

## SECTION 3. INTEGRATING SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

This section of the Guidelines focuses on the operationalization of the South-South and triangular cooperation strategy at the regional level. Its primary audience is staff of the regional Development Coordination Offices (DCOs), regional commissions, members of the regional collaborative platforms (RCPs), and staff of the regional offices of specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and other regional UN entities.

### 3.1 Regional context

According to the Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System<sup>24</sup>, “At the regional level the UN development system is comprised of two main actors - regional offices of UN entities and Regional Economic Commissions. As set out in ECOSOC Resolution 2020/23 on progress in the implementation of the QCPR, the inter-agency work is mainly organized through Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs), the main internal UN-wide collaboration platform for sustainable development at the regional level. Taken together, the UN development system at the regional level is collectively responsible for providing integrated and coordinated support to countries for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda within their region through regional and cross-border analysis and initiatives aligned with national development needs and priorities, and for translating, adapting and contextualizing global policy. The regional UN development system is collectively accountable to support UN country teams and Resident Coordinators to achieve the results set out in their Cooperation Framework as the most important instrument for the planning and implementation of UN development activities in each country.”

The present Guidelines focus on the key processes where regional UN entities may play a critical role in:<sup>25</sup>

- (a) facilitating, catalysing and accelerating nationally designed or regional South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives through the work of the regional collaborative platforms;
- (b) supporting regional, subregional or interregional mechanisms as well as policy advocacy and development initiatives that have a South-South and triangular cooperation dimension;
- (c) facilitating the identification, documentation and exchange of knowledge and experiences of successful development solutions from the South using South-South and triangular cooperation tools and platforms, including digital platforms, for country-to-country or region-to-region learning and cooperation; and
- (d) facilitating the establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize resources to finance regional South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives.

With the purpose of capacitating UN entities at the regional level to respond to member-country demands to address specific development challenges in the region through South-South and triangular cooperation, the guidelines will also provide examples of South-South and triangular

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<sup>24</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/MAF%20-%20Final%20-%202015%20September%202021.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> UN, [United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024](#).

cooperation support structures that can be established within the regional UN entities, how South-South and triangular cooperation can be integrated as specific implementation modalities, and how regional UN entities are facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation.

Pertaining to UNOSSC, the work of its former regional offices is now being coordinated by a Headquarters unit, which will continue to support regional cooperation initiatives, based on demand from Member States or regional mechanisms and the efforts by resident coordinators, UN country teams (UNCTs), the Development Coordination Office (DCO) and all other regional UN entities to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation into all UN operational activities for development. The closure of the UNOSSC regional offices means that UNOSSC will increasingly need to collaborate and work with DCO and the regional commissions to leverage their regional presence and strengths for effective support to Member States and regional organizations on South-South and triangular cooperation.

### 3.2. South-South and triangular cooperation at the regional level

While previous sections of these guidelines presents general definitions and guiding principles of South-South and triangular cooperation, the following paragraphs focus on how these definitions and principles apply to the work of regional UN entities.

According to the 2016 Framework of operational guidelines on UN support to South-South and triangular cooperation *“United Nations support for South-South and triangular cooperation at the regional level is beneficial when targeted at initiatives to better foster capacity development through intraregional sharing of knowledge, expertise and technology; the adoption of joint negotiation positions; and the pooling of financial and other resources. Such support should be integrated into existing efforts towards regional integration through related regional frameworks, cooperation programmes, treaties and agree”ents...”*<sup>26</sup>

In order to distinguish between what may be recorded and reported on as South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives and the more regular work of UN regional entities, it may be useful to come back to the very rationale, principles and primary objectives of South-South and triangular cooperation. Thus, one of the chief principles of South-South cooperation is that it should be conceived as **a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South**, borne out of shared experiences and sympathies, for the purpose of contributing to their national well-being, their national and collective self-reliance, and the attainment of development goals, including the 2030 Agenda. Another distinctive feature of South-South cooperation is that its **agenda must be driven by the countries of the South**.

