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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 [77/185](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the state of South-South cooperation. The report highlights global challenges and emerging issues and trends in South-South and triangular cooperation. It also provides an assessment of progress in implementing the recommendations contained in the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, in particular the numerous initiatives undertaken by the United Nations development system in support of South-South and triangular cooperation in 2022 to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report also contains an analysis of progress in implementing the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024, during the reporting period. The report concludes with recommendations on ways to further enhance the contribution of South-South and triangular cooperation to accelerating progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

* [A/78/150](#).

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution [77/185](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the state of South-South cooperation, including the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. The report, which covers the year 2022, provides analytical information and evidence-based, action-oriented recommendations to inform deliberations on South-South cooperation as the Assembly considers the item on operational activities for development at its seventy-eighth session. The report is important in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit to be held in September 2023, marking the half-way point to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as the report emphasizes the role of South-South and triangular cooperation as demand-based modalities for developing countries to fast-track progress through the exchange of knowledge, technology development and transfer, and financing.

2. The report draws on findings from responses to a survey conducted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation among United Nations entities and to quadrennial comprehensive policy review surveys conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs among Member States, United Nations entities and resident coordinators from January to December 2022. The report also presents, in synthesized manner, information contained in official documents, websites and publications of United Nations entities relevant to South-South and triangular cooperation and research published by members of the South-South Global Thinkers network.

3. Global challenges and emerging issues and trends in South-South and triangular cooperation are set out in section II of the present report. Section III contains a review of progress made by the United Nations development system in implementing the recommendations of the Buenos Aires outcome document. Section IV provides a review of progress in the operationalization and implementation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024, which is coordinated by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. Section V contains conclusions and recommendations on the measures needed to further leverage South-South and triangular cooperation as urgently needed accelerators for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in the face of multiple and interlocking crises.

II. Global challenges and emerging issues and trends in South-South and triangular cooperation

A. Responding to the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine

4. The devastating socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have derailed progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The pandemic disrupted supply chains, forced millions of people into poverty or extreme poverty, increased debt and inflation across the global South, and exacerbated inequality, including vaccine inequity, around the world. In 2022, developing countries continued to be most affected by these global challenges, which were further intensified by the impacts of the war in Ukraine and other armed

conflicts, which have led to increasing debt levels, economic slowdown, inflation and food and energy crises. An unprecedented level of global solidarity is required to overcome the multiple impacts of the pandemic on developing countries, in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

5. At its twentieth session, held in June 2021, the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation reiterated the significant role and enhanced value of South-South cooperation during the pandemic and underlined that the solidarity underpinning such cooperation had enabled developing countries to obtain vaccines, medication and personal protective equipment from their Southern partners. With their expanded scope and solidarity-based cooperation models, South-South and triangular cooperation remained vital modalities of development action, not only to address the immediate impacts of the pandemic but also to build resilience and transformational systems for the future.

6. South-South and triangular cooperation continued to play an important role in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and in the establishment of vaccine production facilities in developing countries, including in Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates. According to the survey of United Nations entities conducted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, in 2022, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) regional COVID-19 recovery project provided medical waste management equipment and materials, technology transfer and technical advice and supported the institutional strengthening of health systems in five countries in the Asia-Pacific region, reaching approximately 14 million direct and indirect beneficiaries.

7. However, overall access to COVID-19 vaccines continued to remain a challenge in many developing countries. By the end of 2022, only 43 per cent of the population in least developed countries had been vaccinated, compared with 75 per cent in developed countries.¹

8. Southern development banks also continued to play an important role in financing the recovery from the pandemic in developing countries. This included the New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which finance projects in various regions, as well as regional development banks such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the African Export-Import Bank.

9. By the end of 2022, the New Development Bank had provided more than \$10 billion in loans to support the emergency response and economic recovery of its members, including Brazil, India and South Africa.² In 2021, the Bank's membership expanded to include Bangladesh and the United Arab Emirates, and in 2022, Egypt and Uruguay expressed interest in joining the Bank as members.

10. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank increased the financing volume of its COVID-19 crisis recovery facility to \$20 billion in 2022 and extended its duration until the end of 2023. As at February 2022, 46 projects had been approved, totalling \$11.6 billion across 25 member countries: \$3.4 billion for the public health sector; \$2.3 billion for finance and liquidity; and \$5.9 billion for economic resilience and policy-based financing.³

11. In Latin America, the Inter-American Development Bank committed approximately \$8 billion, and the subregional development banks, namely the Development Bank of Latin America, the Central American Bank for Economic

¹ See www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/LDC-vaccine-31-Dec-22.pdf.

² See www.ndb.int/projects/covid-19-emergency-assistance-info-hub.

³ See www.aiib.org/en/policies-strategies/COVID-19-Crisis-Recovery-Facility/index.html.

