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Operational activities for development: South-South cooperation for development

State of South-South cooperation

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution [78/167](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to its seventy-ninth session a comprehensive report on the state of South-South cooperation, including the implementation of the recommendations contained in the outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. It highlights key collective actions undertaken by developing countries to recover from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic while building resilience to future shocks. In addition, the report contains an analysis of the support that many United Nations organizations provided to Member States of the Global South in 2023 through policies and programmes that continued to mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation at all levels, as encouraged by the Conference participants in the Buenos Aires outcome document. The report concludes with a set of recommendations on how South-South and triangular cooperation could accelerate urgently needed transitions to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

* [A/79/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution [78/167](#), in which Member States requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-ninth session a comprehensive report on the state of South-South cooperation, including the implementation of the recommendations contained in the outcome document of the second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation. The report highlights notable developments in which South-South and triangular cooperation played a key role in 2023.

2. In the report, the Secretary-General calls attention to the commitment of developing countries to South-South cooperation solutions to development challenges and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In section III of the report, the Secretary-General focuses on collaborative measures that developing countries adopted, with the support of United Nations organizations, to recover from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic while building a health-care architecture and resilience to address future pandemics and other diseases. He also spotlights the South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives that United Nations organizations supported to allow Member States of the South to address the effects of climate change while transitioning to a digital green economy.

3. Section IV contains an analysis of how United Nations entities continued to prioritize South-South and triangular cooperation through their policies and operational activities, as called for at the second High-level Conference, demonstrating progress in implementing the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Section IV also contains an analysis of ongoing efforts to design methodologies for the measurement of South-South cooperation. In section V, the Secretary-General reports on the progress that the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation continued to make in bolstering a coordinated approach to South-South and triangular cooperation across the United Nations system. The conclusions and recommendations contained in section VI focus on ways to leverage South-South and triangular cooperation to intensify support for six crucial transitions to accelerate the achievement of the Goals: (a) food systems; (b) energy access and affordability; (c) digital connectivity; (d) education and skills; (e) jobs and social protection; and (f) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.¹

4. The report is based primarily on findings from a survey of United Nations entities conducted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation in 2023. It also draws on findings from surveys on the implementation of the 2020 General Assembly resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (resolution [75/233](#)) conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs among Member States, United Nations entities and resident coordinators from January to December 2023.

II. Global context

5. During the reporting period, developing countries demonstrated the resolve to take collaborative measures to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic while building resilience in the face of climate change and other development challenges. That resolve coincided with the need for a rescue plan for people and planet in 2023, with

¹ United Nations Sustainable Development Group, “Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs”, September 2023. Available at <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/six-transitions-investment-pathways-deliver-sdgs>.

only 15 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal targets on track to be met by 2030 (see [A/78/80-E/2023/64](#)).

6. Against that backdrop, several countries that play a pivotal role in South-South cooperation, including Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), took measures to enlarge their group, inviting Egypt, Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to join the alliance at the fifteenth BRICS summit, held in August 2023. Through South-South cooperation, the expanded alliance, which possesses vital food and energy systems in addition to other indispensable value chains, has the potential to contribute to key transitions needed to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.²

7. The collaborative solutions sought by the global South included the proactive provision of public goods to boost health-care resilience in the developing world. This is evidenced by recent actions by public- and private-sector actors in Argentina, Brazil and South Africa regarding the manufacturing of vaccines and other medicines to address future pandemics and other communicable diseases. Alongside those interventions, developing countries engaged in negotiations for a new agreement on pandemics and sustainable financing for health, including measures on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, to strengthen international cooperation in overcoming the weaknesses experienced before and during the pandemic.³

8. Amid severe economic setbacks, including crippling debt, the rising cost of living and high borrowing rates, developing countries are assuming leadership roles in global economic governance. India (2022), Indonesia (2023), Brazil (2024) and South Africa (2025) have taken on the responsibility of hosting and chairing annual meetings of the Group of 20. Such leadership provides developing countries with the opportunity to take a pivotal role in South-South cooperation and to better voice the interests of the global South, which could help to reverse the risk of leaving 575 million people in the grip of extreme poverty by 2030 (*ibid.*). It signals policy change to strengthen human solidarity to address pressing crises such as those faced by vulnerable countries, including small island developing States, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and middle-income countries, owing to COVID-19, droughts, floods, violent conflicts and inflation.

9. Developing countries also engaged more decisively in climate action amid the growing frequency of events induced by extreme weather, such as the floods in Libya and Pakistan in 2023. The United Arab Emirates, which hosted and chaired the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in 2023, used its leadership position to operationalize the loss and damage fund amid declining investment in the mitigation of climate change impacts.

10. Developing countries also sought collaborative solutions to harness digital and other technologies inclusively to mitigate climate change, improve food and energy security and boost financing for development while reducing inequalities. They also advocated for measures to narrow the digital divide between developed and developing countries in order to address climate change and bolster health care, education and trade with more efficient tools across regions and crucial sectors. Notably, about 2.6 billion people, mostly women and girls, are still not connected to the Internet owing to the lack of digital infrastructure and/or the related high costs.⁴

² *Ibid.*

³ See <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/pandemic-prevention--preparedness-and-response-accord>.