### 3.3 South-South and triangular cooperation programming at the regional level

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<sup>26</sup> See UN, High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, [SSC/19/3](#), May 2016.

### 3.3.1 Regional collaborative platforms (RCPs)

#### *What's new?*

The RCP is a new mechanism established in the five regions<sup>27</sup> that replaced the former Regional UNDG and the Regional Coordination Mechanism. The RCP is a platform for collaboration intended to enable consistent joint planning and collaboration by the entire UN development system (UNDS) present at the regional level, aiming at the effective deployment of resources and capacities in support of country action in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda.

The RCPs work to identify and build regional strategic partnerships around the collective support of the UN to the 2030 Agenda that address country needs and priorities as well as transboundary challenges. They are expected to be **key regional mechanisms for effective, coherent and systematic integration of South-South and triangular cooperation**, providing a mechanism for adapting the UN system-wide South-South and triangular cooperation strategy and action plan to the regional specificity and context for achieving greater policy coherence and collaboration.<sup>28</sup>

Within the RCP architecture, **regional issue-based coalitions (IBCs) are one of the main vehicles of the substantive work** that RCPs can offer to country teams, rallying UN system-wide expertise in an agile manner in response to changing regional and country needs. Because they respond to specific needs and priorities of countries in each region, their thematic interests vary according to the policy priorities in each region but South-South and triangular cooperation can be useful implementation modalities to support the work of all of them<sup>29</sup>.

#### **Box 3. Linking regional expertise to UNCT needs**

According to the Report of the Chair of the UNSDG on the Development Coordination Office (April 2022), two-thirds of UNCTs in the Asia and the Pacific region benefited from support from the RCP IBCs in 2021. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the IBC on human mobility has supported UNCTs on cross-border responses to movements of migrants and refugees.

**Table 2. List of issue-based coalitions, by region (as of November 2023)**

<p><b>Africa:</b> Strengthened Integrated Data and Statistical Systems for Sustainable Development; Ensuring effective and efficient macroeconomic management and accelerated inclusive, economic transformation and diversification; Education, Innovation, Digitalization, and Youth; Fostering Climate Action, Resilience and Food Systems; Towards Peace, Security, Respect of Human</p>	<p><b>Europe and Central Asia:</b> Youth and Adolescents, Sustainable Food Systems; Health and Well-Being; Gender Equality; Environment and Climate Change; Social Protection; Large Movements of Populations, Displacement and Resilience</p>
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<sup>27</sup> RCP for Africa; RCP for the Arab States; RCP for Europe and Central Asia; RCP for Asia and the Pacific; and RCP for Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>28</sup> UNOSSC, Regional Rollout Webinar for UN Entities in Europe and Central Asia on the UN System-wide Strategy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Its Action Plan: Summary report, January 2022.

<sup>29</sup> UN, Secretary-General, [Report of the Secretary General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system \(A/77/69–E/2022/47\)](#), July 2022.

Rights, and Forced Displacement; Sub-regional initiatives and strategies (cross-cutting)	
<b>Arab States</b> Climate, Food security and Environment; Gender Justice and Equality; Humanitarian-Development-Peace; Economic Management; Inclusive Social Services; Migration; Social Protection; Youth Employment and Empowerment	<b>Latin America and the Caribbean:</b> Climate change and Resilience; Equitable Growth and Financing for Development; Governance for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; Human Mobility
<b>Asia and the Pacific:</b> Raising ambitions on climate action and air pollution; Building resilience; Promoting Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment; Inclusive economic growth and COVID-19 recovery	

**Regional Peer Support Groups (PSGs)** The Regional DCO chairs the Regional Peer Support Group for the region with a dotted reporting line directly to the RCP chair. PSGs are responsible for **quality assurance of the UNSCDF design roadmap, common country analysis (CCA) and the UNSDCF** document and for supporting the UNCTs to ensure regional and transboundary issues are integrated into the CCA and the UNSDCF. These groups can play an important role in promoting South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives at the country and regional levels. Refer to [Checklist 11](#) for suggested quality assurance questions on integrating South-South and triangular cooperation into CCAs and UNSDCFs.

