

Concept Note

6th Directors General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation

SSC Measurement Session

25 November 2024, Bangkok/Hybrid

South-South cooperation is an emerging issue towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the core of South-South cooperation is a mechanism that fosters inclusive and sustainable development. It also puts in the picture progress made by countries to improve the quality of life for all on the planet through the power of partnerships. South-South cooperation is captured under Goal 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”.

As we race towards 2030, progress towards achieving SDG goals remains offtrack as a result of a complex interplay of factors such as conflicts, climate change threats, economic meltdowns compounded by a Covid-19 pandemic amongst others. Within the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region, countries whether economically advanced or lagging encounter challenges related to partnership (Goal 17), zero hunger (Goal 2), decent work and economic growth (Goal 8).

South-South cooperation is an integral part of Goal 17. Goal 17 is critical to support progress towards all the goals given its financing prowess aspect. It has seen moderate improvements in terms of increased remittances towards Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and improved market access extended to these countries, but not strong and comprehensive enough to capture all parameters of Goal 17. There are serious data challenges that exist, particularly measurement of non-financial aspects of cooperation amongst countries beyond Official Development Assistance (ODA) monetary flow parameters.

To address some of data issues such as SDG indicator 17.3.1 on “additional financial resources mobilized for developing countries from multiple sources” the Global South developed a voluntary conceptual framework to measure South-South cooperation which was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2022. It provides flexibility for each country to reflect nationally relevant elements of South-South cooperation and serves as a tool for reporting their data on SDG indicator 17.3.1. By tailoring the framework to national aspects, it is expected that countries can effectively address data issues that can facilitate effective reporting of indicator 17.3.1, in turn addressing current gaps in South-South quantification.

To operationalize and pilot test the framework, the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) with UN regional commissions and other international organisations are implementing a project in selected Southern countries. The overall objective is to put in a coordination mechanism within

¹ <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2024/asia-and-pacific-sdg-progress-report-2024>

countries to systematically quantify South-South cooperation using an internationally comparable but flexible framework. It is expected that countries can identify elements of cooperation amongst themselves and quantify the difficulty to measure aspects and report on SDG 17.3.1. This is in recognition of the critical importance of SDG 17 to achieving all other goals and the need to effectively monitor its progress.

Critical to measuring South-South cooperation are the Technical Cooperation agencies and related ministries such as Foreign Affairs and Finance. ESCAP will host a 6th Directors General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation in November 2024. The platform facilitates South-South and triangular cooperation among its 62 member States and associate members to address development challenges and harness opportunities.

Considering the need to effectively quantify South-South and triangular cooperation, the forum provides a fantastic opportunity to advocate how national agencies led by their technical cooperation agencies can formalize measurement of SDG 17.3.1 relating to South-South Cooperation leveraging the United Nations Statistical Commission conceptual framework on measuring South-South Cooperation. ESCAP Statistics Division and UNCTAD are jointly working together to evaluate the conceptual framework. It is expected that the forum can raise awareness amongst ESCAP members and how they can take practical steps to formalize measurement of South-South cooperation within their respective countries.

During this event, a general awareness about how South-South cooperation can be measured will be highlighted including its implications for effective monitoring of SDGs. In addition, the event will offer insights on practical steps that member states can undertake to operationalize its quantification.

The event will be hybrid and further details can be obtained from ESCAP Statistics Division through Alick Mjuma Nyasulu via email: nyasulua@un.org