⁴ International Telecommunication Union, "Population of global offline continues steady decline to 2.6 billion people in 2023", September 2023. Available at <https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/PR-2023-09-12-universal-and-meaningful-connectivity-by-2030.aspx>.

This deficit underscores the urgency of fulfilling the solemn promise to leave no one behind in accessing the benefits of the digital transformation, as developing countries emphasized during the Summit on Science, Technology and Innovation of the Group of 77 and China held in Cuba in 2023. More challenging in that regard is the need to bolster the capacity of developing countries to enjoy the benefits of artificial intelligence while minimizing the risks.

11. The Group of 77 and China intensified its articulation of the priority concerns of the Group, including debt distress, illicit financial flows and the need for reform of the global financial system as well as for regulation of artificial intelligence and infrastructure development. During the Sustainable Development Goals Summit held in 2023, the Group reiterated its call for the delivery of a Sustainable Development Goal stimulus and urgent reform of the international financial architecture, as proposed by the Secretary-General, to give vulnerable countries a fair chance at a better future. The Group also appealed to Northern countries to support the development efforts of the South on technology transfer, capacity development, industrialization and investment in sustainable and resilient infrastructure – a possible boost to transformative triangular cooperation.⁵ It continued to advocate for those and related matters in the intergovernmental process in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future, to be held in September 2024.

12. Participants at the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries identified additional priority areas and emphasized the significance of leveraging South-South cooperation in priority areas for the least developed countries, including climate resilience, technology transfer, digital transformation, trade and investment, human capital development (including investment in young people) and development financing (including innovative financing through public-private partnerships) (A/CONF.219/2023/3, annex II, para. 38). Participants also highlighted concrete actions on which to focus, including the creation of a platform for intra-African trade and common African agro-parks, an international institute for the development of South-South and triangular cooperation, a road map for monitoring and reviewing the contribution of South-South cooperation to the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, and support for science, technology and innovation and technology transfers through the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries (*ibid.*, para. 44).

III. Support by United Nations organizations to building resilience to address current and future development challenges while seizing opportunities that new technologies present to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

A. Responding to pandemics and other health-care challenges today and in the future

13. In order to strengthen the resilience of health-care systems to counter present and future pandemics and other diseases, two centres in Latin America, the Institute of Technology on Immunobiologicals (Bio-Manguinhos) in Brazil and Sinergium Biotech, a private biopharmaceutical company in Argentina, collaborated with the World Health Organization (WHO), the Medicines Patent Pool and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to enhance regional capacities for the development of messenger RNA vaccines. In addition, through a partnership including Global Affairs Canada and PAHO, WHO helped to boost the capacity of another regional centre

⁵ See <https://www.g77.org>.

through the messenger RNA technology transfer hub that it helped to establish in Afrigen Biologics and Vaccines, a biotechnology company in South Africa. With similar support, Argentina, through public-private partnerships, also worked to produce messenger RNA vaccines as a strategic component of a medical value chain. Similarly, Brazil carried out pre-clinical trials to develop a novel RNA vaccine; if successful, the technology will be licensed to regional manufacturers at no cost.

14. The above initiatives, including support for the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, fulfil some of the commitments made by several developing countries at the twenty-first and twenty-second sessions of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation to address the COVID-19 pandemic and to build resilience in the global South.

B. Addressing climate change and transitioning to a green economy

15. Several United Nations organizations designed programmes and mechanisms to support Member States in addressing the effects of climate change through South-South and triangular cooperation. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) partnered with the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Alliance of International Science Organizations to launch its CropWatch Innovative Cooperation Programme, which uses satellite data to monitor crop conditions and integrates its findings with other climate-related data on droughts, pests and diseases for better farm management.

16. The United Nations development system scaled up multi-stakeholder engagement to marshal international collective action in addressing climate change through South-South cooperation. For example, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) engaged four regional parliaments in the Latin America and the Caribbean region to underscore the responsibility of parliamentarians in improving environmental governance and the importance of collaborative regulatory frameworks to channel financial resources towards climate adaptation, mitigation and reparation policies alongside electricity supply, green transport and the transformation of industrial development and consumption models.

17. Treaty-based agreements are another measure that United Nations organizations facilitated towards impactful climate action through South-South and triangular cooperation. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and other United Nations partners and organizations, hosted the Second Annual Forum on Human Rights Defenders in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Forum served as a platform for sharing experiences and good practices on protecting environmental defenders and on the role of parliamentarians in the protection of environment-related human rights. Those efforts augmented the implementation of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement), a significant Latin American treaty that is aimed at treating climate change as a threat to such human rights as the right to water, food, housing, self-determination and life itself.

18. During the reporting period, United Nations Volunteers and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also addressed the climatic challenges and resilience needs of marginalized communities, including migrants in the Asia and the Pacific region and people of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁶ To address

⁶ See <https://www.unv.org/Success-stories/engaging-afro-descendant-indigenous-and-migrant-communities-water-sanitation-and>.

the water security needs of people of African descent who faced discrimination, UNICEF and United Nations Volunteers from Nicaragua installed water treatment plants in Indigenous areas on the Colombia-Panama border.⁷ In addition, United Nations Volunteer experts and specialists supported the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa on the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative to help to restore about 100 million hectares of degraded landscapes in Africa.⁸

C. Adjusting to digital transformation

19. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the use of digital technologies in the delivery of public services. Many United Nations organizations intensified their support to Member States to buttress digital literacy, e-connectivity, digital governance and e-trade through gender-inclusive South-South and triangular cooperation.