***How can South-South and triangular cooperation support the work of RCPs?***

Of the functions assigned to RCPs (fig. 3), some can be efficiently supported through South-South and triangular cooperation. Five such functions are examined in further detail in the following paragraphs.

Figure 3. Regional collaborative platforms: Key functions<sup>30</sup>



Key areas where South-South and triangular cooperation can add value to the work of RCP members include the following:

- **Capacity development:** Facilitating mutual learning and horizontal exchanges of knowledge and experience between national institutions and institutions from other countries or regional institutions are effective capacity development tools.
- **Policy dialogue:** Facilitating regional South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives to promote coherent regional policy dialogues and respond to challenges related to SDG achievement or to regional integration issues is integral to UN System work at the regional level.
- **Knowledge-sharing:** The facilitation of knowledge-sharing initiatives at the regional, subregional and/or interregional level that identify development approaches and exchange good practices from the global South, including through intergovernmental regional-entity mechanisms, is an efficient way to build the capacity of regional public institutions, academic

<sup>30</sup> UN, Sustainable Development Group, [Management and accountability framework..., Consolidated version](#), 15 September 2021.

institutions, think tanks, knowledge networks, centres of excellence and resource centres of the South.

***What are the relevant RCP processes for South-South and triangular cooperation integration?***

**RCP/PSG/IBC support to UNCTs.** At the national level, the UNCTs are expected to actively facilitate South-South and triangular cooperation, as requested by Government partners, complementing official development assistance.<sup>31</sup> As stated earlier, the UNSDCF planning process and the preparation of the CCAs are crucial steps during which discussions on South-South cooperation and/or triangular cooperation, as a suitable option(s), consistent with nationally defined strategic priorities, can be discussed and agreed upon). In the whole process leading to the finalization of the CCAs and UNSDCFs, the UNCTs may seek support or technical expertise from the regional DCOs, from the regional offices of UN entities or from the RCPs (see box 3).

One of the quality criteria used by Peer Support Groups (PSGs) to review CCAs is cross-border and regional dimensions, that is, does the CCA examine the status and trends of cross-border and regional challenges and opportunities and their implications and potential for SDG achievement.

**The RCP programming process.** Each year, RCPs and their IBCs prepare **common workplans** informed by the priorities of Member States in the region and the demands from UNCTs, as reflected in the UNSDCF.

These **RCP workplans** represents a **key entry point for integrating** South-South and triangular cooperation at the regional level.

**Box. 4 Example of ECE participation in the UNSDCF**  
The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is a signatory to 17 UNSDCFs in its region, providing technical cooperation support in the implementation of ECE norms, legal instruments and standards to the UN programme countries at the national level and ensuring linkages in the work of the ECE with other UN entities. In 2019–2020, the ECE was actively engaged in the deployment of 11 new UNSDCFs through the provision of expertise during CCA preparation, participation in strategic prioritization retreats and providing quality assurance through the inter-agency Peer Support Group (PSG).

The identification of South-South and triangular cooperation opportunities may start with a discussion among RCP members on **how South-South and triangular cooperation could be suitable options** to respond to the requests for policy and capacity-building support by Member States in the region or to contribute to regional SDG targets. Next, the **review of existing or new CCAs and UNSDCFs** may help to identify specific requests for support through South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives from UNCTs or may be the foundation for mapping the specific capacity gaps that have been identified at the country level and that can be addressed through South-South and triangular cooperation. CCAs would also be a source for identifying capacity assets available in other countries in the region or across other regions.

Further, the **mapping of successful Southern solutions**, good practices, experiences, knowledge, expertise and technologies that are the most promising for South-South and/or triangular cooperation and country-to-country learning can also help with the identification of relevant responses to country needs through South-South and/or triangular cooperation. In regions with low

<sup>31</sup> UN, Sustainable Development Group, [United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: Internal guidance](#), 3 June 2019, p. 8.

general awareness of, and collaboration on, South-South and triangular cooperation, the RCP can also play a useful role in helping to **organize regional advocacy, outreach and communication events**.

