data on planned South-South and triangular cooperation activities and programme expenditures in all offices. Accordingly, 57 per cent of UNFPA country programme documents now mention South-South and triangular cooperation activities. In the case of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 75 out of 128 UNICEF country programme documents as well as 64 per cent of the UNICEF field office annual reports included activities focused on South-South and triangular cooperation.²

24. All WFP country strategic plans approved in the period 2021–2022 reflect South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as key engagement modalities. WFP established specific targets for areas of the Sustainable Development Goals, including social protection, nutrition, school feeding, smallholder support and emergency preparedness. Accordingly, WFP created centres of excellence in several countries that were expanded to incorporate a virtual-exchange methodology on South-South and triangular cooperation activities, initially focusing on COVID-19-related travel restrictions and then expanded to other priorities. In 2022, WFP investments in internal South-South and triangular cooperation capacities were significant enough to enable moving from a smaller specialized team to a dedicated 10-staff member South-South and Triangular Cooperation Unit in WFP. The Unit

² The data on South-South and triangular cooperation programming in United Nations entities are derived from a survey conducted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation in January/February 2023.

provides guidance and coordinates WFP South-South and triangular cooperation work. It also provides guidance to the network of South-South cooperation focal points in 11 headquarters technical units and all six regional bureaux.

25. IFAD and UNIDO have developed guidelines to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation into country programme documents and operational procedures. Of the IFAD country programmes, 27 include either planned or implemented South-South and triangular cooperation activities. UNIDO adapted its internal operational strategy on South-South and triangular industrial cooperation and improved its internal reporting mechanism on projects relating to South-South and triangular cooperation. Seven of its ongoing country programme documents and three programmes for country partnerships thus now fully incorporate South-South and triangular cooperation components.

26. FAO, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have ensured that their country programme documents are informed by the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation, while other organizations, such as UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), are in the process of updating their programme guidance documents to do so.

27. PAHO reported that 22 regional, subregional and country entities had incorporated South-South and triangular cooperation into their 2021–2022 operational plans. Focal points have been identified in PAHO country offices and subregional programmes to facilitate and coordinate the exchange of information on South-South and triangular cooperation.

28. In the light of decision 20/1 of the High-level Committee and in line with the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation, the new Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation will work closely with the United Nations development system to advance the implementation of the strategy. The functions of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on South-South Cooperation are an integral part of her terms of reference as Director.

III. Continued programmatic support by United Nations organizations for South-South and triangular cooperation activities of Member States

29. United Nations programmatic support for Member States' policy dialogues, capacity development, advocacy and other South-South cooperation initiatives has also become more systematic.

30. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) convened 442 knowledge-sharing events, which brought together a wide range of stakeholders from developing countries and promoted Southern home-grown solutions and good practices to accelerate inclusive, resilient and sustainable achievement of the 2030 Agenda. ESCAP also established a Sustainable Development Goals help desk to assist Member States in the Asia-Pacific region to develop effective strategies, methodologies, tools and institutional mechanisms for implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Goals. The help desk serves as the primary tool for providing ESCAP support for Member States in priority areas such as integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, stakeholder engagement and effective follow-up and review.

31. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) organized 50 knowledge-sharing events with integrated South-South cooperation components.

The Regional Collaborative Platform for the Arab States, including its issue-based coalitions, held four high-level events, 16 joint advocacy events and 14 capacity-building events in 2021.

32. In 2022, UNICEF China co-organized 13 policy dialogues and partner events on child-centred international development cooperation, climate change and youth engagement, disaster risk reduction, and water, sanitation and hygiene. It co-hosted, with the Ministry of Emergency Management of China, an event during the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Australia, where the knowledge hub for South-South cooperation, disaster risk reduction, innovation and technology was launched. Similarly, following formal requests for cooperation with Brazil from the Governments of Burundi, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Rwanda, UNICEF Brazil and the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office supported a technical mission to Brazil. The mission, hosted by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, increased understanding of the experiences of Brazil in water and sanitation. Areas identified for cooperation included the management and regulation of simplified sewerage systems and solid waste.

33. UNFPA facilitated transfers of population census technology across Africa and between countries in Africa and Latin America, which not only strengthened the capacity of the national census institutions but also reduced the cost of undertaking the censuses. In addition, it supported the intergovernmental organization Partners in Population and Development in South-South and triangular cooperation advocacy, strengthened legal frameworks and capacity-building for its partner country coordinators. In that regard, UNFPA assisted 27 States members of Partners in Population and Development in the review of their work on South-South and triangular cooperation for population and development and reproductive health at the national level.

