



South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific – A brief overview

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1. Introduction

The importance of South-South and triangular cooperation in international development cooperation has grown significantly. South-South cooperation has undergone major transformation over the past sixty years since the Bandung Conference in 1955. The emergence of the middle-income developing countries as the new donors and technical assistance providers in the beginning of this millennium has reshaped the landscape of the international development cooperation. Complementary to North-South cooperation, South-South and triangular cooperation have increasingly become important modalities for fostering development cooperation among developing countries in Asia and the Pacific. South-South and triangular cooperation have been identified as key modalities for delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Against this backdrop, through the UN General Assembly resolutions 71/318 and 71/244¹ Member States decided to hold the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (also called as BAPA+40) in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 20 to 22 March 2019. The resolution also encourages Member States to draw upon the outcomes of regional, sub-regional and sectoral United Nations meetings prior to this conference. To this end, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), and the Royal Thai Government are jointly organizing the Regional Consultation on South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific “Towards the Buenos Aires Plan of Action 40th Anniversary”, held on 27-29 June 2018 in Bangkok. In conjunction with this regional consultation, an inaugural roundtable of the Asia-Pacific Forum on South-South and Triangular Cooperation is also taking place, bringing together the heads of the development cooperation/South-South cooperation agencies of the developing countries in the region (DG Forum).

In the preparation for the Regional Consultation, jointly with UNOSSC, ESCAP conducted a survey to map existing South-South and triangular cooperation modalities, institutions, policies, priorities and channeling in the countries of the region. The countries that responded to the survey included Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Thailand and Vietnam. The survey responses were supplemented by information on South-South cooperation initiatives from other countries in the region, such as China, India and Turkey, collected from secondary sources.

The paper comprises three parts. The first part provides a brief overview of the history and evolution of South-South cooperation in the region. It also seeks find a common understanding of South-South cooperation. The second part key trends and modalities of South-South cooperation in the region. The last part covers the role of the United Nations and ESCAP and the conclusions and recommendations. The paper is intended to inform the DG Forum and stimulate discussion and further thinking in this regard.

2. South-South and triangular cooperation: A brief history and evolution

(i) South-South cooperation: From past to present

South-South cooperation has undergone major transformation over the past sixty years, and this journey is marked by several milestones. The first one was the Bandung Conference, held in 1955, where countries in Asia and Africa met without their colonial powers and expressed a call for independence and promotion of mutual interest and economic and cultural cooperation. This initial phase of South-South cooperation focused on development cooperation which would help these countries in achieving economic and political independence. It was also marked by the establishment of the new international organizations, namely the United Nations, the World Bank (at the time the International Bank for

¹ A/RES/71/318 and A/RES/71/244

Reconstruction and Development) and the International Monetary Fund, and creation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The role of the international organizations was reflected in the outcome document of the Bandung Conference. Provision of technical assistance among the countries of the South in form of experts, trainees, exchange of know-how and establishment of national and regional training and research institutes was at the core of the Bandung outcomes.²

The second milestone was the establishment of United Nations regional economic commissions, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the emergence of the Group of 77. The Economic Commission for Asia and Far East (today Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) was established in 1947, the Economic Commission for Latin America (today Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) in 1948, and the Economic Commission for Africa was established in 1958. The regional economic commissions emerged as the important intergovernmental platforms for promoting multilateral policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and networks for the countries of the South. The Group of 77, the largest coalition of developing countries representing the South to promote its collective economic interest and joint negotiating position in the United Nations, was established at the first session of UNCTAD in 1964.³

The third milestone was the institutionalization of South-South cooperation by the United Nations at the global level. The UN General Assembly resolution A/3251 in 1974 led to the creation of a special unit to promote technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC), which is the predecessor of today's UN Office for South-South Cooperation. In 1978, the first United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, dedicated to the global South and held in Argentina, adopted the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC).⁴ BAPA focuses on increasing the economic cooperation capacity through technical cooperation, transfer of technology, and knowledge-sharing among the countries of the South. In 1980, the UN General Assembly established the High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation to review and assess the implementation of BAPA every two years. With the adoption of the UN Millennium Declaration⁵ in 2000, including eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the focus of South-South cooperation was on poverty reduction. While the Millennium Declaration emphasized the needs of developing countries to mobilize resources for their development and, in particular, the needs of the least-developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states, the implementation of MDGs did not fully utilize the potential of South-South cooperation.