Finally, and considering that a growing number of MICs **are developing their capacities and willingness** to contribute to the attainment of the SDGs as providers of expertise or capacity-building support, it is expected that regional UN entities will increasingly be called upon to play a catalytic role in the efforts of these countries **to share their knowledge, technical expertise and successful Southern solutions** in their region and/or beyond. Such support should also be reflected in the RCP workplans.

Beyond the RCP workplan, **subregional multi-country frameworks** can help to increase the relevance and efficiency of the support provided by regional UN entities and present additional opportunities to identify relevant South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives. Such frameworks offer a coherent framework for UN support to the coordination of knowledge and experience sharing, facing similar risks, challenges and opportunities with countries in other regions. A good example is the UN

#### Box 5. UN multi-country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the UN multi-country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for English and Dutch-speaking countries (2022–2026) was conceived for the following purposes, including:

- leveraging regional synergies while remaining relevant at the national level;
- adopting collective approaches to common challenges such as climate change and COVID-19; and
- deepening regional and triangular cooperation and improving the effectiveness of UN technical cooperation.

The new framework builds on lessons learned from the first UN multi-country SDCF for English- and Dutch-speaking countries (2017–2021). The rationale for a single UN multi-country SDCF originated from the realization that there were overlaps in the areas of work of a number of (then) UNDAFs.

The development of the first framework started in 2015 with an initial consultation of concerned national governments and UN agencies, followed by a multi-country assessment and a series of separate national consultations. That preparatory work culminated in the strategic prioritization workshop with governments, regional organizations and civil society that resulted in the identification of four priority areas. Countries' initial concern that their national needs could be lost in a regional approach were addressed through the preparation of individual country implementation plans that translated the regional strategic plan into actions on the ground.

multi-country SDCF for English- and Dutch-speaking countries (box 5).<sup>32</sup>

**RCP monitoring and reporting.** In response to the Secretary-General's call for annual reporting on system-wide results at the regional level, the annual *Regional Results Report of the UN System* is intended to provide an overview of regional challenges and regional responses of the UN system in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The annual *Regional Results Reports of the UN System* are presented to the annual **Regional Forums on Sustainable Development** for member countries' review of regional results and further guidance on priority areas for joint assistance in the

<sup>32</sup> UN, Sustainable Development Group, «18 Countries, 18 UN agencies and one goal: Sustainable development in the Caribbean», UN in Action, Action 2030 Blog. Available at <https://unsdg.un.org/latest/blog/18-countries-18-un-agencies-and-one-goal-sustainable-development-caribbean>.



implementation of the 2030 Agenda. These reports also inform reports submitted to the Economic and Social Council at the global level.

To date, reporting on South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives has not been a strong feature of the first *Regional Results Reports of the UN System* published in 2021. While specific regional UN entities may continue to have their own South-South cooperation publications, it is expected that future Regional Results Reports of the UN System will include examples on South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives **jointly facilitated by the UN system at the regional level** in line with the provisions of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development endorsed by the Secretary-General's Executive Committee. Indicators to help to measure progress in implementing the UN system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation have also been included in the annual QCPR surveys and a UNOSSC-managed survey (see section 4 on monitoring and reporting).

***What are the key steps to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation into relevant RCP processes?***

[Checklist 12](#) summarizes how South-South and triangular cooperation may be integrated into the key RCP-managed processes described earlier.



### 3.3.2. Regional Commissions

#### *What's new?*

Founded through individual General Assembly and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) mandates, the five regional commissions<sup>33</sup> aim to foster economic integration at the subregional and regional levels, to promote the regional implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed sustainable development goals, and to support regional sustainable development by bridging economic, social and environmental gaps among member countries and subregions.<sup>34</sup> To achieve these objectives, the regional commissions **promote multilateral dialogue, knowledge-sharing and networking at the regional level**; work to promote intraregional and interregional cooperation; and provide a multilateral platform for governments.