34. UNIDO implemented 203 projects in 2022 that applied South-South and triangular cooperation as part of the implementation modality. In addition, UNIDO and the Ministry of Commerce of China signed a new agreement on the initiative to enhance UNIDO South-South and triangular industrial cooperation services for strengthening industrial partnerships among countries of the global South. That agreement is intended to increase the ability of UNIDO to form partnerships, mobilize resources and support its member States in South-South and triangular industrial cooperation. Overall, UNIDO continued to prioritize capacity-building with the UNIDO Centre for South-South Industrial Cooperation.

35. During 2022, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) supported numerous countries of the global South through a series of initiatives and projects. The initiatives presented different manifestations of South-South cooperation, which is a key part of the UNCTAD mandate. For example, UNCTAD supported the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to develop an online investment facilitation portal, which serves as an integrated information portal on all investment facilitation measures in ASEAN member States. UNCTAD was also part of a task force assisting the African Union and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement in the development of the Protocol on Investment to the Agreement. Likewise, it continued to support the Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries in strengthening South-South trade. It supported the development of a regional eTrade Readiness Assessment and an e-commerce strategy for the Economic Community of West African States. The UNCTAD eTrade for Women initiative enabled women digital entrepreneurs across Africa and the Arab States region to benefit from business and leadership skill-building workshops and enhanced access to policymakers through policy dialogues.

36. UNDP continued to expand its support for intraregional and interregional South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives across various development areas during 2022. For example, the Regional Bureau for Arab States launched a project on sustaining peace through insider mediation in Arab States in Jordan, Lebanon and the Sudan, creating a regional network of inside mediators for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge-sharing. Through a regional project on anti-corruption and integrity in the Arab countries, the Bureau facilitated 10 South-South exchanges among seven Arab States. The Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific enhanced the adaptive human and technological capacities for disaster preparedness in Pacific Island countries, focusing on national meteorological and hydrological services that have enabled seven countries to be more resilient to the risks and impacts of climate change and disasters.

37. In 2022, WIPO held an expert round table on fostering South-South and triangular cooperation in the context of the WIPO development agenda. The round table brought together beneficiaries and supporters of development agenda projects to share their experiences and expertise in order to encourage South-South and triangular initiatives in the field of intellectual property. The WIPO Technology and Innovation Support Centres continued to provide innovators and researchers in developing countries with access to locally based, high-quality technology information, related services, programmes and training resources that helped them to better understand and use intellectual property in the research and development and technology contexts. To date, WIPO has established more than 1,200 such Centres.

38. In 2022, the International Labour Organization (ILO) continued to strengthen the capacities of its tripartite constituencies to promote access to decent work while utilizing South-South and triangular cooperation in Brazil, China, India and Panama, among other countries. Since 2020, ILO has launched 70 South-South and triangular cooperation projects across five regions, covering 85 countries and global activities. The projects have promoted peer exchanges in areas such as employment services, migration, women's economic empowerment, employment policies, combating child labour, green jobs, occupational safety and health, sustainable tourism and disaster risk reduction.

39. In 2022, all nine country strategic opportunities programmes adopted by IFAD included a dedicated South-South and triangular narrative, identifying potential areas of collaboration as well as partners for South-South cooperation. IFAD has adopted three main approaches to promoting knowledge and policy exchange among member developing countries. The first is through global and regional knowledge-sharing events and platforms. The second consists of intercountry learning and exchange visits designed for national or local decision makers. The third targets capacity-building and training at the project level. In 2022, more than 100 South-South and triangular knowledge-exchange activities were organized, reaching over 1,200 direct beneficiaries facilitating the sharing of knowledge and experiences.

40. In 2022, UN-Habitat accelerated the implementation of activities on mainstreaming sustainable urbanization through trilateral and South-South cooperation, an integrated global project funded by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency. The project targets selected middle- and low-income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, including Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cabo Verde, Colombia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Paraguay, Sao Tome and Principe and Senegal. The demand-driven approach of this project creates opportunities in beneficiary countries, mainly for municipal administrations, civil society organizations and residents of cities.