The fourth milestone was the emergence of the new development cooperation actors and donors from the global South at the end of the last century, whose role was further emphasized in the aftermath of the global economic crisis in 2008. This period also witnessed the emergence of a number of middle-income countries as providers of technology and knowledge. The establishment of the New Development Bank (formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank) followed by creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has offered alternatives to the existing multilateral development banks, catering to the development needs of the South. South-South cooperation attracted a renewed interest and attention from the international development cooperation

² Final Communiqué of the Asian-African Conference, Bandung, Indonesia, 24 April 1955, https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/final_communique_of_the_asian_african_conference_of_bandung_24_april_1955_en-676237bd-72f7-471f-949a-88b6ae513585.html

³ G77 was established by the seventy-seven developing countries by signing the Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Developing Countries, at the first session of UNCTAD on 15 June 1964 in Geneva. Over the years, it has expanded to 134 countries, however its name was kept because of its historic significance. Since China also participates in G77 but does not consider itself as a member, all official statements in the UN are issues as “the Group of 77 and China”.

⁴ <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/library/policy-documents/>

⁵ <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

community as the 'new' model of international cooperation, combining funding as well as knowledge, expertise and technology transfer between the countries of the South bilaterally or multilaterally.

With the adoption of the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by the UN General Assembly in September 2015, and other major global development frameworks (such as Addis Ababa, Paris and Sendai), South-South cooperation has received a new impetus. In parallel with official development assistance (ODA), it has been recognized as an important element of international development cooperation and one of the key modalities to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its advance is not intended to substitute the North-South cooperation, but rather to complement it. Efforts to implement SDG 17 on revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development should stimulate the exploration of new modalities, arrangements and partnerships for international collaboration, including through South-South and triangular cooperation.

(ii) Defining South-South cooperation

South-South cooperation has been complex and has not lent itself to a single definition. According to the Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation by UNDP, South-South cooperation is defined as “a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how, and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions. South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation”.⁶ There are other definitions, including a more general one by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.⁷

In Asia and the Pacific, South-South cooperation is being implemented by the above modalities, by a myriad of actors, including the governments within and outside the framework of the United Nations, thus the UNDP definition, which is more elaborate, reflects better the developments in Asia and the Pacific.

(iii) Triangular cooperation

Triangular cooperation involves two or more developing countries in collaboration with a third party, typically a developed-country government or multilateral organization, contributing to the exchanges with its own knowledge and resources.⁸

Triangular cooperation, which emerged in the 1960s, has widened the scope of international development cooperation, mainly through joint projects and programmes between developing countries with support from international organizations and developed countries.

⁶ Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation SSC/17/3 (2012) Note by the Secretary-General, High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation Seventeenth session New York, May 2012. <http://undocs.org/SSC/17/3>

⁷ The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation defines South-South cooperation “as an exchange of knowledge and resources in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental or technical domain between developing countries. It can take place on a bilateral, regional, subregional or interregional basis and can involve two or more developing countries. <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/our-work/south-south-and-triangular-coordination/>

⁸ See <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/our-work/south-south-and-triangular-coordination/>

In addition to North-South-South triangular cooperation, the “triple-South” triangular cooperation has been advancing well. Some of the important examples include the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) fund to promote South-South cooperation and exchange and the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund, with a sub-fund dedicated to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, established by China in 2016. The India-UN Development Partnership Fund was established in 2017 in support of Southern-owned and led, demand-driven, and transformational sustainable development projects across the developing world, with a focus on least developed countries and small island developing states. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and New Development Bank are the primary South-led multilateral development banks in this direction. ASEAN Dialogue Partner Fund and ASEAN Fund are the other examples of triangular cooperation between ASEAN countries and their development partners such as Australia, Japan, and European Union.