Within the new UN regional architecture, the Executive Secretary of the Regional Commission now also serves as co-Vice-Chair, together with the UNDP Regional Director, of the respective regional collaborative platform.<sup>35</sup> This means that, together with DCOs and the regional offices of UN entities, **regional commissions play a significant role in the preparation and roll-out of the RCP workplans.**

#### *What are the relevant processes for the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation?*

Among the many processes managed by the regional commissions, a few already include strong South-South and triangular cooperation features by virtue of their nature (e.g., when they involve capacity-building through technical assistance among countries of the South), while others may offer the potential for further strong South-South and triangular cooperation mainstreaming. These processes are briefly described below.

**Regional Forums on Sustainable Development.** The regional commissions convene annually regional forums on sustainable development in close cooperation with the regional UN system, including in consultation with RCPs. The regional forums on sustainable development are focused on practical value addition and peer learning and represent **key regional platforms for policy debate and exchange of good practices on SDG implementation.** As intergovernmental mechanisms, they provide a space for Member States in each region to discuss policy actions, practical solutions and challenges. By means of these forums, the regional commissions facilitate Member States consensus on regional roadmaps for implementation of the SDGs, peer review mechanisms, the setting of norms, and examination of opportunities to strengthen national institutional frameworks for coordinated implementation of the SDGs.<sup>36</sup> The forum adopts inter-governmentally negotiated political declarations, and the summary of its Chair provides the official input of the region for the high-level political forum (HLPF) held annually under the auspices of ECOSOC for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level.

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<sup>33</sup> UN Economic Commission for Africa; UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; UN Economic Commission for Europe; UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; and UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

<sup>34</sup> UN, Sustainable Development Group, [Management and Accountability Framework...](#), Consolidated version, 2021, p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> UN, ECE, ["Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE Region"](#).

By and large and given the strong orientation towards the exchange of knowledge on successful solutions from the South, these regional forums may qualify as South-South and triangular cooperation. However, focusing on the theme of South-South and triangular cooperation in the roundtable on SDG 17 and other SDGs as well as organizing specific **side events on South-South and triangular cooperation alongside the regional forums on sustainable development** can be an effective way to: (a) raise awareness of South-South and triangular cooperation and promote them as useful development instruments; (b) map and match the demands and supply for capacity development services and technical support among regional participants; (c) initiate the establishment of new South-South and triangular cooperation partnerships between side-event participants; and (d) ensure that South-South and triangular cooperation are mainstreamed across all the other SDGs.

**Subsidiary bodies.** To date, two regions have established subsidiary bodies dedicated to the facilitation or promotion of South-South cooperation. Thus, among the nine subsidiary bodies of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) tasked to “examine various public policy issues in the region, facilitate cooperation and peer learning based on the sharing of experiences [and] adopt regional stances in their respective areas of competence...the **Regional Conference [on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean]** was established by resolution 752(PLN.36) adopted by the member States of ECLAC at the thirty-sixth session of its Committee of the Whole in December 2021.”<sup>37</sup> To provide for faster, more effective and efficient regional responses, in consonance with the major changes being faced by the world and the region, this subsidiary body replaces the former Committee on South-South Cooperation established in 2004. The Regional Conference will hold regular meetings every two years at the headquarters of ECLAC in Santiago in years alternating with the sessions of the Commission.

**Box 6. Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean** aims to:

- (a) “strengthen national South-South cooperation mechanisms and possible linkages with North-South and multilateral cooperation”;
- (b) “further South-South and triangular cooperation among regional and extra-regional stakeholders, including donor countries and international organizations, to facilitate technology and knowledge transfer and joint activities in the field of cooperation”;
- (c) “examine the experiences of South-South and triangular cooperation in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean...in conjunction with the relevant subsidiary bodies”.

UN, ECLAC, “Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean”. Available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/about-eclac/subsidiary-bodies>.