41. PAHO has promoted knowledge and technical exchanges through the third edition of the training booklet titled "Transitioning to complex risk management and

resilient urban futures: harnessing South-South cooperation and learning from COVID-19”, which was jointly developed by the Office for South-South Cooperation, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the World Health Organization (WHO) and PAHO. More than 1,300 local participants joined the training, which is currently available on the OpenWHO website. In 2022, 15 good practices supported by PAHO were documented in two publications; one, a special edition dedicated to Sustainable Development Goal 3, was jointly compiled by UNFPA, UNICEF, PAHO and the Office for South-South Cooperation.

42. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, through the Peacebuilding Support Office, continued to support the strengthening of South-South and triangular cooperation in the Department, drawing on the capacities and roles of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. In 2022, the Peacebuilding Commission played a pivotal role in facilitating the exchange of good practices on peacebuilding in conflict-affected countries in the global South and the global North. At the Global South-South Development Expo in 2022, the Department and UNDP organized a joint event on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development and sustaining peace. The event demonstrated the added value of South-South and triangular cooperation for peacebuilding by showcasing initiatives implemented by the global South in India and Sierra Leone.

43. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Capital Development Fund and UNDP, through their joint programme on inclusive and equitable local development, have supported the Kakonko District Council in the United Republic of Tanzania in the development of a cross-border market that provides a safe space for women from Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania to trade and exchange ideas. This has improved their livelihoods and security, unlocked their leadership potential and promoted regional economic cooperation.

44. The Office for South-South Cooperation, in partnership with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and other United Nations entities, published a report that mapped 50 good practices in South-South and triangular cooperation among small island developing States. A partnership between the two Offices, together with the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the Qatar Fund for Development, relating to reporting on good practices focused on the priorities of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in least developed countries. In addition, the Office for South-South Cooperation, in collaboration with UNDP, codified over 50 Africa-based South-South good practices.³ Those publications facilitated and promoted peer learning and collective efforts among the countries of the global South in addressing development challenges and building resilience.

³ UNDP, United Nations Capital Development Fund and Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, *Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development in Small Island Developing States: Advancing the SAMOA Pathway and Achieving Sustainable Recovery* (UNDP, 2021); and UNDP, United Nations Capital Development Fund and Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, *Good Practices in South-South Cooperation in Least Developed Countries: from the Istanbul Programme of Action to Achieving Sustainable and Resilient Development* (2022).

IV. Support for Southern networks and institutions

45. The recommendation to establish or strengthen national and regional institutions for the management of South-South and triangular cooperation is among the most impactful recommendations in the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. Without such institutions to improve public service delivery and address other needs, many promising action plans cannot come to fruition. The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic spurred United Nations entities to design and implement innovative South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives through online networks, knowledge platforms, distance learning and virtual training.

46. The South-South Galaxy platform, the United Nations system-wide and global platform for knowledge-sharing and brokering of partnerships in South-South and triangular cooperation, had over 550 registered institutions by the end of 2022, representing a 24 per cent increase from 2021. The platform presents a curated digital repository of over 900 good practices in South-South and triangular cooperation that cut across all of the Sustainable Development Goals, including responses to the pandemic. These good practices illustrate how South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation are leveraged to tackle local development challenges through peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges across different sustainable development issues and geographical areas.

47. UNDP supported countries in key areas such as fostering an enabling environment at the country and regional levels for South-South and triangular cooperation through its regional hubs and country offices and establishing a global South development solutions network and exchange. It published its country office guidelines for developing national strategies on South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation. The guidelines support UNDP staff in assisting national institutions to develop and implement their national policies on South-South cooperation in line with the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and to strengthen the national ecosystem for South-South cooperation. The UNDP finance hub for Africa brought together over 300 participants from 52 African countries to share experiences on integrated national financing frameworks. That resulted in 20 Government-endorsed action plans on integrated national financing frameworks, Sustainable Development Goal budgeting and public financial management, together with a map for future South-South exchanges on reforms related to integrated national financing frameworks.

48. The United Nations Capital Development Fund used the Better Than Cash Alliance to encourage Member States to actively promote South-South and triangular cooperation by providing a platform to foster cross-country learning on digitizing payments for basic public services among countries of the global South; boost opportunities for and use of local economic development; access climate finance; and cultivate regional and pro-poor market development approaches to financial inclusion.⁴

49. FAO supported individual and organizational capacity development mainly in the formulation, implementation, coordination and scaling up of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation programmes to meet national development objectives. For example, it established a triangular cooperation project among China, the Netherlands (Kingdom of the) and FAO to enhance the understanding, research

⁴ Additional information on the Better Than Cash Alliance is available at www.betterthancash.org.

and training capacities of Chinese partners regarding South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation.