Integration and the Caribbean Development Bank, committed \$12 billion collectively, to address the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by financing emergency programmes, including health measures, and by providing contingent credit lines.⁴

12. The African Export-Import Bank continued its pandemic trade impact mitigation facility (PATIMFA) and its \$1.5 billion collaborative COVID-19 pandemic response facility (COPREFA). PATIMFA helped the Bank's member countries to mitigate and manage the financial, economic and health effects of the pandemic on the African continent, while COPREFA assisted African economies to withstand commodity price shocks and to procure medical supplies.⁵

13. Some development banks of the global South also realigned their corporate strategies in 2022 in response to the pandemic. The Islamic Development Bank, for example, shifted the focus of its strategy for the 2023–2025 period to boosting recovery from economic losses caused by the pandemic while tackling poverty, building resilience against future economic shocks and driving green economic growth.⁶

B. Combating the debt crisis

14. According to the *World Economic Outlook* published by the International Monetary Fund in October 2022, inflation was forecast to rise to a global average of 8.8 per cent in 2022, while global growth was expected to continue to slow down to 3.2 per cent in 2022 and to 2.7 per cent in 2023.⁷ Rising interest rates and slowing global growth risk tipping a large number of countries into debt crises. About 60 per cent of the poorest countries are already at high risk of debt distress or already in distress.⁸

15. According to the latest available data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Sustainable Development Goal financing gap in developing countries increased by 56 per cent in 2020, totalling \$3.9 trillion.⁹ While official development assistance rose to \$162.2 billion in 2020, the highest level ever recorded, global inflation has degraded its purchasing power. At the same time, OECD predicts that between 2020 and 2025, external debt service in developing countries is projected to reach \$375 billion on average.¹⁰

16. One of the main findings of the *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2022* is that “many countries are at risk of sinking deeper into a cycle of unsustainable debt and austerity while incidents of poverty and hunger are on the rise”, with 60 per cent of least developed and other low-income countries already at high risk of, or in, debt distress.¹¹ Rising interest costs in the poorest countries remained a key challenge in 2022, as those countries faced higher interest rates, slower economic recoveries and persistent revenue shortfalls. That was in addition to increasing gross external

⁴ See Georgina Cipoletta Tomassian and Tarek Abdo, “Development bank financing in the context of the COVID-19 crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean”, *Financing for Development*, No. 272 (Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2022).

⁵ See www.afreximbank.com/afreximbank-recognised-for-role-in-africas-fight-against-covid-19.

⁶ See www.isdb.org/news/supporting-resilience-and-sustainability-through-south-south-cooperation.

⁷ See International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook: Countering the Cost-of-Living Crisis* (Washington, D.C., 2022).

⁸ See www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/12/06/debt-service-payments-put-biggest-squeeze-on-poorcountries-since-2000.

⁹ See OECD, *Global Outlook on Financing for Sustainable Development 2023: No Sustainability Without Equity* (Paris, 2023).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See United Nations, Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2022* (New York, 2022).

financing needs in many least developed countries and other low-income countries due to higher external debt service and widening current account deficits.

17. In this context, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda continues to serve as the global framework for financing sustainable development by aligning all financing flows and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities. In the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Heads of State and Government and high representatives recognized “the need to assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief, debt restructuring and sound debt management, as appropriate”. They also recognized South-South cooperation as “an important element of international cooperation for development as a complement, not a substitute, to North-South cooperation” and committed “to strengthening triangular cooperation as a means of bringing relevant experience and expertise to bear in development cooperation”.

C. Taking urgent climate action

18. Addressing the climate crisis requires cooperation between all countries and stakeholders, with South-South cooperation playing an important complementary role to North-South cooperation. The countries of the global South continue to be at the frontline of the fight against climate change and are the ones suffering the most from the climate crisis. At the same time, they have been innovating and developing a broad range of adaptation and mitigation solutions that are in harmony with local socioeconomic circumstances, building on indigenous knowledge and endogenous technologies. Some Southern countries also have contemporary cutting-edge equipment, know-how and expertise. Climate technologies originating from developing countries are often likely to be suitable for other developing country contexts because of similarities in geoclimatic, cultural and socioeconomic conditions. The value that developing countries see in South-South cooperation for climate change is reflected in their updated nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement on climate change, which increasingly feature South-South and triangular cooperation as important climate action modalities.

19. There is growing recognition that progress in the implementation of the Paris Agreement is inextricably linked to progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda and its Goals. The South-South cooperation trust funds managed by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, namely, the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation, the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund and the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation, continued to disburse funding for projects with strong climate action components in 2022.

20. At the interregional and regional levels, South-South cooperation on climate change was pursued through regional institutions, frameworks and initiatives. In 2022, the African Union finalized its first Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2032). Examples of South-South cooperation on climate change reported by United Nations entities in 2022 include the climate security in the Pacific project supported by the Peacebuilding Fund and managed by the Peacebuilding Support Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, which is helping to strengthen knowledge exchange and the empowerment of low-lying atoll countries, in particular Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, in addressing the security threats linked to climate change. UNDP and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation backed the International Solar Alliance led by India, as well as South-South partnerships between Africa and China, India and Türkiye and the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation. The International Solar Alliance is to benefit 10 countries in Africa and

the Asia-Pacific region: Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, the Niger, Senegal, South Sudan, the Sudan, Togo, Tuvalu and Uganda. The India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation is deploying solar-operated water pump systems to expand access to clean, affordable energy and safe water for household and agricultural use and is being implemented by UNDP India. A further example is the Global Network of Regional Sustainable Energy Centres that the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) continued to spearhead in 2022, in partnership with subregional economic communities and their member States, to accelerate the energy transition in developing countries through South-South and triangular cooperation. Furthermore, in 2022, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) partnered with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation to produce a compilation of innovative climate actions through South-South and triangular cooperation at the city level.