A different arrangement was established in the Asia-Pacific region. In June 2018, the *Regional Consultation on South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific*, convened by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), UNOSSC and the Government of Thailand, established the **Asia-Pacific Directors General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation (“DG Forum”)**. This Forum plays an important role in shaping the region’s perspectives and promoting innovative partnerships and approaches to make South-South cooperation more

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.cepal.org/en/about-eclac/subsidiary-bodies>.

effective and demand-driven (see box 7). The fourth meeting of the Asia-Pacific DG Forum was held in Bangkok in September 2022 in conjunction with the eleventh Global South-South Development Expo<sup>38</sup> and the 2022 United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation. Hosted jointly by ESCAP and UNOSSC, these events have provided an opportunity for member States to discuss more concrete measures in the region for leveraging and enhancing the role of South-South cooperation **as a key modality for sustainable recovery from the pandemic and for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

#### **Box 7. Asia-Pacific Directors General Forum on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (DG Forum)**

Since 2018, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), working with the UNOSSC Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, has been providing a regional platform to facilitate South-South and triangular cooperation among its 62 member States and associate members and address development challenges and opportunities. Leading up to the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40), ESCAP jointly established the DG Forum with the Government of Thailand and UNOSSC in June 2018. Every year since then, the regional DG Forum brings together the heads of development cooperation and South-South cooperation agencies and units of ESCAP member States to share experiences and good practices and provide a venue for facilitating collaboration on issues related to South-South and triangular cooperation.

The third Asia-Pacific DG Forum, held virtually in November 2020, brought together Directors General and other stakeholders from 23 countries in Asia and the Pacific to share experiences concerning their responses to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and exchange information on national and regional actions to build back better.

At the fourth Asia-Pacific DG Forum, held in 2022, the South-South Cooperation Connector was launched and demonstrated. This tool developed by ESCAP serves as a one-stop shop that addresses the need for a regional platform that can document good practices, bridge the demand-and-supply gaps of technical cooperation, and promote networking and collaboration through communities of practice. In addition, the Forum endorsed the formation of three working groups to: (a) support the needs of new cooperation providers; (b) streamline matching of needs and resources; and (c) further strengthen the Asia-Pacific DG Forum and guide it substantively.

Historically, the South-South and triangular cooperation activities of ESCAP helped to shape its technical assistance programmes, informed its research and analysis, and underpinned its intergovernmental and consensus-building work.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://unescap.org/events/2022/roundtable-network-south-south-cooperation-asia-pacific>.

**Support to subregional mechanisms and neighbourhood initiatives.** Effective regional integration being an important milestone for greater insertion into global trade, removing obstacles to cross-border trade is one of the key objectives of the regional commissions as they support their Member States' deeper integration efforts. Through South-South and triangular cooperation and policy-level support, regional commissions have a good track record related to **free-trade agreements and other trade facilitation initiatives.** Best practices include exchange of information among customs authorities, coordinated actions to establish regional single windows or one-stop border posts, and the facilitation of regional transit and transport facilitation programmes. For example, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has provided advice and capacity-building for Member States on compliance with, and access to, regional and global trade agreements, such as the Arab Customs Union, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with the European Union and the African Continental Free Trade Area. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) regional and subregional activities, including through the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, also often focus on transboundary and cross-border issues, seeking to promote regional cooperation and integration.

**Box 8. Supporting countries' regional integration efforts**

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has played an instrumental role in accelerating the ratification of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, reaching 34 countries and paving the way for the start of its operational implementation on 1 January 2021. The Gambia, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone have benefited from ECA support in this regard. In East Africa, four new strategies – for Burundi, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda – and a regional strategy for the East African Community were developed, and efforts will be pursued towards supporting the second phase of the negotiations on the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Through South-South and triangular cooperation, in particular technical cooperation, regional UN entities can also support **investments in both hard and soft infrastructure** at the country or regional level to foster actual regional economic cooperation, facilitate infrastructure connectivity or help to coordinate regional development strategies. Through the facilitation of intergovernmental coordination and technical and advisory services, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has, for instance, supported LLDCs and SIDS to improve their transport systems (transport infrastructure and logistics) and ensure better access to worldwide markets while contributing to the effective implementation of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