50. IFAD provided a \$1 million grant to the Government of Morocco to implement a country-led South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation programme and pursue a leadership role in sharing its expertise with other African countries. The grant was aimed at promoting policy, value-chain development and the adoption of the agricultural growth pole concept⁵ in Côte d'Ivoire and Madagascar. IFAD provided financing to leverage the South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation centre of excellence in Ifrane, Morocco, and to scale up the success achieved in Madagascar to other countries, such as Burkina Faso and the Niger.

51. The Office for South-South Cooperation collaborated with the International Organization of la Francophonie to facilitate economic opportunities in agriculture in which the Office facilitated exchanges between agriculture-related businesses in African countries and those of other regions of the South, focusing on cotton, textile sectors and cashew production, processing, export and pricing. In partnership with the African Union Development Agency under its rural futures programme, the Office technically and financially supported the third Africa Rural Development Forum in 2022, which led to the launch of the operational strategy to implement the Blueprint for the Implementation of Rural Transformation Policies in Africa and the sharing of lessons on South-South cooperation.

52. The eleventh Global South-South Development Expo was held in Bangkok from 12 to 14 September 2022. Co-organized by the Government of Thailand, ESCAP and the Office for South-South Cooperation, it was convened in a hybrid format, allowing for innovative forms of Southern-led knowledge-sharing. Representatives of more than 30 United Nations entities, 150 governments, other multilateral organizations, civil society institutions, the private sector and academia showcased evidence-based development solutions and initiatives that are being implemented for recovery from the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Over 4,000 South-South and triangular cooperation stakeholders participated in the Expo activities onsite and virtually, and more than 1.5 million participants were reached on social media.

53. In both the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and decision 20/1 adopted by the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation at its twentieth session, States underscored the need for evidence of the impacts of South-South and triangular cooperation and encouraged initiatives for information and data collection. Furthermore, the General Assembly, in paragraph 12 of its resolution [77/185](#) on South-South cooperation, welcomed the development of an initial conceptual framework for the measurement of South-South cooperation.

54. At its fifty-third session, the Statistical Commission adopted Sustainable Development Goal indicator 17.3.1 on additional financial resources mobilized for developing countries from multiple sources, for which the conceptual framework provides a data source.⁶ As a result, a voluntary conceptual framework for measuring South-South and triangular cooperation is now in place. UNCTAD, as a co-custodian of the indicator with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,

⁵ Agricultural growth poles (agropoles) are agricultural zones where farmers are trained and their farms are provided with roads, electricity and irrigation systems, among other things. For additional information, see Francine Picard, Mohamed Coulibaly and Carin Smaller, "The rise of agricultural growth poles in Africa", Investment in Agriculture Policy, Brief No. 6 (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2017).

⁶ UNCTAD, webinar on measuring South-South cooperation in the context of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 17.3.1, 19 July 2022.

was asked to coordinate work on the framework, including on global reporting and capacity-building, under the leadership of Southern countries and based on country-owned mechanisms. The focus of this support is to share resources and experience and spearhead dialogue to empower Southern countries to report their own data for debates and decisions related to development support and help them to mobilize resources for recovery from the pandemic and for making progress towards the 2030 Agenda. UNCTAD also collaborated with the Office for South-South Cooperation and the Statistical Commission to establish a specific data reporting mechanism for South-South and triangular cooperation.

V. Support provided to facilitate access by developing countries to digital and other enabling technologies

55. Digitalization and mobile technologies, linked with other forms of information technologies, have begun to transform global development on a large scale, paving the way for institutional reform and inclusive growth. Despite the risks posed by digitalization, such as its use to spread misinformation and disinformation, Governments, companies and individuals are paying growing attention to the power of digitalization to improve both the delivery of services, including access to education, health care and key information by institutions of all types, and access and inclusion for many marginalized groups, such as youth, women, children and others being left behind.

56. Several United Nations organizations are responding to this challenge through programmes and strategies using South-South and triangular cooperation platforms. Such platforms can be an important avenue for mobilizing the required national and international resources and spurring capacity-building and knowledge-sharing, as was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

57. The Economic Commission for Africa, through its initiative on digital identity, digital trade and a digital economy for Africa, supports the Africa Union Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030) by promoting the provision to all Africans of a digital identity for accessing economic and social services, accelerating the role of digital technologies in African trade and expanding the role of digitalization in Africa in the light of the increasing importance of information flows as part of the global economy.