D. Advancing digitalization and science, technology and innovation

21. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to accelerate the transition to digital technologies, facilitating new solutions to socioeconomic challenges through new ways of communication, work, commerce and finance. Nevertheless, while in some developing countries, including in some small island developing States in the Pacific,¹² the pandemic served as a catalyst for digital initiatives, overall, digitalization in the global South remained characterized by large imbalances. Only 36 per cent of the population in least developed countries used the Internet in 2022, compared with 66 per cent globally. As much as 17 per cent of the population in least developed countries lacked access to a fixed or mobile broadband network. The remaining 47 per cent of the population continued to be offline due to other barriers, including the affordability of information and communications technology (ICT) services. On average, using the Internet in least developed countries continued to be more costly than anywhere else in the world.¹³ Moreover, a wide gender gap existed within the digital divide. For instance, almost 259 million fewer women had access to the Internet compared with men. Only 63 per cent of women used the Internet in 2022, compared with 69 per cent of men, according to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The gender gap was even more concerning in lower-income countries, in which 21 per cent of women were online, compared with 32 per cent of men, a figure that has not improved since 2019.¹⁴

22. There were, however, a growing number of examples of how South-South cooperation at the regional, national and local levels could narrow the digital divide. For example, at the regional level, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) started to implement its Consolidated Strategy on the Fourth Industrial Revolution for ASEAN, to guide its members' work on digital transformation. Another example is the digital transformation strategy of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, which was developed in 2022 and aims to use digital health solutions to enhance disease surveillance and response and improve health-care delivery throughout the continent. In Arab countries, the digital divide is being addressed through the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which is intended to realize the digital rights of persons with disabilities.

¹² See United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Digital Economy Report, Pacific Edition 2022: Towards Value Creation and Inclusiveness* (Geneva, 2022).

¹³ See International Telecommunication Union (ITU), *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures – Focus on Least Developed Countries* (2023).

¹⁴ See ITU, "The gender digital divide". Available at www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/2022/11/24/ff22-the-gender-digital-divide/.

23. On science, technology and innovation, the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals highlighted that international cooperation, including South-South cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships, needed to be reinvigorated to mobilize and harness science, technology and innovation in order to accelerate progress towards sustainable recovery and development.¹⁵ In that connection, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation mapped South-South cooperation in science, technology and innovation and analysed the state of science, technology and innovation in the global South, based on a series of case studies across regions.¹⁶ The study concluded that information on South-South cooperation on science, technology and innovation was scattered and that large-scale data collection would be required to understand the current status of such cooperation, and recommended that the national science, technology and innovation systems of developing countries should be analysed to enable the building of a road map for system improvements and for identifying opportunities for South-South cooperation. The International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation, under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, could provide a platform for undertaking such comprehensive analysis across the global South.

E. Bringing triangular cooperation to scale

24. In 2022, participants at the annual International Meeting on Triangular Cooperation, jointly organized by OECD and the Government of Portugal, concluded that triangular cooperation was growing and continued to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Goals by bringing together complementary strengths and resources of Northern and Southern partners.¹⁷ While Governments and multilateral and international organizations continued to be the main actors in triangular cooperation, an increasing number of projects included multiple stakeholder groups, including intergovernmental organizations, civil society, academia, the private sector and philanthropic institutions. Despite those encouraging developments, however, more efforts would be required to tap into the full potential of triangular cooperation.

25. In a report published in 2022, OECD noted that triangular cooperation was increasing in Africa.¹⁸ As at February 2021, 33 per cent of the projects listed in the OECD triangular cooperation repository of projects¹⁹ involved African countries, compared with 21 per cent in 2016. The OECD report stated that triangular cooperation had great potential to address three megatrends identified as critical to African development in the African Union's Agenda 2063, namely information and communications technology, environment and climate change, and demographic changes (youth employment, urbanization and international mobility), and listed examples of how triangular cooperation was already happening across the continent. In 2022, OECD published a guidance note to assist members of its Development Assistance Committee in their reporting of triangular cooperation activities.

26. Some developed countries allocated dedicated resources for triangular cooperation or set up and managed triangular cooperation funds and continued to make contributions to those funds in 2022. Examples of such funds include the

¹⁵ See [E/HLPF/2022/6](#).

¹⁶ See <https://unsouthsouth.org/2022/01/17/south-south-ideas-paper-mapping-south-south-cooperation-in-science-technology-and-innovation-for-theory-and-practice>.

¹⁷ See www.oecd.org/dac/triangular-co-operation/Summary_Lisbon_TRC_Oct22.pdf.

¹⁸ https://triangular-cooperation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/OECD_Triangular-co-operation-with-Africa.pdf.

¹⁹ See www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/triangular-co-operation-repository.htm.

Regional Fund for Triangular Cooperation with Partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany and implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation, and the Fund for Triangular Cooperation with Asia, commissioned by the Federal Ministry and implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation. Projects implemented under those funds in 2022 included a project to develop geospatial information systems for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of social programmes in Peru, with support from India, and a project to increase agricultural productivity in Ethiopia based on lessons learned from Brazil.

III. Progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the Buenos Aires outcome document by United Nations entities

A. Continued integration of South-South and triangular cooperation into policies, strategies and programming

27. According to a survey of the headquarters of United Nations system entities conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2022, United Nations entities continued to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation into their strategies and policies. In 2022, 73 per cent reported integrating South-South and triangular cooperation as specific implementation modalities into their global strategic plans and programming instruments, and 75 per cent reported integrating them into their regional plans.