The Asia-Pacific region offers some good examples where triangular cooperation has been undertaken within and outside the UN platform. One such examples in the The ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries (Trust Fund), operated by ESCAP (see Box 2).

Box 2. The ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries

The ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries (Trust Fund) provides financial and technical support to address unmet needs and gaps in early warning systems in the Asia-Pacific region. It has promoted innovative pilot initiatives, scaled up successful early warning systems and facilitated regional cooperation by leveraging the convening power of ESCAP. Advocating a multi-hazard people-centred approach, the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund works with key partners of the United Nations system, regional intergovernmental institutions, member States, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions in the area of early warning.

With the generous support of Thailand, a founding donor, and valuable contributions from Bangladesh, Germany, India, Japan, Nepal, the Philippines, Sweden and Turkey, the Trust Fund has and will continue to play its catalytic role in generating enhanced regional cooperation, resources and knowledge sharing of tsunami, disaster and climate risk reduction efforts.

At the national level, the Trust Fund focuses on policy and institutional strengthening in countries facing high risk and low capacity. In projects targeting specific national capacities, the Fund applies South-South approaches to enhance cooperation between countries covered by the Fund and tap into the existing capacities in the region.

Since its establishment in 2005, the ESCAP Multi-donor Trust Fund has supported 26 projects with a total budget of approximately 15.5 million dollars, directly benefitting 19 countries of the South. It provided sustained financial support that contributed to the establishment of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System and the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES). The former, which became operational in 2011, is a system that brings together 28 member States that now share information and combined technical capacities. The latter is an intergovernmental institution that focuses on generating early warning information, technical support and capacity building, and providing cost-effective solutions for high-risk low-capacity countries.

Source: ESCAP, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division

The 2030 Agenda, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and Paris Agreement recognize that international development cooperation in general, including explicitly triangular cooperation, must play a major role in fostering collective action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Triangular cooperation may be especially well positioned to stimulate such arrangements in the area of science, technology and innovation, where it can contribute to reducing global imbalances between the North and the South and foster more equitable international relations across many fronts.

3. The South-South cooperation in Asia and the Pacific

South-South cooperation is one of the important drivers of the regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific and has resulted in increased volumes of South-South trade, foreign direct investment flows and technology transfer. Over the decades, countries of the South have accumulated considerable expertise, experience, lessons and capabilities in their own development processes, which have been shared with other developing countries in the form of technical assistance. Middle-income developing countries, as emerging donors and technical cooperation providers, have significantly influenced the landscape of the South-South cooperation in this region and beyond.

The Asia-Pacific has a mix of international development cooperation players. The region includes China and India, the region's economic powerhouses; high income nations and ODA providers, such as Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea and New Zealand; and middle-income countries, such as Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, among others. Japan is also a leader in triangular cooperation. On the other hand, the region also has a large number of least-developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS). The diversity in levels of development across the region provides unique opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation between countries and learning from each other's development experience. This has been particularly evident in ASEAN, where countries rely on the intra-regional sharing of knowledge and experience.

(i) South-South cooperation strategies and institutional mechanisms

ESCAP's survey and other sources reveal that while many countries have a development cooperation strategy covering South-South cooperation to a certain extent, only a few appear to have stand-alone strategies dedicated to South-South cooperation. China's blue print for international development cooperation is its Second White Paper on Foreign Aid (adopted in 2014), specifically referring to training programmes, experience-sharing and trilateral programmes as part of its South-South development support. Establishing a 'single window' policy for international development cooperation, Indonesia's development cooperation strategy focuses on South-South cooperation putting forward priority sectors and countries and aid management. Similarly, South-South cooperation in Thailand is part of its development cooperation strategy, covering some 150 countries world-wide. Thailand's South-South projects utilize its domestic expertise and are tailored to the users' needs. Bangladesh, which has also recently emerged as a strong champion of South-South cooperation, has finalized a National Policy on Development Cooperation. Its objective is to facilitate a coherent and integrated institutional and policy approach to foreign assistance coming in different forms and modalities to ensure that it is need-based and result-oriented.