58. UNESCO supported developing countries in their response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting South-South cooperation in the response to COVID-19 in the sphere of education by facilitating distance learning and developing smart classrooms through the UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education in Beijing, the Smart Learning Institute of Beijing Normal University, the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education and the Institute of International Online Education.

59. The UNDP Digital Strategy 2022–2025 lays out the approach of UNDP to supporting digitalization in the global South. It outlines the role of UNDP across the public and private sectors as well as its role in being an active contributor to discourse on inclusive digital ecosystems and digital public goods. UNDP convenes global digital development conversations while aggregating and leveraging its insights from its presence in countries of the global South. For example, it supported the Aspire to Innovate programme in Bangladesh, including a South-South component with the objective of sharing digital-based development solutions in public-service innovations with other countries of the global South. It is facilitating effective Southern collaboration through knowledge-sharing, peer-to-peer learning, capacity-building, technical cooperation and technology transfer rooted in the practice of

matchmaking. For example, the national portal, empathy training and service process simplification have been introduced in the Philippines and the tracker for the Sustainable Development Goals used in Bangladesh has been adapted in Bhutan. Furthermore, the teaching factory concept from Nanyang Polytechnic in Singapore has been adapted in Bangladesh.

60. At the programme level, an example of support is the joint initiative of ITU and the Office for South-South Cooperation to hold a digital innovation challenge on responses to COVID-19. It identified innovative digital solutions that can assist countries, societies, communities and institutions of the global South to deal with the cascading effects of the pandemic. The challenge, which promoted South-South cooperation by replicating or scaling up 12 innovations with partners of the global South, concluded in 2022.

VI. United Nations support to COVID-19 response and recovery through South-South and triangular cooperation

61. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, policies and programmes to prevent the spread of the disease and promote recovery were central to the policy dialogues, publications, knowledge-sharing events and exchanges of best practices in which United Nations organizations engaged with the global South. UNDP, for example, provided technical leadership in the socioeconomic response to the pandemic.

62. ESCWA organized many policy dialogues and workshops on leveraging public governance and exploring innovative solutions to address the COVID-19 pandemic in the Arab States region, including a high-level meeting on supporting persons with disabilities in the region during the pandemic. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) compiled the measures and policies adopted by the 33 countries of the region to confront the effects of the pandemic. It also supported the development of a series of intergovernmental consultations and assessment studies to analyse the economic and social impacts of COVID-19 at the national level and in specific sectors. In addition, ECLAC organized seminars, policy dialogues and meetings for Governments to share their good practices and discuss challenges regarding the pandemic and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

63. The development of national deployment and vaccination plans was led by WHO and UNICEF, with support from United Nations country teams, under the overall leadership of the respective resident coordinators. Efforts were also made to ensure that South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation were mainstreamed across the 121 United Nations socioeconomic response plans at the country level. UNDP played a key role in that regard and, in 2020 alone, South-South and triangular cooperation projects accounted for about 17 per cent of all UNDP COVID-19 projects, with more than 60 per cent of them focused on health system support, inclusive and integrated crisis management, and governance. In addition, UNDP issued a report on African South-South and triangular cooperation responses to COVID-19 and beyond in which it stressed the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation in addressing COVID-19 and other development challenges.⁷

64. Supported by the African Union and the World Bank, the African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team initiative was a demonstration of African regional cooperation in which African Union member States collectively purchased vaccines to safeguard the health of the African population, leveraging a \$2 billion facility provided by the African Export-Import Bank. IFAD, through its rural solutions portal, shared

⁷ UNDP, *Accelerating COVID-19 Recovery through Ushikamano wa Pan-Africa: a South-South and Triangular Cooperation report* (2022).

innovative practices and experiences to mitigate the adverse impact of the pandemic and increase the resilience of agriculture and food systems. More than 60 solutions were available on the platform to support knowledge-sharing and future contributions to the COVID-19 response. The China-IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation Facility designated \$4 million to support the generation and exchange of innovative solutions, approaches and methodologies for post-COVID-19 recovery.