28. The UNDP Strategic Plan 2022–2025 includes South-South and triangular cooperation as a fundamental approach to development cooperation and as integral to the way UNDP works and thinks about the future of development. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in its Strategic Plan 2022–2025, elevated South-South and triangular cooperation as programmatic accelerators for results. In 2022, UNFPA also published its corporate strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation and issued South-South and triangular cooperation indicators to guide the programming and activities of its country offices. Similarly, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) had in place strategic plans and guidelines to further mainstream and institutionalize South-South and triangular cooperation at the country level. In 2022, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) released its South-South and Triangular Cooperation Guidelines for Action 2022–2025 and its South-South and Triangular Cooperation Implementation Plan 2022–2025, and started a process for monitoring the inclusion of South-South and triangular cooperation in its country programme documents. The Pan American Health Organization continued to institutionalize South-South cooperation in 2022 by incorporating such cooperation as a cross-cutting approach into the guidelines for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of its Strategic Plan 2020–2025. Through this approach, 37 of the Organization’s regional, subregional and country entities incorporated South-South and triangular cooperation into their 2022–2023 biennial work plans. Throughout 2022, UNIDO was dedicated to the creation of a comprehensive organizational strategy, aligning its efforts with the Buenos Aires outcome document. The World Intellectual Property Organization defined a new plan of action to support and encourage more South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives with and among its member States.

29. The General Assembly, in its resolutions [76/221](#) and [77/185](#), gave a strong mandate to the United Nations development system to continue mainstreaming South-South and triangular cooperation into the United Nations Sustainable Development

Cooperation Frameworks at the country level, as appropriate, as a means to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Goals. The Assembly called upon the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation to work in collaboration with the United Nations system organizations and the regional commissions to mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation, including through regional collaborative frameworks for such cooperation.

30. In line with that mandate, in 2022, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, in collaboration with the Development Coordination Office and regional commissions, prepared guidance for United Nations country teams and the United Nations development system at the regional level to support them in mainstreaming South-South and triangular cooperation into United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks at the country level and into United Nations planning and monitoring instruments at the regional level.

31. The regional commissions had South-South cooperation at the core of their work, given their mandate to promote cooperation among Member States within their respective geographic regions. In 2022, several commissions reported on progress in the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation approaches into their work. The Economic Commission for Europe reported that its programme budget for 2023 included a reference to South-South cooperation, demonstrating a clear allocation of funds for South-South cooperation initiatives. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific included specific references to South-South and triangular cooperation in its regional programme document.

32. In line with General Assembly resolution [77/185](#), United Nations entities ensured that their country programme documents were informed by the system-wide guidance on South-South cooperation, while they sought to further align them with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. For example, South-South and triangular cooperation-related indicators or activities were included in 100 per cent of IFAD country programme documents, 90 per cent of UN-Habitat country programme documents targeting least developed countries and small island developing States, 87 per cent of WFP country programme documents, 80 per cent of UNFPA country programme documents, about 60 per cent of UNDP and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) country programme documents, 41 per cent of UNIDO country programme documents, and 25 per cent of International Labour Organization (ILO) country programme documents.

33. Seventy per cent of the 115 United Nations country teams that responded to the survey indicated that the main challenges in providing support for South-South and triangular cooperation were lack of dedicated resources and capacity. Lack of engagement at the national level and the need for corporate strategy and policy were cited as other main challenges by 27 per cent and 26 per cent of respondents, respectively.

B. Enhancing networks for knowledge-sharing, codifying good practices and brokering partnerships

34. In 2022, United Nations entities continued to enhance networks for knowledge-sharing, codify good practices in South-South and triangular cooperation, and broker South-South partnerships. For example, a recent report by UNDP on accelerating COVID-19 recovery through pan-African solidarity illustrates how South-South and triangular cooperation have increased the resilience of Africa to the COVID-19 pandemic through the mutual sharing of knowledge, skills and expertise across the

continent, including on financing and debt restructuring.²⁰ At the national level, UNFPA facilitated exchanges of experts in national civil registries between the Republic of Moldova and India, with support from the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund. At the city level, the regional commissions, together with UN-Habitat and the United Nations Capital Development Fund, implemented a 16-country project to build urban economic resilience during and after the pandemic,²¹ including by facilitating exchanges between cities and supporting municipal authorities to develop economic recovery and resilience plans and identify possible funding sources for realizing those plans.

35. South-South Galaxy, hosted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, continued to serve as the United Nations global online platform for knowledge-sharing and partnership development for South-South and triangular cooperation. By the end of 2022, it had served more than 500 registered entities (a 25 per cent increase from 2021) and included over 1,000 good practices (a 25 per cent increase from 2021) in South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, including responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

36. Many United Nations entities also continued to codify good practices in South-South and triangular cooperation in 2022. For example, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, in partnership with FAO, issued a compendium of FAO experiences with South-South and triangular cooperation in agricultural development.²² The Office also issued a publication on good practices in South-South and triangular cooperation in least developed countries²³ and its fourth volume on good practices in South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development.²⁴ The United Nations Volunteers programme launched a separate thematic section on South-South cooperation under its knowledge portal on volunteerism, which contains global, regional and national data and evidence on South-South cooperation and volunteerism.

37. With regard to enhancing networks for knowledge-sharing and brokering partnerships, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific carried out a variety of activities in 2022, including co-hosting the Global South-South Development Expo with the Government of Thailand and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, facilitating meetings of the Asia-Pacific Directors General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and developing and launching the South-South Cooperation Connector, a virtual platform that bridges the supply-and-demand gap of technical cooperation.