20. The high-impact measures to narrow the widening digital divide between developed and developing countries received increased support from several United Nations organizations. The fifth Asia-Pacific Directors General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, convened by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), launched a platform known as the South-South Cooperation Connector to foster regional collaboration and networking. In 2023, International Telecommunication Union digital transformation centres in Indonesia and the Philippines held workshops to develop the digital literacy training capacity of trainers, with support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, including courses on productivity, entrepreneurship, e-commerce, communication, cyberhygiene, cybersecurity and transformative technologies.

21. UNDP supported the efforts of the Governments of Bangladesh and Uzbekistan in digitalization, fostering knowledge-sharing and regional collaboration, and South-South and triangular cooperation in the digital sector. In addition, UNDP introduced an online knowledge space to share best practices and provide a comprehensive overview of UNDP South-South and triangular cooperation impacts, as well as an innovative data and analytics tool to showcase exemplary UNDP initiatives in South-South and triangular cooperation. In the Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States region, UNDP promoted knowledge-sharing and capacity-building on emerging digital technology issues, opportunities and solutions, including artificial intelligence and digital portfolio formulation.

22. The use of digital technology to boost trade among Member States also received increased backing from the United Nations development system. In 2023, the Economic Commission for Europe prepared a policy brief on monitoring progress in the implementation of sustainable digital trade facilitation focused on the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, namely, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The policy brief enables evidence-based policymaking for the adoption of targeted measures to facilitate cross-border trade.

23. UNCTAD also supported the sharing of experiences relating to trade and the exchange of best practices among countries of the global South participating in its eTrade for Women initiative. Furthermore, it supported the development of a regional e-commerce strategy for the Economic Community of West African States

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See <https://www.unv.org/Success-stories/addressing-climate-change-and-desertification-sahel-region> and <https://www.unccd.int>.

(ECOWAS) that is aligned with the ECOWAS Vision 2050 to guide the region in leveraging technology to accelerate structural change and in fostering regional integration. Through its TrainForTrade programme, UNCTAD supports regional entities in boosting the digital economy in small island developing States.

24. The United Nations Capital Development Fund inclusive digital economies scorecard, implemented across 25 countries in 2023, fosters knowledge exchange and peer learning among Governments to boost collaborative approaches to digital transformation. Since its inception in 2019, the scorecard has empowered 120 Southern Government agencies and other stakeholders across regions, enabling people-to-people exchanges to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to design digital strategies and policies. Ten countries adopted the scorecard as their national digital-transformation measurement tool.

25. The considerable value of the foregoing digital initiatives lies in their scalability, which should inspire more proactive South-South collective action to ensure their emulation or adaptation to accelerate transitions to a green and digital economy across the global South.

D. Measuring South-South cooperation

26. The increasing reliance on data in decision-making aided progress in the measurement of South-South cooperation by many developing countries and their United Nations partners. In 2023, UNCTAD and the United Nations regional commissions launched a project supporting eight developing countries in gathering data and reporting on their measurement of South-South cooperation, in line with Sustainable Development Goal indicator 17.3.1. With the support of UNCTAD, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico started to draft guidance on pilot testing the measurement of South-South cooperation in selected countries. Furthermore, the Islamic Development Bank launched its South-South Cooperation Index, a composite measure to assess the existence, effectiveness and growth of the elements of national South-South cooperation ecosystems of a country.⁹

27. As developing countries strengthen their resolve to increase their collaboration on addressing shared challenges, the measurement of South-South cooperation is an effective way to use reliable data in assessing the contributions of such cooperation to sustainable development.

IV. Progress in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Buenos Aires outcome document, guided by the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development

28. Surveys conducted in 2023¹⁰ found that many United Nations entities were implementing the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, in compliance with the Buenos Aires

⁹ See <https://www.isdb.org/reverse-linkage/publications/the-isdb-south-south-cooperation-index>.

¹⁰ The surveys conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to obtain feedback from Governments on United Nations operational activities for development, United Nations system entities and resident coordinators and a survey of United Nations entities conducted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation constitute the data sources used in reporting on the implementation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development.

outcome document, in which they were encouraged to continue mainstreaming South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation.

A. Continued integration of South-South cooperation into policies, strategic plans and the programmatic work of United Nations entities

29. Nearly all 23 organizations that responded to the survey by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation for the present report confirmed their adherence to the encouragement in the Buenos Aires outcome document to mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation. That response is consistent with the prioritization of such cooperation in strategic plans. For example, 81 per cent of United Nations entities responding to the survey of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs indicated the inclusion of South-South cooperation in strategic plans, and 86 per cent had integrated South-South cooperation results into corporate reporting in 2023, up from 73 per cent and 79 per cent, respectively, in 2022. Specific steps by United Nations entities to institutionalize South-South and triangular cooperation in their work included assigning South-South focal points (58 per cent), establishing dedicated units for South-South cooperation (29 per cent) and allocating a budget for South-South cooperation (20 per cent).