The institutional mechanisms for South-South cooperation vary from country to country. Thailand and Turkey have dedicated agencies for international development cooperation. These are also responsible for implementing the South-South cooperation programmes and have recently added on the aspect of triangular cooperation. Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) was established as a focal agency under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is headed by a Director-General. Box 1 contains information about TICA's institutional model for international development cooperation, including South-South cooperation. Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) is a government department under the office of the Prime Minister of Turkey.

China and Kazakhstan recently announced their intention to establish similar dedicated agencies. In China, South-South cooperation is being handled by several agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, and other agencies. In 2016, China established the Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development, a training and knowledge-sharing platform based on the successful development experience of China. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for overall development cooperation, including among the countries of the South, while in Bangladesh, the Ministry of Finance coordinates South-South cooperation. The newly established China South-South Cooperation Fund is the latest addition to China's institutional South-South cooperation landscape,

providing funding for the projects implemented bilaterally or with the third partner, including the UN agencies.

Box 1. Thailand's institutional model in support of the South-South cooperation

Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) was established in 2004 by Royal Decree to serve the Royal Thai Government as a focal agency under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand in administering international development cooperation, including North-South and South-South cooperation. TICA is responsible for the implementation of Thailand's development cooperation programmes in neighbouring countries in particular, and other regions of the world. Development cooperation has various forms, including the development projects, volunteer and expert programmes, fellowships, scholarships and training programmes.

The scope of TICA's work includes the following:

- Formulation of international cooperation plan, studies and analysis on development (including South-South) cooperation policy including implementation, follow-up and evaluation of technical cooperation projects.
- Administration of development cooperation programmes provided to developing countries according to foreign policy of the Royal Thai Government.
- Cooperation with various development partners including foreign governments and international organizations to formulate, implement, and assess technical cooperation projects/programmes under bilateral and multilateral frameworks.
- Administration of fellowships and scholarships offered to developing countries for human resources development in public and private sectors as well as civil society.
- Coordination of international development cooperation
- Dissemination information regarding development cooperation to government agencies concerned and international organizations.

TICA is headed by Director-General and has two Deputy Director-Generals, and several bureaus, including development cooperation bureau, procurement and privileges bureau and partnerships bureau.

Source: TICA website; <http://www.tica.thaigov.net/main/>

(ii) Modalities and focus of the South-South cooperation

Modalities and geography are the major factors determining the South-South cooperation. The results of the survey indicate a distinction between the providers and the users of South-South cooperation, defined earlier in this report.

Modalities include funding and technical assistance (in-kind assistance) aimed to develop human and institutional capacities such as expertise/knowledge, training, advisory services, study visits and technology transfer. In addition to such technical assistance, China, India, Indonesia and Iran and Thailand provided financial support to their Southern partners, which is channeled either bilaterally or in cooperation with an international agency. Priority areas range from SDGs, environment and climate change, disaster, urban/rural development and agriculture, to connectivity issues (transport, trade and ICT), energy, to social development and gender.

Donors and technical assistance providers of the South tend to focus more on LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. Table 1 provide an overview of the modalities and focus countries of selected countries using South-South cooperation as an international development cooperation tool.

The greatest strength of the South-South cooperation has been its diversity of forms and flows. The core idea is to share best practices and lessons with other partner countries. For this reason, it cannot be a one-size-fits all approach but carefully crafted and tailored to the needs of the user partner countries.

Table 1. Modalities and Priorities for implementing South-South cooperation from selected countries in the region drawn from survey responses and secondary resources

