



Summary Webinar

“Fostering South-South cooperation on nature-based solutions for a low-emission and climate-resilient recovery”

September 23 8:30 –10:00 am New York Time at <https://undp.zoom.us/j/93943851768>

Organized by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), this webinar brought together experts, scientists, and researchers from national, regional and international organizations to share their experiences in developing, using, and promoting nature-based solutions in countries of the Global South.

1) Opening Remarks

The event started with the Opening remarks of Mr. Adel Abdellatif, Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), who thanked the panelists and attendants for their presence at the event. There are not very good news on global biodiversity targets right now. Therefore, the topic of this webinar is currently very timely and relevant with proximity of the Summit on Biodiversity, which will be convened next week under the theme “Urgent Action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development.”

2) Presentations:

Ms. Muriel Obon (UNOSSC) introduced the members of the panel who proceeded with their presentations:

Mr. Moritz Weigel, Managing Director of The ChinaAfricaAdvisory and former Senior Research & Program Advisor, UNOSSC. Mr. Weigel presented the UNOSSC Publication on South-South and Triangular Cooperation, highlighting case studies on nature-based solutions.

Next presenter was Ms. Yoko Watanabe, Global Manager of the UNDP GEF/Small Grants Programme who presented the experiences of the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), implemented by UNDP that promotes replication and upscaling of good practices on global environmental issues/nature-based solutions across participating countries and regions. The SGP South-South Community Innovation Platform supports peer-to-peer, in person exchange among civil society and community-based organizations at the regional and global level, to learn and apply effective local solutions, including technologies, tools and practices.

Ms. Anne Bogdanski, Natural Resources Officer of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) presented the FAO-led International Sustainable Bioeconomy Working Group (ISBWG), a South-South and Triangular Cooperation mechanism that provides knowledge and experience-sharing on bioeconomy and nature-based solutions. Together with the BMEL funded project “Towards Sustainable Bioeconomy Guidelines”, the group supports knowledge exchange between members on transitioning to a sustainable and circular bioeconomy, including: (1) Better understanding the potential benefits and risks of bio-innovations through lessons learnt and good practices; (2) Providing guidance to national and regional stakeholders in the development of sustainable and circular bioeconomy strategies and (3) Supporting bioeconomy monitoring and evaluation toward a sustainable economy.

Next presenter was Ms. Charlotte King, International Communications Specialist of the International Bamboo and Rattan Organization (INBAR) who showcased bamboo as “a natural tool for South-South

cooperation”, as it grows across developing countries in the Global South, including 46 out of 47 of INBAR’s Member States. Bamboo is a well-known tool for livelihood creation and poverty alleviation in rural areas, but it also offers important ecosystem services: restoring degraded land, storing carbon and preserving biodiversity. INBAR estimates there are 50 million hectares of bamboo around the world and that countries should all use it.

Ms. Kelly Witkowsky, Manager, Climate Change and Natural Resources Program of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) introduced the System of Rice intensification (SRI), a solution that provides multiple benefits and contributes towards multiple sustainable development goals. Based on a set of four agro-ecological principles, SRI alters the management of the plant, soils, water, and inputs to enhance productivity and resilience while improving natural resource use. It is a flexible methodology that can be contextualized in different geographies to respond to the priorities and abilities of each farmer. IICA have worked in Dominican Republic, Colombia, Chile, Suriname, Venezuela, Panama, and others to demonstrate the principles of SRI in producers’ fields. SCTC can help drive the necessary transformation through knowledge-sharing on topics like using circular bioeconomy approaches, GHG monitoring, water use efficiency, mechanization, data collection and evaluation, among others.

Next presenter was Mr. Christian Susan, Industrial Development Officer of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), who presented 3 case studies on ecosystem services and nature-based solutions from: (1) Vietnam: Pyrolysis of coffee husks; (2) Montenegro: Reed bed filter for sludge treatment; and (3) Indonesia: Public-private partnerships on water stewardship.