38. ITU, in the context of its Women in Cyber Mentorship Programme, engaged role models in cybersecurity and connected them with talented women in Africa, the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific, which resulted in over 200 women from 69 countries being trained and matched with 86 mentors.

39. IOM continued to implement and launch new South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives designed to benefit developing countries in making progress towards good migration governance through capacity development, knowledge exchanges, and cross-border and regional or cross-regional dialogue.

²⁰ See UNDP, *Accelerating COVID-19 Recovery through Ushikamano wa Pan-Africa* (Pretoria, 2022).

²¹ See <https://urbaneconomicresilience.org>.

²² See www.fao.org/3/cc0678en/cc0678en.pdf.

²³ See www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SSTC-Good-Practices-in-LDCs-EN.pdf.

²⁴ See <https://unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Good-Practices-in-South-South-and-Triangular-Cooperation-for-SustainableDevelopment-Vol-4.pdf>.

40. In its latest report, published in 2022, the Ibero-American General Secretariat, which supports 22 countries that make up the Ibero-American community, identified 1,168 South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives carried out in 2020 and 2021. The report serves as an important reference and a source for good practices on South-South and triangular cooperation in Ibero-American countries.²⁵

C. Advancing policymaking on South-South and triangular cooperation

41. United Nations entities continued to facilitate policy dialogue, research and advocacy on South-South and triangular cooperation. At the global level, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation continued to serve as the substantive secretariat of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, providing Member States with evidence-based research and analysis on challenges, trends and opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation, including reports to inform the considerations and recommendations of the Committee. In 2022, the Office began preparations for the twenty-first session of the Committee, to be held in 2023. To further advance policymaking on South-South and triangular cooperation, the Office convened a ministerial dialogue at the Global South-South Development Expo in 2022.

42. To further mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation into policy processes and resolutions, in 2022, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation reviewed draft resolutions of the Second Committee during the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly to identify priority thematic areas that would benefit from the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation based on the needs articulated by Member States, the Buenos Aires outcome document, decisions of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, recommendations contained in reports of the Secretary-General, the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2022 session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development,²⁶ and the ministerial declaration of the Group of 77 and China.²⁷ As a result, South-South and triangular cooperation were incorporated into 24 resolutions in 2022.

43. Research institutions and think tanks of the global South or with a focus on the global South continued to inform the global development discourse, including by contributing insights from South-South and triangular cooperation. Through the South-South Global Thinkers network, a global coalition of think tanks and think tank networks for South-South cooperation supported by UNDP and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, 10 research papers were issued and one global policy dialogue was held in 2022 on the occasion of the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation.

D. Promoting the development, transfer and dissemination of technologies

44. In 2022, the United Nations development system used digital technologies to advance South-South knowledge-sharing and collaboration and strengthened its efforts to promote technology development, transfer and dissemination. For example, a regional South-South cooperation project under the FAO-China South-South Cooperation Programme supported 12 countries of the Community of Latin American

²⁵ See Ibero-American General Secretariat, *Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America 2022* (Madrid, 2023).

²⁶ E/HLS/2022/1.

²⁷ See www.g77.org/doc/Declaration2022.htm.

and Caribbean States in the recovery of their rural livelihoods and agrifood systems from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project supported the transformation of agrifood systems and contributed to strengthening the resilience and sustainability of livelihoods in participating countries, with particular attention to the most vulnerable populations in rural areas, towns and small cities.²⁸

45. Similarly, WFP continued to operate its COVID-19 South-South and Triangular Cooperation Opportunity Fund benefiting Armenia, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cameroon, Guinea, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as the WFP-China South-South and Triangular Cooperation Global Field Pilot Initiative in Ecuador, Ghana, Kenya, Peru, the Republic of the Congo and Sri Lanka, aimed at enhancing the resilience of smallholder farmers and supporting the transformation of national food systems.²⁹

46. The UNDP accelerator labs continued building the world's fastest learning network on sustainable development challenges. From drone and satellite data to financial transactions and ethnographic and citizen-generated data, the network of accelerator labs drew on a wide range of sources to inform and expand development solutions across the global South.³⁰

47. UNFPA facilitated the transfer of population census technologies across Africa and between countries in Africa and Latin America, which strengthened the capacity of the national census institutions and reduced costs for conducting censuses.³¹

48. UNICEF expanded its triangular cooperation with Brazil, including through projects on the construction of a simplified sewage system in the municipality of Viana in Angola, with support from the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation. UNICEF also provided assistance to the Islamic Republic of Iran on how to translate policies and legislation into social protection programmes for the welfare of children and adolescents, including migrants.³²

49. UNIDO reported having implemented 203 projects in 2022 that applied South-South and triangular cooperation approaches for technology development, transfer and capacity-building, including through the UNIDO Centre for South-South Industrial Cooperation, as well as projects in its technical cooperation portfolio.³³

50. In collaboration with Member States, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) distributed 319 water purifiers to countries of the global South, including Belize, Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Honduras, Kiribati, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Suriname, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tuvalu.³⁴

51. The Global South-South Development Centre, a joint initiative of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and the China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchanges, supported, among other things, knowledge products on the use of digital technologies for trade integration and on advancing digital transformation through the establishment of science and technology parks. In addition, small grants were provided for ecosystem integration in the Lake Victoria Basin in East Africa, rural electrification in Peru, and building the resilience of food systems in Latin America and the Caribbean.