30. At the global level, UNDP developed a new guidance document to integrate South-South Cooperation principles into its programmatic activities and integrate such cooperation in UNDP project life cycles.¹¹

31. At the national level, UNDP achieved the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation in over 571 (12 per cent) of all UNDP projects, across 102 countries.¹² Specifically, 347 projects used or will use South-South cooperation in building and enhancing capacities. In addition, 146 projects will utilize South-South cooperation to facilitate knowledge-sharing and exchanges, and more than 111 projects are aimed at fostering partnerships with Southern partners, underscoring the strategic importance of such collaborative approaches in advancing development objectives to attain the Sustainable Development Goals. Among them, 48 initiatives facilitated South-South and triangular cooperation to address development challenges faced by 25 small island developing States.

32. Similarly, UNEP embedded several initiatives supportive of South-South and triangular cooperation into its core business. It is reviewing its monitoring and reporting framework, project document templates and reporting tools to enhance their respective capabilities to capture, monitor and report on South-South cooperation activities implemented in its programme of work. UNEP also committed to strengthening regional engagement and inter-agency linkages to more closely monitor and follow up on strategic and political issues related to South-South and triangular cooperation (UNEP/EA.5/3/Rev.1, para. 39).

33. In September 2023, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization consulted its member States on its approach to South-South and triangular cooperation, highlighting the integration of such cooperation as a pivotal cross-cutting priority in its operational agenda. In addition, it presented its new operational guidelines, outlining their role in effectively mainstreaming South-South cooperation across its engagements.

¹¹ See document DP/2024/12, annex 3, available at <https://www.undp.org/executive-board>.

¹² Ibid.

34. Among other measures to empower developing countries to sharing knowledge on and implementing zero-hunger initiatives to strengthen national systems, focusing on the most vulnerable, the World Food Programme (WFP) updated its policy on South-South and triangular cooperation. As a sign of progress, for the first time, WFP country offices were able to report on specific South-South and triangular cooperation indicators, using corporate monitoring and reporting systems. Hence, country offices from all regions reported a total of 24 national policies, strategies, programmes and other systemic components contributing to zero hunger and other Sustainable Development Goals that WFP supported through South-South and triangular cooperation.

35. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) strategy for 2022–2027 orients the agency to increasingly mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation into its operational guidelines and operations. The new strategic plan of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), finalized in December 2023, was designed to contribute to solidarity and collective self-reliance among peoples and countries of the South. The document guides the organization in applying such principles in saving lives and protecting people on the move while finding solutions to displacement and facilitating pathways for regular migration. South-South and triangular cooperation mechanisms were also integrated into the planning and implementation mechanisms of the International Atomic Energy Agency, especially its technical cooperation programmes that facilitate capacity-building and technology transfer to its member States.

36. The International Labour Organization (ILO) initiated 28 South-South and triangular cooperation projects across five regions and its International Training Centre in Turin, Italy, for the 2022–2023 biennium. The projects have extended their reach to more than 80 countries alongside additional global activities. As mandated by the Human Rights Council, the Working Group on the Right to Development has emphasized the importance of South-South cooperation as a mechanism complementary to North-South cooperation and has encouraged Member States and other stakeholders to incorporate the right to development into the design, financing and implementation of its cooperation processes.

37. The heightened significance that developing countries attach to collaborative solutions justifies the continued integration of South-South and triangular cooperation into the core business of many United Nations entities, reflecting the strengthened ability of the United Nations development system to respond to the demands of developing countries to address specific development challenges through such modalities. This trend has the potential to galvanize the political will of Southern countries towards the renewed commitment needed for transformations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Progress in strengthening the human and institutional capacities of Member States at the national and regional levels through South-South and triangular cooperation

38. Based on the survey conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2023, requests by Member State Governments for support from the United Nations system on South-South and/or triangular cooperation rose steadily from 53 per cent in 2022 to 61 per cent in 2023. Progress in the response of the United Nations development system to that demand was evident: the percentage of host-country Governments that confirmed receiving such support from the development system rose from 67 per cent in 2022 to 71 per cent in 2023. Thirty-five per cent of Governments indicated that they had received support from the United Nations

system in establishing or strengthening national institutions engaged in South-South and triangular cooperation. The five regional commissions, namely, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, led the capacity-building efforts.

39. Many other United Nations organizations also continued to respond to the calls of Member States to strengthen their public institutions at the regional level. The number of United Nations entities supporting regional entities of the South in developing and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives increased from 15 in 2022 to 20 in 2023. UNDP collaborated with more than 40 regional institutions across various regions to bolster both interregional and intraregional efforts to integrate both modalities. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP, in partnership with the Spouses of CARICOM (Caribbean Community) Leaders Action Network, conducted training sessions for more than 450 men and boys on preventing gender-based violence. In Africa, UNDP assisted the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area in the drafting of the Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade, thus empowering women to increase their participation in regional trade and other economic enterprises.

40. In the Arab States region, UNDP advanced the formation of substantial dynamic partnerships with the League of Arab States, the Regional Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, the Clean Energy Business Council and the International Renewable Energy Agency. This heightened collaboration is intended to facilitate the transition to clean energy and extend energy access across the region. Furthermore, in the Asia and the Pacific region, UNDP collaborated with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Working Group on Water Resources Management to assist six countries in addressing transboundary environmental interconnections and pollution issues through an integrated approach to river-basin management.