Country name	Modalities to provide/receive SSC	Priority areas	Priority regions/countries	Total annual contribution (last 5 yrs in US\$)
Bangladesh	Experts/knowledge Training Advisory services Study visits Technology transfer	SDGs Environment and climate change Disaster risk reduction Rural development Sustainable agriculture/food security ICT Social development Gender and women's empowerment	Asia and Pacific Africa LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS Bhutan, Maldives, Fiji Nepal, Kenya, Cambodia, Uganda, Italy	n/a
Cambodia	Financial Experts/knowledge Training Technology transfer	SDGs Environment and climate change Disaster risk reduction Statistics Urban development Rural development Sustainable agriculture/food security Energy, renewables Water and waste management Trade Transport ICT Social development Gender and women's empowerment Macroeconomic policies Finance	Asia and Pacific LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS Support received from: n/a	n/a
China ⁹	Financial Experts/knowledge Training Advisory services Study visits Technology transfer	SDGs Connectivity Belt and Road Initiative Disaster risk reduction Sustainable agriculture/food security Trade Transport ICT Social development Gender and women's empowerment	Africa Asia and the Pacific Samoa, Fiji, Papua New Guinea	n/a
India	Financial Experts/knowledge Training Advisory services Study visits Technology transfer	SDGs Disaster risk reduction Sustainable agriculture/food security Trade Transport ICT Technology transfer Social development	Asia Africa and the Pacific Latin America, The Caribbean	n/a

⁹ 2017 South-South Cooperation Report, Changing Roles of South-South Cooperation in Global Development System towards 2030, Finance Centre for South-South Cooperation, 2017

Country name	Modalities to provide/receive SSC	Priority areas	Priority regions/countries	Total annual contribution (last 5 yrs in US\$)
Indonesia	Experts/knowledge Training Advisory services Study visits Technology transfer	SDGs Environment and climate change Disaster risk reduction Rural development Sustainable agriculture/food security Energy, renewables Water and waste management Trade Transport ICT Gender and women's empowerment Finance	Asia and Pacific Africa LDCs Fragile states Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Myanmar, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Timor-Leste, Vietnam,	3,588,249.00
Iran (Islamic Rep.of)	Financial Advisory services Technology transfer	Environment and climate change Sustainable agriculture/food security Trade Transport Finance Security	Asia and Pacific Africa Other neighbouring regional countries Islamic countries Members of the Group of 77 Africa, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Syria, Countries from the Gulf region	n/a
Lao PDR	Financial Experts/knowledge Training Advisory services Study visits Technology transfer	SDGs Environment and climate change Statistics Rural development Sustainable agriculture/food security Energy, renewables Water and waste management Transport ICT Social development Finance	Africa LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS Support to Lao PDR received from: Japan, Korea, China, Australia, New Zealand, France, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russian Federation	n/a
Turkey	Financial Experts/knowledge Training Study visits Technology transfer	SDGs Environment and climate change Disaster risk reduction Rural development Sustainable agriculture/food security Energy, renewables Water and waste management Mining and construction Social development Gender and women's empowerment Health, community development	Africa Asia and the Pacific LDCs Fragile states Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands	1,549,800.00 (LDCs) ¹⁰

¹⁰ Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, *Turkey's Cooperation with Least Developed Countries: A report on Turkey's Economic and Technical Cooperation Package for the LDCs*, 2016, p.11

Country name	Modalities to provide/receive SSC	Priority areas	Priority regions/countries	Total annual contribution (last 5 yrs in US\$)
Thailand	Financial Experts/knowledge Training Advisory services Study visits Technology transfer	SDGs Environment and climate change Disaster risk reduction Rural development Sustainable agriculture/ food security Energy, renewables Water and waste management Social development Gender and women's empowerment Health, community development	Asia and Pacific Africa Latin America and the Caribbean LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS Fragile states Four neighbouring countries (CLMV) Middle East Laos PDR, Myanmar, Cambodia, Bhutan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, China, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh	500,636,838.00
Vietnam	Financial Experts/knowledge Training Advisory services Study visits	SDGs Environment and climate change Disaster risk reduction Statistics Sustainable agriculture/food security ICT Social development Gender and women's empowerment Macroeconomic policies Finance	Asia and Pacific Africa Latin America LLCDs Support to: Algeria, Bangladesh, Fiji, Lao PDR, Mozambique, Morocco. Support from: Mexico, Peru.	n/a

(iii) Challenges and how to address them

The countries which responded to the survey also identified several challenges from the perspective of the South-South cooperation providers and users, which are summarized in Table 2 below. Some of the main challenges the countries providing South-South cooperation include:

- Insufficient national legal and institutional arrangements,
- Low level of coordination and knowledge-sharing both within the country and internationally (regional and global levels),
- Limited availability of statistical data on/measurement of South-South cooperation
- Insufficient funding.