65. WHO supported the establishment of the first COVID messenger RNA technology transfer hub in South Africa. The initiative, which was designed to scale up production and access to COVID-19 vaccines and other medical products, includes the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility partners, Biovac, Afrigen Biologics and Vaccines and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

66. The Office for South-South Cooperation, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Islamic Development Bank, in collaboration with the Government of Thailand and ESCAP, co-organized the high-level forum of directors general for development cooperation, held in September 2022 on the theme “Strengthening South-South and triangular cooperation institutional capacity and ecosystem for a sustainable and resilient future in the context of COVID-19 and other global crises”. The event provided specific recommendations on ways to address capacity-development demands and priorities of Southern countries to move forward South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development at all levels.

67. PAHO convened exchanges of good practices and lessons learned in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in collaboration with UNFPA, UNICEF and the Office for South-South Cooperation through virtual sessions on universal health coverage, essential health services and the strengthening of health-care systems around reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health.

VII. Resource mobilization to advance South-South and triangular cooperation

68. During the current reporting period, United Nations entities continued to play a catalytic role in attracting a wide range of partners to financially support South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives.

69. The latest ESCAP resource mobilization strategy integrates South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as key components of partnership and development cooperation. In this regard, ESCAP and China collaborated under an overarching fund and cooperation framework called the China-ESCAP cooperation programme.⁸ Accordingly, 23 developing and least developed countries in the Asia-Pacific region provided financial support to five ESCAP regional institutes to implement capacity-development programmes and promote South-South exchanges on agricultural mechanization and machinery, technology transfer, information and communications technology for development, data and statistics, and disaster information management.

70. In 2020, ESCWA mobilized resources from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development based in Kuwait and created an extrabudgetary fund for a number of ongoing projects. In 2022, ESCWA continued to mobilize resources from external partners and donors to support developing and least developed Arab States.

71. The UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States has a portfolio of programmatic engagements with many strategic donor

⁸ For additional information on this joint programme, see www.unescap.org/partners/working-with-escap/donors.

partners including Czechia, Slovakia and Türkiye that test and implement various forms of South-South and triangular cooperation, including resource mobilization and operational models for engagement with the private sector.

72. At FAO, in addition to allocations from the core budget, substantial non-core financial resources are dedicated to South-South and triangular cooperation through voluntary contributions. In 2021, 15 FAO South-South and triangular cooperation projects across five regions were funded by a number of bilateral partners from the global South and North.

73. IFAD established 51 partnerships to advance South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, for which more than \$10 million in South-South investments were raised. In addition, over 30 experience- and knowledge-sharing and capacity-building workshops were held on sustainable agriculture, rural finance, water management and market access, among other topics. To strengthen partnerships and engagement at the global level, IFAD created the Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization Division. The South-South and Triangular Cooperation Unit within the Division is dedicated not only to facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation but also to cultivating partnerships and resource mobilization.

74. UNICEF implemented 17 South-South and triangular cooperation projects that helped to prevent maternal and child deaths during the pandemic, reaching over 12 million beneficiaries across 17 countries in Africa and Asia. With support from UNICEF China, for instance, 13 projects in health, education and COVID-19 and emergency responses were completed in 2022.

75. PAHO has also supported resource mobilization efforts of countries and the development and implementation of initiatives financed by South-South and triangular cooperation funding mechanisms, including the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund and the Regional Fund for Triangular Cooperation with Partners in Latin America and the Caribbean of the German Agency for International Cooperation. PAHO has designated focal points at the regional level to support country offices in the promotion and implementation of South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives.

76. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) completed the procurement and installation of solar-powered freezers in the Marshall Islands through the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund. UNOPS purchased almost 57 tons of dehydrated food and 319 water purifiers that were shipped to countries facing a humanitarian crisis (Belize, Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Honduras, Kiribati, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Suriname, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tuvalu, Ukraine and others). The project also included delivery of more than 3.5 million doses of vaccines to the Governments of Angola, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Maldives, Mozambique, Nauru and Trinidad and Tobago. Another delivery of almost 20 tons of medicines was sent to Ecuador, Lebanon, Saint Lucia and Ukraine, and 8,000 tons of rice were shipped to Lebanon and Mozambique.

77. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, through the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, manages the Peacebuilding Fund that supports projects to share knowledge and experiences, as well as skills development, relating to peace within and across regions. For example, a climate security project in the Pacific helped to strengthen knowledge exchange between Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu in addressing the security threats linked to climate change.

