

CONCEPT NOTE

20 April 2026

Anchoring South-South and triangular cooperation in the Global Dialogue on AI Governance

Proposed Foresight Initiative on the role and future of South-South and Triangular Cooperation for advancing sustainable Artificial Intelligence development and use in the Global South

Background

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping economies, governance systems, and development trajectories worldwide. While much of the global discourse on AI has focused on advanced economies, the implications for developing countries - particularly least developed countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Middle Income Countries (MICs)- remain insufficiently explored, especially in relation to the structural conditions required for inclusive, sustainable, and context-appropriate development and adoption.

These country groups often face structural constraints including limited digital infrastructure, constrained human capital pools (amplified by the global ‘brain drain’ for AI talent, and the negative impact of AI on industries such as business process outsourcing), fragmented data ecosystems, and restricted access to computing resources and financing. At the same time, they also present opportunities for technological leapfrogging, innovative governance models, and context-adapted technological pathways that respond to national development priorities.

In this context, South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTrC) could play an important catalytic role in enabling developing countries to jointly address emerging challenges related to sustainable AI development, governance, and deployment. Through knowledge exchange, capacity development, regional collaboration, and shared investments in digital infrastructure and human capital, SSTrC may help accelerate inclusive and sustainable AI ecosystems while reducing risks, costs, and technological fragmentation.

A significant milestone in shaping the global development-oriented AI agenda was the India AI Summit held in New Delhi in February 2026- the first ever held in a southern country-, which brought together governments, international organizations, academia, and private sector actors

from across the Global South and beyond. The Government of India demonstrated notable leadership in convening this global dialogue and fostering partnerships among developing countries. The Summit resulted in the [New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact](#), structured around the “Seven Chakras” (pillars) of AI cooperation, including democratizing AI resources, harnessing AI for economic growth and social good, secure and trusted AI, AI for science, access for social empowerment, human capital development, and resilient and efficient AI systems.

The declaration emphasizes that inclusive AI development requires robust digital infrastructure and meaningful and affordable connectivity, and it highlights voluntary initiatives such as the Global AI Impact Commons and the Charter for the Democratic Diffusion of AI, aimed at facilitating the replication and scaling of AI solutions across regions.

Several governments demonstrated leadership in advancing Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)—including digital identity, payments, and data exchange systems—and have consistently shown openness in sharing their experiences and expertise with developing countries. These experiences may offer valuable insights for countries seeking to build scalable digital foundations that could support responsible AI ecosystems and innovation.

At the global governance level, efforts are also underway to strengthen international dialogue on AI governance. The United Nations General Assembly established a mechanism leading to a Global Dialogue on AI Governance planned for July 2026 through [Resolution A/RES/79/325](#), following intergovernmental negotiations and broad consultations with diverse stakeholders. The Dialogue is expected to provide an important platform for Member States to exchange perspectives and explore cooperative approaches to ensuring that AI development benefits all countries.

The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) has been actively involved in the research and policy advocacy around the issue of South-South and triangular cooperation for inclusive digital transformation and advancement of AI sustainable development and use in the Global South. The [UNOSSC’s 2025 Global Report on South-South and triangular cooperation](#) points at the potential of AI in the Global South and the importance of this cooperation modality to advance the sustainable development and use. During the [22nd Session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation](#), national delegations underscored the importance of **artificial intelligence and digital transformation** as priority areas for future South-South and triangular cooperation, while the thematic discussion highlighted the transformative potential of AI in addressing development challenges and accelerating SDG progress.

Against this backdrop, the present concept proposes anchoring South-South Cooperation as pertinent means of implementation through a **light foresight initiative**, which would explore how AI could evolve in selected LDC, SIDS, LLDCs and MICs contexts over the next 10–15 years, and how South-South and triangular cooperation could support inclusive, ethical, and SDG-aligned AI development and governance. The initiative could also help equip countries of the Global South with evidence, insights, and practical pathways to strengthen South-South cooperation in

preparation for and during the Global Dialogue on AI Governance scheduled for July 2026 in Geneva.

Scope of the proposed pilot

The proposed foresight exercise would analyze possible future trajectories of AI in a selected group of LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs and MICs, focusing exclusively on civilian applications and prioritizing inclusive, ethical, and sustainable use cases aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The analysis would explore:

- The role of South-South and triangular cooperation as a potential strategic enabler of AI development and deployment
- Potential regional and cross-border approaches, including collaboration through regional organizations and initiatives (such as shared compute infrastructure, digital markets, and talent mobility schemes)
- Emerging partnership, investment, and financing models for AI ecosystems
- Alternative and diverse innovation pathways emerging from the Global South, including approaches such as frugal AI, Green AI, or collaborative digital infrastructure development

The foresight exercise would combine system-level analysis of AI ecosystems with the identification of priority opportunity areas where AI could support specific development outcomes.

Main research questions

The proposed foresight exercise would seek to address the following key questions:

1. What are the most plausible future scenarios for AI in these countries over the next 10–15 years, and what opportunities, risks, and structural constraints might they present—particularly in relation to capacity development, institutional readiness, and equitable access to AI technologies?
2. To what extent, and through which mechanisms, could South-South and triangular cooperation act as a catalyst for the accelerated, inclusive, and context-appropriate development, deployment, and governance of AI in LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs and MICs?
3. What strategic pathways, policy choices, and partnership or investment models could governments and ecosystem actors pursue to shape desirable AI futures, and how could SSTRC be operationalized as a key vehicle to enable these pathways?

Proposed contribution of UNOSSC

Under this proposed initiative, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) is proposing to:

- Provide the platform and facilitation of the foresight exercise, including coordination of expert consultations and stakeholder engagement, and offer the South-South Galaxy platform as a digital hub for sharing knowledge, insights, good practices, and collaboration opportunities emerging from the exercise
- Mobilize and connect experts, researchers, and practitioners from across the Global South and North
- Support in the dissemination of findings and policy recommendations to inform international discussions on AI cooperation and governance
- Convene Member States and partners interested in advancing cooperation on AI for development

Proposed Outputs

1. Foresight Paper (by end-June 2026)

A concise analytical report presenting key trends, plausible scenarios for AI in selected LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs and MICs over the next 10–15 years, and strategic pathways through which South-South and triangular cooperation could accelerate inclusive AI development.

A first consultative draft of the foresight paper could be shared with Member States ahead of the Global Dialogue on AI Governance, scheduled to take place 6–7 July 2026 in Geneva, in line with United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/79/325.

The findings and recommendations of the proposed foresight exercise could help ensure that countries of the Global South are better equipped with evidence and policy insights to strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation in preparation for and during the Global Dialogue.

2. Policy dialogue with interested Member States (by end of June 2026)

A multi-stakeholder dialogue could be organized before the meeting of the Global Dialogue on AI Governance, involving interested Member States, development partners, regional organizations, academia, and private sector actors to discuss findings and explore cooperative pathways for advancing AI ecosystems in developing country contexts.

3. Generation of a pipeline of potential innovative solutions (by end of September 2026).

The initiative could contribute to the development of a potential pipeline of new solutions and projects to be carried forward by interested partners.