41. Amid the current migration crisis, IOM relied on its African Capacity Building Centre to offer technical assistance and capacity development to African member States in order to bolster their capacities on migration and border management. In 2023, the Centre facilitated 46 capacity-development events for 654 participants, representing an increase of 41 per cent compared with the events organized in 2022. It engaged the African Union and African regional economic communities and trained migration officials on the protection of the human rights of migrants. Notably, IOM facilitated the conclusion of the Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility, a landmark agreement to address climate-induced migration and human security, exemplifying collaborative solutions to the impacts of climate change.

42. In 2023, WFP continued to play a lead role in collaborative capacity-building towards zero hunger in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and IFAD. It facilitated 74 exchanges through South-South and triangular cooperation and engaged national institutions from 69 countries for mutual learning through the support of its three centres of excellence, in Brazil, China and Côte d'Ivoire. Also, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) continued to work with regional entities, economic commissions, regional ministerial conferences and other partners in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean to accelerate the implementation of sustainable urbanization initiatives by providing technical expertise and supporting capacity development in substantive areas of its specialization. ESCWA supported at least 10 regional initiatives and developed the capacities of regional institutions, including intergovernmental regional organizations such as the League of Arab States, to develop Arab Vision 2045, a socioeconomic road map for the future of Arab countries.

43. United Nations entities also supported the formulation and implementation of regional agreements. The secretariat of PAHO/WHO developed a mechanism to foster the integration of health-related matters into the intergovernmental agreements and resolutions of the Caribbean, Central America and South America member States. In that work, which included the implementation of cooperation agreements by PAHO and subregional integration entities, PAHO addressed the adverse effects of climate change on various aspects of human well-being.¹³ It also strengthened a regional monitoring system with a focus on reducing health inequalities, the early detection of cancer in childhood and adolescence in the Andean subregion and the strengthening of national and regional capacities for the detection and surveillance of antimicrobial resistance in CARICOM countries.

44. To foster regional and global trade, UNCTAD continued to support the development and strengthening of its regional centres of excellence in Africa and Asia to address persistent and emerging challenges facing the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

C. Enhanced support for knowledge- and experience-sharing among developing countries

45. Through its convening power, the United Nations development system continued to provide Member States with opportunities to tap into Southern proven policies and development practices. Since 2021, there has been a 20 per cent increase (27 per cent to 47 per cent) in Member States reporting that they had received support from the development system in organizing global, regional and/or national knowledge-sharing initiatives on solutions from the global South.

46. Regarding interregional exchanges, ESCWA facilitated South-South collaboration between the Arab States region and Latin America to address the challenges facing more than 2 billion informal workers, or over 60 per cent of the global adult labour force, owing to the lack of social security. ESCWA worked with ministries of social affairs in Chile and Uruguay, which led to Latin American countries sharing lessons with Arab States on measures to extend social insurance coverage to informal workers. In June 2023, experts from Uruguay participated in the eighth meeting of the Group of Experts on Social Protection Reform in Arab countries to present the Monotax scheme of Uruguay. This South-South collaboration was further integrated into a triangular cooperation project funded by the Ford Foundation to support the Ministry of Social Solidarity of Egypt in developing a simplified social insurance scheme for informal workers, inspired by the tax scheme in Uruguay.¹⁴ Through the Monotax tax collection system, people who make small contributions are entitled to receive social security benefits, as salaried workers do. ESCWA also established two significant solution portals: one that collects examples of policies from all over the world that have proved successful in reducing inequality and another that shares good practices on the use of emerging technologies and innovation in Arab public institutions.¹⁵ It also organized more than 100 regional capacity-development and knowledge-sharing events that were open to all countries of the global South and the North, including a training event on gender-based violence in Africa, Western Asia and Europe that included representatives from Albania and Italy alongside representatives from Arab countries. ESCAP convened 425 knowledge-sharing events for a wide range of Southern stakeholders to address challenges to sustainable development across nine thematic areas.

¹³ See <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/cd60inf11-c-subregional-organizations>.

¹⁴ See <https://www.unescwa.org/events/eighth-meeting-group-experts-social-protection-reform>.

¹⁵ See <https://opengov.unescwa.org/index.php/case-studies>.

47. UNDP facilitated upwards of 240 South-South knowledge exchanges addressing a broad range of issues,¹⁶ including poverty eradication, biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, governance enhancement, gender equality, fiscal and financial management and digital transformation. IFAD country teams and regional offices engaged in knowledge exchange through various means, including study tours, learning events and policy dialogues. The United Nations Capital Development Fund Smart Green ASEAN Cities programme supports 15 cities from six South-east Asian countries, facilitating knowledge-sharing and peer-to-peer learning to develop innovative subnational financing mechanisms for sustainable urban development.