²⁸ According to the 2022 survey of United Nations entities conducted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

52. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, together with ITU, concluded the Global South COVID-19 Digital Innovation Challenge, which identified innovative digital solutions that could be scaled up to enable developing countries to better deal with the cascading effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Twelve winners were provided with seed funding and a mentorship scheme to support the scaling up of their digital innovations to other developing countries. The winners were also invited to the Global South-South Development Expo to build and establish new partnerships with Southern networks to further advance their innovative digital solutions.

53. The Astana Civil Service Hub, supported by UNDP, collaborated with OECD and supported nine countries and several international organizations focused on public service delivery to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This was achieved through a portal for gathering and disseminating tried and tested development solutions for adaptation. Innovations towards that end included the use of artificial intelligence, particularly for the recognition of trends, and capacity-building and research pertaining to priorities set by clients and specific government reforms.

E. Progress in the development of new conceptual frameworks for the measurement of South-South and triangular cooperation

54. The Buenos Aires outcome document encourages all actors to support initiatives for information and data collection, coordination, dissemination and evaluation of South-South cooperation, upon the request of developing countries. In response, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators of the Statistical Commission established the Working Group on Measurement of Development Support. The Working Group developed a voluntary conceptual framework for the measurement of South-South cooperation as a new indicator for Sustainable Development Goal target 17.3.1, which was then adopted by the Statistical Commission at its fifty-third session in 2022. The adoption of the voluntary conceptual framework is significant as it further refines the measurement of Goal 17 and provides a common approach for developing countries to better showcase the contributions of South-South cooperation to the 2030 Agenda, including through enhanced voluntary national reporting on the Goals.

55. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Statistics Division and four regional commissions, together with other partners within the United Nations development system and beyond, carried out a project to support eight developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to test the voluntary conceptual framework by measuring financial and non-financial forms of South-South cooperation. The project is intended to strengthen national coordination on data collection in this regard and generate feedback on the feasibility and challenges of measuring South-South cooperation by applying the framework.³⁵

IV. Progress in the implementation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024

56. The United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024, and its action plan for

³⁵ See <https://unctad.org/project/quantifying-south-south-cooperation-mobilize-funds-sustainable-development-goals>.

implementation provide a concrete framework for improving coordination and policy harmonization for the programmatic and operational support of the United Nations development system at the global, regional and national levels. The strategy is intended to support Member States' domestic development priorities and to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Goals. Under the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation coordinated the preparation of a monitoring framework that includes indicators to track progress in the achievement of the five envisaged outcomes of the strategy and action plan. The surveys conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to obtain feedback from Governments on United Nations operational activities for development, from the headquarters of United Nations system entities and from resident coordinators, as well as the survey of United Nations entities conducted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, constitute the data sources used to report on the aforementioned indicators.

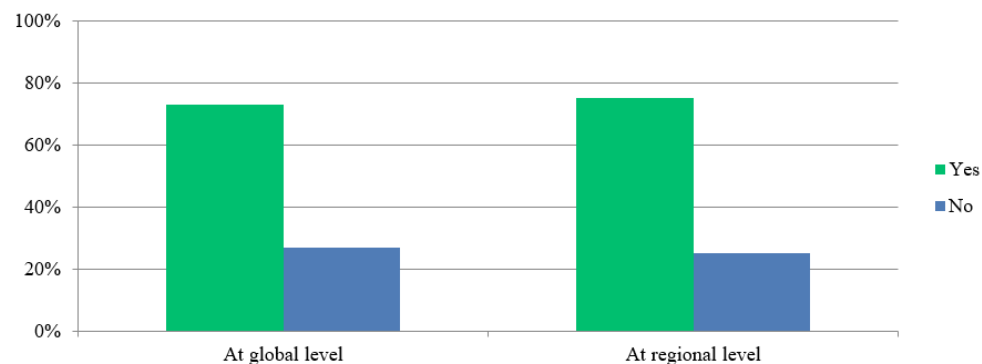
57. A total of 70 per cent of Member States of the global South that responded to the Government survey indicated that they were providing South-South cooperation, up from 66 per cent in 2021.

A. Outcome 1: Strengthened United Nations ability to respond to developing countries' demands to address specific development challenges through South-South and triangular cooperation

58. South-South and triangular cooperation are being mainstreamed as specific implementation modalities for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and other global agendas and holistically incorporated into policies, strategic frameworks and other planning and programming instruments of most United Nations entities (see figure I).

Figure 1

Percentage of United Nations entities integrating South-South and triangular cooperation as a specific implementation modality in their strategic plan and programming instruments



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of the headquarters of United Nations system entities, 2022.

59. At the national level, United Nations country teams reported at least 20 newly developed United Nations common country analyses, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks or appropriate country programmes that followed the system-wide guidance on South-South cooperation and included South-South and triangular cooperation indicators or activities in 2022.

60. With regard to enhanced technical and human capacities in the United Nations system to respond to Member States' requests for support through South-South and triangular cooperation and to report on system support to South-South and triangular cooperation programmes and initiatives, 22 of the United Nations entities indicated that they had incorporated South-South and triangular cooperation results into their corporate reporting. That represented an increase of 10 per cent compared with the 2021 reporting.

61. Based on the data reported above, United Nations entities made good progress towards achieving outcome 1 of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development in 2022.