78. The United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) mobilized resources to fund the services of 133 volunteers for South-South knowledge-sharing and also generated funding for the innovative UNV Africa women health champions initiative.⁹

79. Finally, the Office for South-South Cooperation continues to manage the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation; the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund; the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation; and the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation. While leveraging South-South cooperation mechanisms to deliver results in developing countries addressing all the Sustainable Development Goals, these funding mechanisms have also supported the advancement of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development. They have also enabled the United Nations development system to collaboratively support the implementation of South-South cooperation activities across the global South. These Southern funds substantially increased their delivery by 27 per cent from that of the 2019–2020 biennium, delivering \$30,164,008 in the period 2021–2022. The number of countries that benefited from the support of these funds towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals reached 85 during the reporting periods of 2021 and 2022, including 27 least developed countries, 28 small island developing States and 10 landlocked developing countries. For example, during the period 2021–2022, the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund supported 44 countries across the global South, including 15 least developed countries, 27 small island developing States and 7 landlocked developing countries, through 49 projects. Through the introduction of a guidance tool on the mainstreaming and integration of South-South cooperation, these funds have also served as vehicles to strengthen capacities of project teams at the country level on South-South cooperation while promoting and enabling South-South exchanges, transfers and network building. Beyond country-level projects supported under the funds managed by the Office for South-South Cooperation, two global projects, with a strong focus on capacity development, technology transfer and skills training, are facilitating South-South cooperation among technical institutions, centres of excellence and cities. A triangular cooperation facility is benefiting lower Mekong Basin countries.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

80. The present report has presented multiple examples of ways in which United Nations entities have expanded the scope and reach of their South-South and triangular initiatives from an internal institutional perspective and in terms of the implementation of projects and programmes across numerous sectors, reflecting the different mandates of the various agencies and entities. An encouraging continuing trend is the growing momentum of United Nations entities to fully institutionalize South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as integral parts of their policies, strategies, programmes and projects to move South-South and triangular cooperation from the margins into the mainstream of development cooperation.

81. In 2023 and in the run-up to 2030, the challenges that pose ongoing risks to Southern countries will require even more reflective thinking outside the box that can lead to new and innovative ways to expand the models and approaches to South-South and triangular cooperation. Common challenges confronting most Southern countries on such matters as food security, health, education for all, gender and income inequality, the digital gap, access to clean and affordable energy, debt relief and climate change are not being addressed quickly enough.

⁹ See www.unv.org/unv-recruiting-africa-women-health-champions.

82. The United Nations development entities will continue to expand efforts to institutionalize and operationalize institutional South-South and triangular cooperation mechanisms, especially at the country level, as integral components of development cooperation. All United Nations entities can replicate existing innovative uses of funding mechanisms, centres of excellence and well-defined partnerships directed towards South-South and triangular cooperation, with the guidance and support of the Office for South-South Cooperation where necessary.

83. By the same token, the operationalization of South-South cooperation within and among Southern countries should benefit from having dedicated human and institutional capacities. Experience has shown that this would further enable them to institutionalize South-South cooperation, design and implement their own South-South programmes and initiatives, and attract resources. In this regard, the Secretary-General calls upon the entities of the United Nations development system to respond positively to requests for support from Member States.

84. Similarly, more concerted efforts are required to involve Southern civil society organizations and academia in the cross-border fertilization of ideas and approaches, including the pooling of human and financial resources, since these actors are at the frontlines of achieving sustainable development, particularly at the local level.

85. Likewise, there is a need to find pioneering ways to facilitate much greater participation of the private sector of the global South in South-South and triangular cooperation as a source of funding and for knowledge-sharing and skills transfer. Much more concerted attention is required to address the financial shortfall for South-South and triangular cooperation by identifying new financing partners of the South and the North.

86. Attention is also needed to better identify the kinds of funding and institutional support required to confront the development challenges at the individual country level that can best be supported by Governments and the private sector through South-South and triangular cooperation. The multifaceted challenges in developing countries will continue to require commitment to multilateralism and solidarity in order to help those countries and communities that are the least able to help themselves.

87. United Nations entities will seek to leverage further the benefits offered by South-South and triangular cooperation alongside more traditional forms of development cooperation, notably in improved alignment to address local conditions based on cross-country or cross-regional similarities. Ongoing challenges facing the global South demand concerted, bold and measurable actions that Member States should articulate at the upcoming global summits towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.