48. In 2023, UNICEF continued to support South-South and triangular cooperation to accelerate transfers of development solutions, good practices and lessons learned while strengthening partnerships with other United Nations agencies on shared Sustainable Development Goals. UNICEF Brazil implemented two South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, one with Angola regarding water, sanitation and hygiene and the second with Sao Tome and Principe on child protection. UNICEF Brazil also facilitated a technical exchange on social protection between Brazil and Angola in the context of the third national Conference on Social Action in Angola. UNICEF China organized several policy dialogues and capacity-building workshops that focused on South-South cooperation, including on maternal, neonatal and child health, child nutrition, water and sanitation, and climate-adaptation action. In addition, UNICEF China facilitated Government missions to Cambodia and South Africa to formulate joint South-South cooperation projects on climate-resilient water, sanitation and hygiene. UNICEF Thailand facilitated a study visit by officials from the Papua New Guinea Ministry of Education to learn about early childhood education in Thailand as well as a study visit by officials from the Department of Social Welfare and Development of the Philippines to learn about the Disability Grant Scheme of Thailand. In addition, UNICEF Thailand facilitated triangular cooperation initiatives aimed at building the capacity of the Government of Thailand through a study visit to Italy for the National Economic and Social Development Council of Thailand and the Ministry of Labour to study a European Union Youth Guarantee programme that builds the capacity of young people to transition to employment.

49. In a joint effort with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, UNICEF released a comprehensive guide on South-South and triangular cooperation best practices aimed at transforming education and achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education) through South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives.

50. A central objective of ILO courses and knowledge development series has always been the exchange of experiences among professionals from diverse countries, with peer learning serving as the foundation for creating networks and synergies for future endeavours. The ILO South-South and triangular cooperation good practices include projects or initiatives collaboratively undertaken by ILO constituents, field staff, and practitioners of South-South and triangular cooperation.¹⁷ The collaborations led by ILO and its partners included cooperation between small island developing States (SIDS-to-SIDS); country-to-country, regional and interregional projects; support to Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa; and initiatives aimed at promoting decent work.

¹⁶ See <https://data.undp.org/project-hub/south-south-and-triangular-cooperation>.

¹⁷ For additional information on International Labour Organization South-South and triangular cooperation good practices, see <http://www.southsouthpoint.net>.

D. Continued support for South-South and triangular cooperation policy development and dialogues among Member States and other stakeholders

51. Many United Nations organizations continued to support the shaping of national, regional and international policies and strategies for South-South and triangular cooperation. UNDP played its customary lead role at the global level as host of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, which is the secretariat of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, the main policymaking body on such cooperation in the United Nations development system. The Administrator of UNDP convened the twenty-first session of the High-level Committee, while the United Nations Office prepared reports of the Secretary-General and the Administrator that informed the deliberations and policy guidance by the High-level Committee and the General Assembly to the United Nations development system regarding South-South and triangular cooperation. During the session, many Member States committed to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and food and energy security in efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals through South-South collaborative initiatives. The Office also provided policy advice on South-South and triangular cooperation to Member States during preparations for the Fifth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the Third South Summit, among other intergovernmental and United Nations forums. The reports prepared by the Office were instrumental in enabling Member States to take informed policy decisions.

52. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean, established in 2021 as a subsidiary body of ECLAC, convened for its inaugural session in May 2023. The Regional Conference adopted a resolution that outlines the commitment to advance South-South cooperation across the region within the framework of Agenda 2030, stressing the importance of sharing information and experiences among the countries and calling for greater action to strengthen partnerships and synergies with stakeholders and partners. Similarly, in the Asia and the Pacific region, which has the only regional Directors General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, ESCAP played a critical role in championing South-South and triangular cooperation; as a result, in 2023, the Forum adopted a resolution on accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda that recognized the significance of South-South and triangular cooperation in that regard.

53. Regarding national dialogues to shape policies and strategies aimed at addressing thematic development challenges, various United Nations organizations convened or facilitated such interactions under their respective mandates. While those interactions are too numerous to review in the present report, a few illustrative examples are outlined below.

54. UNEP supported multiple forums of environmental ministers in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region, West Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean during their deliberations and policy decisions relevant to South-South and triangular cooperation in the context of addressing the triple planetary crisis: climate change, pollution and loss of biodiversity

55. Regarding private-sector engagement, the United Nations Global Compact leveraged its multi-stakeholder partnerships in advancing the ideals of South-South and triangular cooperation among its 21,000 members, who have committed to the 10 principles relating to anti-corruption, human rights, gender and environment. The Global Compact Africa Business Leaders Coalition, with a membership of 65

companies that collectively generate over \$100 billion in revenues, facilitated the sharing of experiences and technical know-how to drive action on climate change to achieve their renewable energy targets and resilience plans. The Global Africa Business Initiative also hosted more than 3,000 participants, including six Heads of State, and facilitated six major announcements that espoused the guiding principles of South-South and triangular cooperation.

56. Across Africa, the United Nations Capital Development Fund deepened its engagement with central banks and line ministries to support the harmonization of remittance policies and the facilitation of collaboration to address the common challenge of high costs and limited accessibility of cross-border payments. It also advanced the global discourse on municipal finance. As co-organizer of the 2023 High-Level Policy Dialogue of the Malaga Global Coalition for Municipal Finance, the Fund provided a global platform for collaborative discussions to explore subnational finance approaches and highlight the transformative power of policy reforms and innovative financing instruments in unlocking sustainable-development capital flows for local governments.