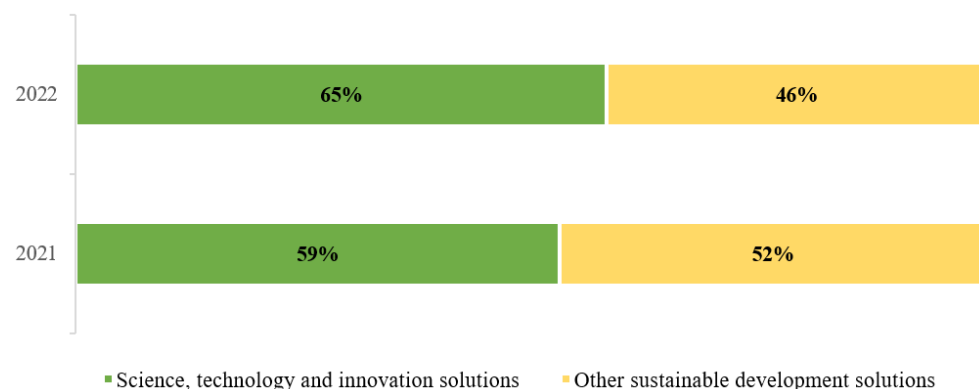
B. Outcome 2: Strengthened institutional, human and technical capacities in countries of the South through/for South-South and triangular cooperation

62. With regard to strengthened capacities of Southern Member States to assess capacity gaps, define their comparative advantages and matching needs of other relevant Member States, and design and implement South-South and triangular cooperation programmes or initiatives, 48 per cent of respondents to the 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs Government survey said that they had requested support from the United Nations on South-South and triangular cooperation, 51 per cent said that they had received such support, and 31 per cent said that they had received support from the United Nations in establishing or strengthening national institutions engaged in South-South and triangular cooperation. These figures are similar to the responses received in 2021.

63. With regard to strengthened capacities of countries of the South to identify, evaluate and document successful development solutions and appropriate technologies of the South and progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, there was an increase in the percentage of Member States reporting that they had received support from the United Nations development system for science, technology and innovation solutions since 2021, but a decrease in the percentage of Member States that had received support for other sustainable development solutions (see figure II).

Figure II

Countries that received support from the United Nations development system to map, evaluate and document development solutions from countries of the global South, including through evidence-based research



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs Government survey on United Nations operational activities for development, 2022.

64. In addition, with regard to the number of regional entities supported through South-South cooperation, 15 United Nations entities reported having supported a total of 63 initiatives together with regional entities of the global South to develop and facilitate South-South and triangular cooperation in 2022. One example is the joint initiative by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, the Republic of Korea Ministry of Science and ICT and the Mekong River Commission, which continued to strengthen access to water, food and energy for vulnerable communities living in the Lower Mekong Basin (in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam) by strengthening development approaches and management in those sectors.³⁶

65. These survey results demonstrate that greater efforts by United Nations entities are needed to strengthen institutional, human and technical capacities in countries of the South, as requested, through/for South-South and triangular cooperation.

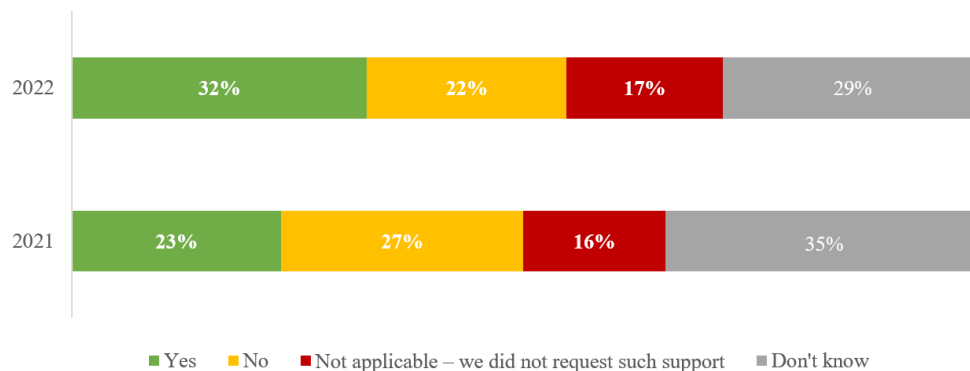
C. Outcome 3: Improved exchanges of experiences, know-how, appropriate technologies and adaptable development solutions among developing countries and Southern policymakers, institutions, professionals, civil society, academia and private-sector organizations

66. With regard to enhanced ability of the United Nations system to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences on successful development solutions from the global South using South-South and triangular cooperation tools and platforms, including digital platforms, for country-to-country learning and cooperation, the number of annual users of the South-South Galaxy platform in 2022 was 1,448, of which 617 registered in 2022. The annual traffic on the platform in 2022 comprised 54,000 visitors.

67. In terms of enhanced support by the United Nations development system for the sharing of knowledge and experiences on effective and successful initiatives and adaptable development solutions and appropriate technologies from the South using South-South and triangular cooperation tools and platforms for learning and replication, since 2021, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of Member States reporting that they had received support from the United Nations development system to organize global, regional or national knowledge-sharing initiatives on solutions from the global South (see figure III). In addition, in 2022, United Nations entities reported having identified, documented and published more than 44 South-South and triangular cooperation good practices. Seventy regional knowledge-sharing initiatives facilitated by the United Nations system were also reported.

³⁶ See www.southsouth-galaxy.org/capacity-development/rok-unossc-facility.