Ms. Shira Mukiibi, Business Development Manager of BioInnovate Africa (BA), the regional innovation-driven programme of the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE), presented innovative biobased ideas that were translated into value-added goods and services across six eastern Africa countries. Bio-alkanol gel is a biobased innovative idea, implemented through a collaborative partnership among academic institutions and government organisations in the Lake Victoria basin (LVB). The gel is an affordable alternative to wood fuel for rural and peri-urban households in LVB with comparable heating properties as Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) but with more added benefits such as mosquito repellent properties, among others. A litre of the gel retails at USD 1 (One USD) and is enough for a family of four (4) persons for 4-5 days. It takes an ecosystem to build a great product. Targeted capacity strengthening for innovation is critical to encourage ownership and participation in building local innovation ecosystems. South-South-Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) could potentially accelerate long-term investments in Science, Technology and Innovation and strengthen enabling environments.

3. Q&A and discussion

Ms. Xiaojun Grace Wang, Deputy Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) introduced 3 thematic lines to stimulate the discussion:

- 1) **Financing:** All good practiced and initiatives on nature-based solutions usually involve small holder producers, grass-root based organizations, communities and its future relies a lot on how these can link well with the market with the value-chain integration. Investment is the key. Many have started from grants. If we think of how development financing institutions funds can actually play a role in what more needs to be done, specially now more room in development financing institutions from the global south there are over 250 development banks and such institutions now in the south. How do we link up with that. Innovative financing, there are examples green financing, blue and green bonds, digital financing are supporting NBS and overall bound economy. There are questions about developing financing and commercial financing is also part of the picture.

- 2) Impact/scale: we have examples of how engaging multi-stakeholders working actively at community level is contributing to the overall call for inclusive global partnership to SDGs. It is big linkage between what local farmer farmers are doing with what you are doing at regional or global level. It's great to hear from you what are the opportunities to unlock to better bring these kinds of solutions to contribute to global agenda and the future of an inclusive multilateralism.
- 3) Broker SSC: UNOSCC can provide the needed support. We are offering tool and we want to be more demand driven. Each case tells us their individual challenges. Please highlight what are the real challenges you have face while working on SSC and how can we help. Proposals to work together to build a better post COVID era.

Ms. Kelly Witkowsky from IICA mentioned that there is still uncertainties about the effectiveness of green bonds in development. On that, SSC could help by promoting discussions among countries and creating a system to better understand the impact of bonds, its effectiveness and if it's worth the investment. In the agriculture sector there is always development finance versus commercial finance. Development finance needs to be a bridge to cover cost and risk-associated issues, but in the long run farming is a business and farmers are businesspeople. In the large part, farmers are connected to markets and we need to make sure that the solutions that are being promoted really work economically and environmentally. Experiences at the local level clearly show that the agricultural sector has an important nexus between several global challenges and that without additional resources directed towards the sector and the creation of additional linkages with other sectors (tourism, health, water and environment), it will be a challenge to achieve the SDGs. IICA works with different actors to better demonstrate how initiatives on the ground connect with national level processes efforts to achieve international commitments. It's a long process but if we can demonstrate how SRI contributes to the goals of the SDGs, UNCCD and UNFCCC. Mapping these experiences helps to drive resources towards grass-root actions where climate adaptation and mitigation need to take place.

Ms. Shira Mukiibi from BioInnovative Africa received a question about what fruits were necessary to produce the alcohol gel. She mentioned that the gel is basically made with banana peels and orange fruit peelings and other similar organic foods that contain a certain compound with mosquito-repellant properties (more information at <https://bioinnovate-africa.org/>)

Ms. Mukiibi also spoke about her perspective working in Africa, particularly in Bioinnovative. The programme has a large and unique setup with regional challenges related to funding, as countries do not devote much of their national budgets towards science technology and innovation. BA believes that a science driven economy will be able to help achieve some of the key sustainable development goals. When it comes down to innovation, SSC can help to support governments to come up with better policies and better ways of allocating more funding or even support them to allocate more funding towards science technology and innovation to drive that that kind of a system. Bioinnovative is working together with partners within the East African Community to support the development of the economy strategy which will have a shared vision for seven countries within eastern Africa.