57. Regarding further South-South cooperation in the social sphere, in September 2023, UNICEF discussed areas for collaboration with the African Union Development Agency on education and investments in human capital plus health, including access to malaria vaccines, and on a groundbreaking initiative to study the impact of trade on the children and young people of Africa. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Government of Zimbabwe and Partners in Population and Development convened the twentieth International Inter-Ministerial Conference on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Population and Development, in October 2023. The Conference resulted in the adoption of the Victoria Falls Declaration on the United Nations Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development in Africa by which UNFPA member countries committed to the continued implementation of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in addition to the fostering of reproductive health and human well-being while placing human rights at the centre of development. Also, at the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation held a ministerial meeting on South-South cooperation.

58. In summary, many United Nations organizations responded to the requests of Member States for assistance in shaping policies and regulatory frameworks to bolster sustainable development through South-South and triangular cooperation actions.

E. Progress in partnership-building and resource mobilization

59. Mindful of the fact that South-South cooperation is a complement to, rather than a substitute for, North-South cooperation, the United Nations development system contributed towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 17 (partnerships for the Goals) by continuing to forge and strengthen Southern partnerships that fill gaps in development finance and catalyse numerous in-kind contributions that complement official development assistance.

60. Against that backdrop, many organizations of the United Nations development system mobilized resources from Governments, the private sector and civil society organizations through South-South and triangular cooperation. For example, the Rome-based agencies FAO, IFAD and WFP continued to forge partnerships and mobilize resources towards meeting the goal of zero hunger. Under the FAO-China

South-South Cooperation Programme, FAO launched its One Country One Priority Product initiative, to which China pledged to donate \$5 million. Under the same programme, FAO committed \$5 million in support of small island developing States to strengthen their capacities to boost innovation, digitalization and knowledge exchange. Another allocation of \$5 million was earmarked for Kenya, Malawi and Namibia to promote low-carbon tea production, agricultural mechanization, pest control and water management. Bangladesh and FAO joined forces to leverage South-South and triangular cooperation under the Programme on Agricultural and Rural Transformation for Nutrition, Employment and Resilience in Bangladesh (\$543 million) funded by the World Bank and IFAD. FAO also secured \$10 million to support projects on agricultural heritage systems and water and soil health management, among other endeavours. FAO and the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development developed a memorandum of understanding to boost the transformation of agrifood systems in Africa through South-South and triangular cooperation. WFP mobilized \$3.35 million from countries of the global South for projects associated with South-South and triangular cooperation, including through the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation and private-sector foundations, to expand and diversify its partnership base.

61. The China-IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation Facility expanded its impact, reaching more than 90,000 direct and indirect beneficiaries, fostering more than 100 business partnerships and facilitating the mobilization of more than 200 experts and solutions from the global South. Under the Facility, a new project was launched in 2023 to empower rural youth in the Kenya tomato value chain. IFAD strengthened its collaboration with partners, including the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, the China International Development Cooperation Agency and the Islamic Development Bank.

62. UNDP facilitated more than 100 South-South and triangular partnerships, primarily with national Governments, while also engaging non-State actors, including international financial institutions, civil society organizations, foundations, the private sector, research institutes and academic institutions.

63. UNCTAD facilitated partnerships towards institutional investment in Sustainable Development Goals in Africa through regional and South-South cooperation initiatives to leverage the opportunities for investors that Africa offers owing to its rich natural resources and the new African continental market. During the World Investment Forum 2023, UNCTAD announced a partnership with a network of leading African sovereign wealth funds to promote and facilitate investment in sustainable development in Africa.

64. The United Nations Capital Development Fund partnered with nine private-sector financial intermediaries to develop digital remittance channels, reaching 916,000 low-income migrants and their families, a 25 per cent increase compared with 2022. Those combined efforts facilitated 1.3 million remittance transactions in 2023, bringing the cumulative total since project inception to \$5 million.

65. During the reporting period, the United Nations Volunteers programme expanded volunteering opportunities for Southern citizens to support the initiatives of the United Nations system domestically and worldwide. It mobilized 12,840 United Nations Volunteers in 2023, of whom 11,340 or 88 per cent were from the global South. Of those, 6,263 (or 55 per cent) were women and 8,028 served as national United Nations Volunteers in their countries of origin, while 3,350 volunteered in other countries of the global South.¹⁸

¹⁸ See <https://www.unv.org/news/expanding-africa-women-health-champions-initiative>.

V. Ensuring coordinated and coherent United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation

66. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation undertook several measures towards enabling the United Nations development system to provide coordinated, coherent support to partner-country Governments through South-South and triangular cooperation. At the global level, the Office:

(a) Collaborated with the Development Coordination Office to finalize the compilation of guidelines to implement the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development. The guidelines will enable the United Nations development system at the country and regional levels to respond more systemically to requests from national partners regarding South-South cooperation;

(b) Initiated the design of online training modules to develop the capacity of the United Nations development system at the country and regional levels to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation into common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, including regional collaborative frameworks and workplans. Several development system entities supported that joint endeavour, including FAO, PAHO, UNFPA and WFP;

(c) Initiated regional dialogues on interregional and cross-regional South-South and triangular cooperation, convening a high-level discussion among United Nations development system entities with regional mandates (Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa, regional commissions and such partners and stakeholders as the African Union Commission, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development and civil society organizations;

(d) Collaborated with members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation to clarify the roles of South-South cooperation focal points in various United Nations agencies and to better capitalize on their work on South-South cooperation;

(e) Fostered accountability by ensuring that progress in the implementation of the system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development was reported to the Second Committee of the General Assembly through the annual report of the Secretary-General on the state of South-South cooperation;

(f) Coordinated with partners, including the International Atomic Energy Agency, UNCTAD and WFP, and provided a platform for agencies to learn from one another's best practices during meetings of the Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation and on the sidelines of other United Nations events.