Another example is the Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS) region, where ECE seeks to provide solutions to transboundary challenges through technical cooperation, delivering sharing of South-South knowledge and contributing to cooperation, integration and the addressing of transboundary issues. ECE country-level and regional technical assistance are seen as both complementary and mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, ECE intergovernmental expert bodies carry out policy reviews and issue recommendations to the specific countries and subregions, providing an opportunity for representatives from the South to share the knowledge and to contribute to the work of the other countries of the South, including on transport and trade issues.

Supporting regional and subregional institutions is also at the heart of the work of the regional commissions, such as ESCAP support to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that has taken many forms, from broadening regional trade and investment research, statistics and the knowledge base through the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade to organizing high-level policy summits or thematic task forces.

**Development Account projects.**<sup>39</sup> In the spirit of South-South collaboration, some UN entities have collaborated and worked in partnership to jointly deliver on Development Account projects, which aim at strengthening Member States capacities in a wide range of thematic areas. The United Nations Development Account was established by the General Assembly in 1997, through its resolution 52/12 B, as a mechanism to fund capacity development projects of the economic and social entities of the United Nations<sup>40</sup> and advance the implementation of internationally agreed development goals and the outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits. The mechanism is implemented by 10 entities of the UN Secretariat (DESA, UNCTAD, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the regional commissions).

The Development Account helps countries to better integrate social, economic and environmental policies and strategies in order to achieve inclusive and sustained economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development. Projects financed from the Account aim to build the socioeconomic capacity of Southern countries through collaboration at the national, subregional, regional and interregional levels. Among others, the **Development Account provides a mechanism for promoting the exchange and transfer of skills, knowledge and good practices among target countries** within and between different geographic regions and through the cooperation with a wide range of partners in the broader development cooperation community.

Thus, many Development Account projects, or specific components within them, **can easily be considered** South-South and triangular cooperation **initiatives**, provided that they have been designed based on Southern countries' specific requests for implementation through South-South cooperation. Further, in the spirit of the ongoing UN reform that fosters greater collaboration and coherence within UN regional entities, the Development Account projects that may be jointly programmed or facilitated by another UN entity, besides the regional commissions, **may be mentioned in the RCP**

#### **Box 9. South-South and triangular cooperation and the ECE**

The ECE is a longstanding advocate for South-South and triangular cooperation, delivering its technical cooperation with South-South cooperation components through policy advisory services, capacity-building activities and field projects based on the direct demand of the Member States. More than 50 per cent of its technical cooperation activities are clustered at regional and subregional levels, thus delivering South-South and triangular cooperation knowledge and contributing to cooperation, integration and the addressing of transboundary issues in the region.

<sup>39</sup> UN, DESA, « Development Account ». Available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/about-the-development-account/>.

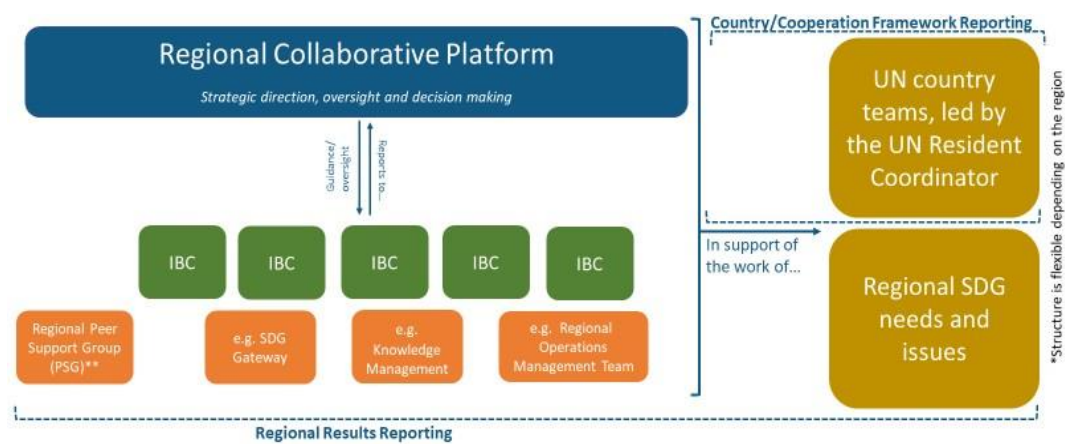
<sup>40</sup> DESA, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC.