4. Conclusions

Mr. Haroldo Machado-Filho, Senior Advisor on SDG and Coherence of UNDP Brazil and former Senior Programme Manager on Climate and Sustainability of UNOSSC, proceeded with the conclusions of the webinar.

As Mr. Abdellatif, mentioned at the beginning, unfortunately we do not have very goods new on biodiversity targets. Therefore, the topic of this webinar is very relevant with proximity of the Summit on Biodiversity,

which will be convened under the theme “Urgent Action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development.” It could not have a better theme to be addressed in the current context.

Pannelists presented good practices and solutions that show the integrated and intelinked nature of the SDGs. This webinar is not only about SDG 15 though, it is about all SDGs and about integrated solutions. We heard today about solutions related to food safety and security, poverty eradication, mitigation of health problems, sustainable energy solutions, business opportunities, job creation, resilience value-added income, combat to climate change and many other issues. We have heard very successful stories around the globe on how to promote nature-based solutions for a sustainable planet, which is actually one of the signature solutions of UNDP, in light of its Strategic Planning.

Thank you to the pannelists for inspiring stories and for reminding us that biodiversity and terrestrial and marine ecosystems provide the foundation for human societies and a safety net of resources and ecosystem services for billions of people. We also heard about multi-stakeholders platforms, not only different UN agencies, funds and programmes, but also other international organizations, private sector, academia, and NGOs who are applying integrated actions on ‘nature-based solutions’ in partnership with many stakeholders. It also reflected the spirit of the Conference BAPA+40 held last year.

Most of these actions have been built on innovative partnerships. We have found out about great examples not only on bilateral and regional SSC, but also on triangular cooperation. It’s important to point out the importance of traditional knowledge upon which we can build up. Most of the innovative programmes that the panellists mentioned highlight contributions of women and men, including in indigenous communities.

Ms. Xiaojun Grace Wang highlighted the the challenges and opportunities we face. These initiatives are addressing biodiversity loss by tackling market, policy and governance failures that lead to ecosystem degradation. Many participants stressed the relevance of identifying and accessing new financing opportunities, promoting policy coherence on natural resources and helping transitions to green economies. We still need to look for innovative finance, for tenure, water and land rights, with a clear understanding of the differentiated impacts. How can we stimulate the transformation that we want to promote?

Brazil is an example of a continent-sized country country usually remembered by its abundant natural resources but also with enormous challenges to realize that “nature-based solutions” can be an accelerator of sustainable development. In addition to harbouring over a third of the Earth’s tropical forests – the Amazon forest –, there are other ecological regions of great extensions in the country, such as the Cerrado (Brazilian savannah) and Pantanal. Nevertheless, Brazil faces important development challenges in combining the benefits of agricultural growth, environmental protection and sustainable development. Illegal deforestation and biodiversity loss are very a serious problem not only in Brazil, but in many Southern countries. These illegal activities have been translated into negative externalities rather than into economic gains for the Brazilian society as a whole.

Nevertheless, having heard the good practices that presented today, there is hope. People are exploiting new options to support productive activities that are aligned with the paradigm shift of low-carbon development and “green economy”, in a competitive and sustainable manner, that could balance inclusive economic growth, social protection and conservation of the planet’s natural resources.

In the aftermath of COVID-19, nature-based solutions can indeed assist with sustainable recovery efforts protecting natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems. The main message, to sum-up, is that nature - ecosystems and biodiversity - are not a burden that we must preserve, they could and must be a key source of solutions for sustainable development. And we can do it together through South-South and triangular cooperation. In the middle of the UN 75th anniversary, multilateralism is more important than ever.