



South–South Cooperation Forum

23 October 2025
Room IX
10 a.m.–1 p.m.



CONCEPT
NOTE

Description

The economic dynamics of the global South have changed substantially over the past decades. South–South trade has been a major driver of global trade, with its value expanding tenfold over the last three decades. UNCTAD has played a historical role in promoting South–South dialogue and trade. Among other initiatives, the Global System of Trade Preferences provides a unique framework for interregional trade cooperation and sustainable development among developing countries.

While South–South cooperation has proven instrumental for inclusive structural transformation, lack of data has kept its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development largely invisible. This is now changing with the initial conceptual framework for the measurement of South–South cooperation developed by the global South. Through the United Nations Statistical Commission, countries asked UNCTAD to test this framework and enable South–South data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Against this backdrop, this forum offers an opportunity to take stock of the evolution of South–South cooperation and to discuss future priorities in the context of rapid technological change, environmental concerns and rising uncertainties that reshape development prospects.



Programme

Opening remarks: UNCTAD Secretary-General/Deputy Secretary-General

Panel 1. South–South cooperation: Setting priorities

Participants at this forum session will reflect on the achievements and the way forward for South–South cooperation, including on existing or missing coordinating mechanisms and institutions. The session will include an exchange on past experiences with and expectations about South–South cooperation between senior policymakers at the sixteenth session of the Conference, emphasizing the regional aspects as challenges and enablers for South–South cooperation.

Questions

- What has been achieved by South–South cooperation and through which main modalities and activities?
- What role would be best for the global South to play in shaping a new global development paradigm that is equitable, sustainable and resilient?
- What is required to further strengthen South–South cooperation and inclusive structural transformation in the global South? Is there a need for improved coordination of South–South cooperation modalities or should South–South cooperation continue to evolve spontaneously in response to national and regional needs?

Moderator: To be confirmed

Panel 2. South–South trade partnership for accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals

Participants at the forum session will discuss how South–South trade cooperation, particularly the Global System of Trade Preferences, can provide a viable avenue for economic growth and diversification in times of global trade uncertainties.

Questions

- What is the significance of the South–South trade partnership in today's multipolar world?
- In which policy areas or sectors does South–South trade cooperation become most effective in enabling developing countries to leverage trade for sustainable development?
- How can UNCTAD assist member states in deepening trade cooperation – particularly through frameworks like the Global System of Trade Preferences – to promote sustainable trade and development?

Moderator: Ms. Luz María de la Mora, Director, Division on International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD

Panel 3. Quantifying South–South cooperation

For too long, South–South cooperation was the only major form of development cooperation that was not systematically measured. The forum session will provide an update for member States on progress and findings from the first set of South–South data and a discussion on how to ensure that South–South cooperation, informed by data provided by the global South, counts in future debates.

Questions

- What progress has been achieved in the measurement of South–South cooperation? How can the proper collection and use of data improve decision-making?
- Can data gathered by the global South reshape development narratives and enhance collective resilience in the face of global shocks?
- How can UNCTAD, partners and countries best support developing economies to build inclusive data ecosystems?

Moderator: To be confirmed

Closing remarks: Stephanie Blankenburg, Chief, Economic Cooperation and Integration among Developing Countries Branch, Division on Globalization and Development Strategies, UNCTAD; Miho Shirotori, Head, Trade Systems, Services and Creative Economy Branch, Division on International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD; and Anu Peltola, Director, Statistics Service, UNCTAD

Interpretation

English, French, Arabic

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