Along with the limited access to technology and to funding and the lack of statistical data on South-South cooperation, the countries benefiting from the South-South cooperation (users) found limited availability of information on technical assistance and how to benefit from it as one of the main challenges.

The UNOSSC conducted a South-South cooperation needs assessment survey of some 80 countries world-wide. The response rate was 25 percent. The survey identified the following broad areas, where the support was needed: (i) legal and institutional frameworks for South-South cooperation; (ii) institutional management and coordination mechanisms; (iii) project management; (iv) human resources skills; and (v) communication skills and technology. These findings are widely corresponding to the challenges identified by the surveyed countries by ESCAP/UNOSSC, provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Challenges identified by the South-South cooperation providers and users

Providers	Users
<p>(a) Insufficient national legal and institutional frameworks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National legal framework • Domestic SSC program sustainability • Institutionalization of SSC • Lengthy domestic decision-making processes for importing initiatives/best practices • Selection of appropriate focal points <p>(b) Limited coordination & knowledge-sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of the receiving countries • Internal coordination • Coordinated roles of relevant intergovernmental organizations including UN system • Knowledge management/sharing information amongst development cooperation agencies and entities in order to avoid duplication <p>(c) Limited measurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic and effective measurement of the success of SSC • Lack of reliable statistics and data nationally and internationally <p>(d) Insufficient funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited information on technical assistance and human capacity development, including project formulation • Insufficient technology transfer • Limited access to financial resources • Lack of measurement and data availability

To address these challenges, the reviewed countries suggested to improve coordination at national, regional and global levels. At the national level, mainstreaming the South-South cooperation into the national development policy and agenda is one of the primary tools suggested. Countries with existing national development/South-South cooperation institutions could consider creating coordination mechanisms involving other government agencies, and other stakeholders including the civil society organizations and the private sector. Such countries could share their experience and knowledge with other countries on their South-South cooperation institutional model.

At the regional level, coordination and collaboration could be improved through establishing a network or forum of the heads of the national agencies of international development cooperation or South-South cooperation. Such network or forum could provide a platform for learning from one another – **“South-South cooperation for the South-South cooperation”** – through exchanging experience and good practice on the institutional mechanisms, lead agencies/champions, national coordination, and involvement of other stakeholders. It could also provide opportunities to share information about the modalities and to determine focus countries for South-South cooperation to ensure that the demands by the beneficiary countries are being effectively met and gaps reduced, and duplications are minimized.

4. The role of the United Nations in the South-South and triangular cooperation

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals have set new milestones for international community, including the United Nations. The United Nations works to promote South-South cooperation through providing the intergovernmental dialogue, leading to policy decisions on strategies and practical programmes essential to the deepening of South-South cooperation. Guided by the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, its policy work includes advocating for the adoption of South-South approaches to development globally and in the United Nations system. In this area, the activities of UNOSSC are designed to improve collective problem-solving through a better conceptual understanding of the real value of South-South cooperation in efforts to achieve SDGs. The High-Level Meeting on South-South Cooperation, supported by the UNOSSC, serves as the prime intergovernmental forum for South-South cooperation, while the regional commissions provide the regional platforms for research and analysis, policy discussions, and capacity development, including through regional cooperation, among the countries of the South.

The UN General Assembly resolution 71/244 urges the United Nations development system, in consultation with all members States, to increasingly leverage, as appropriate, South-South cooperation to bolster its impact in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In doing so, the United Nations is requested to enhance its support in the areas where South-South cooperation has proved effective, namely, capacity-building, policy coordination, regional integration, interregional linkages, infrastructure interconnectivity and the development of national productive capacities through exchanges of knowledge and technological innovations.¹¹

In response to the growing demand for the South-South initiatives at the regional and subregional levels, the regional commissions have advanced South-South cooperation by undertaking policy research and analysis; developed regional public goods, such as networks and resource facilities. They have further forged strategic partnerships and undertaken dedicated knowledge-sharing and capacity-development programmes and initiatives, integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

South-South cooperation has been a core modality of ESCAP's work since its establishment in 1947. Some concrete examples of this collaboration include harnessing space technology services to provide early warning systems for natural disasters through the ESCAP Multi-donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disasters and Climate Preparedness; broadening regional trade and investment research and knowledge base through the Asia Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT); and other platforms for the transfer of ideas and knowledge.