workplan and related results may be reported on in the *Regional Results Report of the UN System* (See also [checklist 13 and 14](#)).

### 3.3.3 Configuration of regional teams

The *action plan for implementation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024*, calls for the strengthening of “South-South and triangular cooperation support structure(s), including dedicated unit[s] and/or institutional focal points, appropriately and adequately funded by UN entities, in a manner consistent with their respective mandates, institutional arrangement and policy/strategy” (p. 36).

Figure 4. RCP Structure



\*System-wide evaluation will be put in place, and the chart will be updated accordingly at that time.

\*\* It is suggested that the PSG will formally be part of the RCP architecture, but will have a dotted reporting line direct to the RCP Chair. Graph to be updated upon confirmation of final arrangement.

Within the regional commissions and regional offices of UN entities, the designation of South-South and triangular cooperation focal points can also help to mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation internally, strengthen institutional capacities to promote and engage in South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, support the establishment of South-South and triangular cooperation partnerships, and report on South-South and triangular cooperation-related achievements (see Box 10). Experience shows that South-South and triangular cooperation focal points can be more effective if they are able to

**Box 10. UNFPA corporate strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation** (June 2022) explicitly mentions that dedicated South-South and triangular cooperation focal points will be designated in regional offices and will be assigned the following broad responsibilities:

- raise South-South and triangular cooperation capacity of all staff in the office;
- assess capacity of institutions to match South-South and triangular cooperation partnership supply and demand; and
- maximize use of South-South and triangular cooperation learning and training tools.

apportion a **sufficient amount of their time** to pursue South-South and triangular cooperation-related activities and if they have a **budget** for the organization of internal and external training and awareness-raising events on South-South and triangular cooperation or the documentation of successful South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives. Furthermore, **establishing an informal network of regional South-South and triangular cooperation focal points** can help regional UN entities to share and exchange successful South-South and triangular cooperation experiences, organize joint awareness-raising events, and design joint South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives.

Within all UN regional entities, the organization of **periodic staff training on** South-South and triangular cooperation principles, intergovernmental policy and decisions, value addition and benefits, and the role of the UN and the UN system-wide strategy is recommended to enhance institutional knowledge about South-South and triangular cooperation structures and processes and to ensure that staff can effectively engage in and support these initiatives (see box 11).

**Box 11. Example of successful South-South and triangular cooperation capacity-building activities in a regional office of a UN entity**

As one of the management responses to a thematic evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth, UNFPA management has committed to “launch an online training, available to all staff, particularly aimed to create and strengthen in-house country and regional offices skills to identify, engage and operationalize SSC as an integrated part of their business model for Youth Programme delivery. In addition [a] South-South cooperation project will develop and put in place a SSTC tool to facilitate matchmaking between solutions and needs of countries to address adolescent[s] and youth. This will support the function of [UNFPA] Ros [regional offices] to provide adequate and effective support to COs [country offices], in scaling up SSC. In collaboration with ROs, a participatory mechanism of internal and external stakeholders’ network, including SSTC [South-South and triangular cooperation] focal points, will be established in order to boost connection of successful experiences and COs needs.”

*Source:* [UNFPA Management Response, Thematic Evaluation of UNFPA support to Adolescents and Youth \(2008–2015\) \(DP/FPA/2017/CRP.2\)](#), p. 19.