67. To facilitate coordinated responses to the needs of Member States regarding South-South and triangular cooperation at the national and regional levels, the Office:

(a) Provided knowledge-management services regarding South-South and triangular cooperation and produced eight analytical, evidence-based publications on development topics for relevant policy choices and programming;

(b) Welcomed 73 new partners through the digital knowledge platform South-South Galaxy and added 111 new Southern development solutions to the database in 2023;

(c) Managed trust funds for the promotion of South-South cooperation, including the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation and the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund, and

facilitated the design and implementation of 71 South-South projects in collaboration with 16 United Nations organizations;

(d) Documented and disseminated numerous good development practices in partnership with various United Nations organizations, making available to development practitioners proven development policies, strategies and programmes that were worthy of being scaled up;

(e) Developed the *Handbook on Integrating South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Voluntary National Reviews*¹⁹ under the leadership of the co-chairs of the Group of Friends of the Voluntary National Reviews (Morocco and Philippines).

68. The coordination role of the Office not only augmented the systematic mainstreaming of South-South and triangular cooperation approaches to development by the United Nations development system at all levels, but also facilitated doing so in a quantifiable manner, as demonstrated by the considerable data on numerous South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives in the present report.²⁰

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

69. **South-South cooperation, with its collaborative approach, galvanized the political will of the global South to get back on track to achieve the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 of the African Union and other internationally agreed development goals, in particular through landmark declarations, resolutions and decisions adopted at the twenty-first session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, the Summit on Science, Technology and Innovation of the Group of 77 and China held in 2023, the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the Third South Summit and other forums that focused on South-South and triangular cooperation, including the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States. The Summit of the Future, to be held in September 2024, will provide a vantage point from which to further accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through support for South-South and triangular cooperation.**

70. **Looking ahead, it is essential that all Member States, United Nations entities and partners continue to strengthen South-South cooperation. In that regard:**

(a) **Member States are encouraged, with the support of the United Nations development system, to facilitate the development of, and access to, appropriate technology and support digital transitions, as well as exchanges of innovative practices to protect the interests of present and future generations, and to incorporate science, artificial intelligence and data analytics into national and international development choices;**

(b) **Member States are urged to prioritize and scale up South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives relating to the 1.9 billion young people, mostly in the global South, to enhance their digital skills, employability and entrepreneurship, with the support of the United Nations development system, and consider establishing a South-South youth innovation fund to support youth-**

¹⁹ Available at <https://unsouthsouth.org/2023/07/14/handbook-on-integrating-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-in-the-voluntary-national-reviews-2023/>.

²⁰ For more detailed information on the work of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation in 2023, see the midterm review of the Office's strategic framework, 2022–2025, available at <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-05/dp2024-12%20Annual%20Report%20South%20South.pdf>.

led sustainable development initiatives, foster innovation and enhance the meaningful engagement of young people in policymaking processes;

(c) Member States are strongly encouraged to strengthen the use of South-South cooperation ideals of multilateralism, solidarity and mutual interest to avoid divisions and conflicts through exchanges of successful conflict-prevention and peacebuilding strategies and peer mediation to address emerging security challenges, including cyberthreats;

(d) The United Nations development system is called upon to support Member States to enhance the establishment and development of platforms for innovation-sharing in education and pedagogical methods and leverage technological advancements through South-South and triangular cooperation.

71. Member States are urged to further enhance regional capacities for the development of vaccines, including with the support of the United Nations development system, and to scale up collaborative initiatives in the global South, especially in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

72. Multilateral development banks, including those based in the global South, are encouraged to spearhead reforms in the global financial architecture and take deliberate actions to address financial shocks and debt distress, in order to meet the priorities of the global South and to ensure more inclusive and effective global economic governance.

73. All stakeholders are called upon to strengthen partnerships for transformative development initiatives on a global and regional scale to maximize the impact of South-South and triangular cooperation. The United Nations development system should intensify its facilitation of the exchange of good practices and successful policies, with greater attention to multi-stakeholder policy dialogues that include the private sector, international financial institutions and multilateral development banks, through the sharing of such innovative financing models as green bonds and blended financing solutions.

74. The leadership of United Nations entities is encouraged to leverage the potential of South-South and triangular cooperation to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through (a) accelerated implementation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development; (b) full integration of South-South and triangular cooperation into the work of the United Nations development system at the global, regional and country levels; and (c) support for the roll-out of the newly launched (2023) *Guidelines for the Integration of South-South and Triangular Cooperation into the Country- and Regional-level Work of the United Nations Development System* at the national and regional levels.²¹

75. Lastly, it is essential that United Nations resident coordinators continue to spearhead the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation into the work of United Nations country teams.

²¹ Available at <https://unsouthsouth.org/2023/12/08/guidelines-for-the-integration-of-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-into-the-country-and-regional-level-work-of-the-united-nations-development-system/>.