Figure III
Percentage of countries that received support from the United Nations development system to organize global, regional or national knowledge-sharing initiatives on solutions from the South



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs Government survey on United Nations operational activities for development, 2022.

68. Based on the survey responses received in 2022 pertaining to indicators for outcome 3, United Nations entities made good progress towards achieving this outcome of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development.

D. Outcome 4: Enhanced integration of Southern perspectives and needs into global and regional policies and international development cooperation

69. Regarding enhanced coherence and coordination of United Nations contributions, including through regional collaborative platforms, to inform relevant intergovernmental policy dialogues at the global and regional levels to address sustainable development and regional development issues, including through South-South and triangular cooperation, it was reported, in response to the survey of United Nations entities conducted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, that in 2022, the Regional Collaborative Platform for Europe and Central Asia included South-South and triangular cooperation in its annual work plan.

70. Regarding enhanced advocacy, outreach and communication by the United Nations development system on South-South and triangular cooperation, more than 800 events on South-South and triangular cooperation were organized by United Nations entities in 2022. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific alone reported having convened 522 knowledge-sharing events on sustainable development challenges and solutions, which brought together a wide range of stakeholders from the global South.

71. Based on the survey responses received in 2022 pertaining to indicators for outcome 4, United Nations entities were on track to achieve outcome 4 of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development.

E. Outcome 5: Mobilize financial and in-kind resources and expertise through South-South and triangular cooperation partnerships and strategic alliances for increased impact of South-South cooperation

72. An increased and diversified United Nations development system resource base for South-South and triangular cooperation programmes to ensure their long-term sustainability, including through new sources or innovative financing instruments, was measured using the indicator of having in place guidelines for engagement of the private sector or other non-State actors. Six United Nations entities – UNFPA, ILO, IOM, UNOPS, IFAD and UN-Habitat – reported having such guidelines in place in 2022.

73. Given the limited data available, it is difficult to conclude whether United Nations entities made progress in 2022 towards achieving outcome 5.³⁷

74. Overall, measured against the indicators identified for the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, United Nations entities made good progress towards achieving most of the five outcomes.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

75. Global solidarity and international cooperation are instrumental to human security and to building an inclusive, equitable and peaceful world, in particular to help the poorest, most vulnerable countries. I encourage Member States, regional development banks and the United Nations development system to step up international cooperation to help least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and to build resilience to future socioeconomic shocks. In doing so, it is important to forge new partnerships with other stakeholders, in particular local governments and municipal authorities, civil society, academia, the private sector and philanthropists, to increase the scope and scale of South-South cooperation for sustainable development, including through triangular cooperation.

76. I commend the progress made by the United Nations development system in leveraging South-South and triangular cooperation to address the climate emergency and I strongly encourage United Nations entities to continue supporting partnerships between actors from the global South at the regional, national and subnational levels in this regard. New partnerships that combat climate change in line with the Paris Agreement are needed more than ever.

77. Acknowledging the potential of digitalization in promoting sustainable development, I also encourage the support of the United Nations development system towards promoting policy development for digital cooperation and facilitating digital transformation initiatives, with the objective of bridging the digital divide through South-South and triangular cooperation. It is critical that all developing countries have a digital transformation strategy and an enabling environment with a policy and legal framework in place to promote ICT and

³⁷ In the survey of United Nations entities conducted by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, there were inadequate responses to the question on enhanced United Nations system support for the establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships between government agencies and institutions, financial and non-financial partners, public and private organizations and academia from developing countries for the identification, negotiation, formulation, financing and implementation of South-South and triangular cooperation programmes and initiatives. This may suggest that it is a complex indicator and needs to be revisited.

innovation. Furthermore, development of digital skills can be transformative, and access to broadband Internet for all should be a basic right.

78. I appreciate the efforts of Member States and the United Nations development system to promote the development, transfer and dissemination of technologies to developing countries and urge them to strengthen such cooperation, including by creating synergies among experts and resources within and between different regions and stakeholder groups. Cooperation with and between the least developed countries is particularly important to better access technologies and scientific research on technology development that meets their specific needs. I also encourage the United Nations system to support the summit of the Group of 77 and China on science, technology and innovation, to be held in Havana in September 2023, by highlighting good practices in technology development, transfer and distribution in developing countries.

79. I commend the development of an initial conceptual framework for the measurement of South-South cooperation and recommend that the United Nations development system support the efforts of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in raising awareness and developing the capacity of national statistical offices and cooperation agencies to use this framework to measure South-South cooperation by building on country-led mechanisms. This should include the use of gender markers and indicators to strengthen the mainstreaming of gender considerations into South-South cooperation initiatives.

80. I call on the United Nations development system entities to further integrate South-South and triangular cooperation into their strategic frameworks and planning instruments and urge them to allocate more financial resources dedicated to supporting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation.

81. I encourage the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, along with the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, the Development Coordination Office and the regional commissions, to share practical guidance with the United Nations country teams and other United Nations entities to facilitate progress in mainstreaming South-South and triangular cooperation into the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks at the country level and regional collaborative platforms, as appropriate, and to support Member States to use these modalities to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Goals.

82. I welcome the holding of the third South Summit in January 2024 and urge the United Nations development system to support Member States in ensuring a successful Summit outcome.

83. Recognizing the growing debt burden of developing countries from increased quantitative easing that led to more borrowing for public spending in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by rising interest rates and increased borrowing from non-concessional sources by Governments, I urge the United Nations to play a significant role in debt restructuring to help countries of the South.