The main inter-governmental platforms and mechanisms for ESCAP to mechanisms to ensure the effective use of South-South and triangular cooperation are the annual Commission session and the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD). APFSD is the main intergovernmental platform overseeing the implementation of the Regional Roadmap for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. It also provides a platform for the exchange of good practices, success stories and peer learning between countries in the region planning to present Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) at the forthcoming High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and those which already finalized and presented the reports in previous years, emphasizing the South-South exchange of experience and learning.

Finance, technology and trade have been recognized as critical means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, underpinned by the North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. ESCAP's initiatives such as the Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway, and Cross-border paperless trade agreement promote

¹¹ See http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/244

regional connectivity and intra-regional trade. As finance is the backbone of successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, ESCAP is working towards strengthened domestic public resource mobilization at all government levels as well as broad-based cooperation and coordination among countries, including through the Eminent Expert Group on Tax Policies and Public Expenditure Management for Sustainable Development. Promoting further South-South Cooperation are the ESCAP regional institutions including the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM) in Beijing, which works on enhancing the resilience of the region's agricultural systems and food security against intensifying natural disasters and the impacts of climate change, with specific focus on the needs of smallholders. The Asia-Pacific Centre for Technology Transfer (APCTT) in Delhi identifies and supports the transfer of green technologies through South-South co-operation.

Many UN programmes and specialized agencies, including UNDP, UN Environment, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, FAO, and ILO, have dedicated South-South cooperation strategies and specific programmes promoting South-South exchanges on the ground. In Asia and the Pacific these can be further coordinated through the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism in Asia and the Pacific (RCM) and through the focal points of these agencies on South-South cooperation.

These endeavors lay the groundwork for a new regional architecture for South-South cooperation in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a regional commission, ESCAP could serve as an inclusive coordinator and facilitator, within the United Nations system, in coordination with UNOSSC.

5. Conclusions

When South-South cooperation was first promoted in Bandung, some developing countries had gained independence from colonial powers and helped others achieve freedom from colonial rules. Since then, many developing countries in Asia and the Pacific have achieved remarkable economic and technological development. These countries are an important source of technical assistance, innovation and development finance for other countries of the South. This is particularly important in the context of the 2030 Agenda. While not a substitute for North-South cooperation, South-South and triangular cooperation will be increasingly among critical modalities for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

One of the main challenges, identified by the Survey and ESCAP research is the insufficient coordination, collaboration and information exchange among the South-South cooperation providers and users. It would therefore be important to promote mechanisms in the region to improve coordination and information sharing to match the needs with the resources and enable developing countries to learn from each other's experience to achieve greater results.

The creation of a DG Forum – as a regular regional forum on South-South and triangular Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific – could be a valuable mechanism to provide a platform for the countries of the South to exchange good practices, knowledge and experience and better coordinate provision of the technical assistance to other Southern partners in the region. Such a forum or platform needs to be owned and led by member States. As a follow-up to the DG Forum, a task force of member States could be created to define the forum's value proposition and terms of reference, including its membership, objectives and key outputs. It could further propose options for involving civil society organizations, the private sector, international organizations and ODA providers to discuss triangular cooperation. If required, ESCAP and UNOSSC can play a facilitative role, tapping into the combined resources and expertise of the UN at the regional level through the RCM.

6. Issues for consideration

The participants may wish to structure their discussions along the following issues:

- (i) Main challenges faced in the South-South cooperation:
 - As a provider of technical assistance
 - As a user of technical assistance

- (ii) Types of information, cooperation, exchange of experience is needed to strengthen South-South cooperation
 - As a provider of technical assistance
 - As a user of technical assistance

- (iii) Possible modalities to improve coordination and collaboration among South-South cooperation partners in the region

- (iv) The need for and value proposition of establishing dialogue/platform of the Heads of the national South-South cooperation agencies and focal points through the establishment of a regional DG Forum?
