

Second Inter-Regional Expert Meeting on Measuring South-South Cooperation

(Doha, 4-6 June 2024)

Summary of Discussions

Experts from 66 developing economies gathered in Doha, Qatar, from 4 to 6 June 2024, for the Second Inter-Regional Expert Meeting on Measuring South-South Cooperation.

Background

The meeting in Doha was conceived and held under the inspiration of major UN Resolutions on the progress of South-South Cooperation, including the Buenos Aires Plan of Action adopted in 1978 (UNGA Resolution [A/33/134](#)), and the outcomes of the High-Level United Nations Conferences on South-South Cooperation, the first held in Nairobi in 2009 (UNGA Resolution [A/64/222](#)) and the second held in Buenos Aires in 2019 (UNGA Resolution [A/73/291](#)), as well as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (UNGA Resolution [A/69/313](#)). It contributed to future reporting of data on South-South cooperation as envisaged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ([A/70/1](#)) and its indicators, in particular indicator 17.3.1.

The meeting is a step forward in the 53rd United Nations Statistical Commission ([E/2022/24](#)) request for ‘further work on the initial voluntary *Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation*, including on global reporting and capacity-building, be enabled by the custodianship of the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and led by countries from the global South, building on country-led mechanisms, and included under indicator 17.3.1 in the future’.

In particular, the meeting refers to the deliberations of the 78th session of the General Assembly ([A/78/167](#)) to welcome ‘the Framework, which marks a breakthrough in its measurement on the basis of country-led mechanisms and helps shed light on the importance of South-South cooperation towards achieving the 2030 Agenda’, requesting UNCTAD, ‘to strengthen capacity-building’ based on country-led mechanisms, and ‘recommend that the United Nations development system support the efforts of the UNCTAD’.

Common views

The Experts gathered in Doha reiterated that the crafting of the initial and voluntary Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation by and for the global South, stands as a significant milestone, empowering each country for voluntary data collection and reporting in alignment with national development plans and priorities.

The Experts recognized the importance of data on South-South cooperation as a fundamental tool for demonstrating the contributions of South-South cooperation to the 2030 Agenda and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Experts expressed their common view in support for the inclusion of all forms of cooperation between developing economies in reporting for indicator 17.3.1, as achieved within the Framework itself and alongside other development support data. This is crucial to achieve a universally representative and inclusive indicator of development support for the first time in history.

The Experts expressed their support to the development of the draft *Manual for the Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation* and stressed that further efforts will be essential for achieving internationally comparable data on South-South cooperation, including to meet the reporting requirements for the current indicator 17.3.1, as well as for the future methodological set up post-2030.

The Experts stressed the importance of scaling up support to strengthen national capacities for data collection, analysis, and reporting on South-South cooperation, emphasizing a country-led approach, particularly for countries with limited statistical capacities. In this context, the Experts addressed UNCTAD, as co-custodian of indicator 17.3.1, to consider the development of harmonized tools for data collection in developing economies, analysis, and reporting, as well as mechanisms for global data reporting, including support for development of interoperable national data systems.

The Experts also expressed their expectation for an enhanced coordination among international cooperation agencies or related offices, national statistical offices, relevant line ministries and specialized public institutions in developing economies. The Experts also highlighted the importance of leveraging existing mechanisms for peer learning and capacity building, including those led by UNCTAD and the Regional Commissions, and those coordinated by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), or other regional mechanisms.

The Experts supported the idea of discussing the possibility of establishing - through the appropriate channels and processes - an institutional arrangement hosted by UNCTAD, with support from the UNOSSC and other United Nations entities as appropriate, for regular consultation and exchange among developing economies on common and voluntary statistical concepts, methodologies, tools, and technologies for measuring South-South cooperation, in alignment with national official statistics quality standards.

Integration of the Conceptual Framework to the SDG Indicator 17.3.1 and beyond

To comprehensively capture South-South cooperation in reporting, it is crucial to encompass all modalities beyond mere monetary quantification. The initial voluntary *Framework to Measure South-South Cooperation* will facilitate this through its three groups:

- Group A: Financial modalities (monetary data)
- Group B: Non-financial modalities (data suitable for monetization)
- Group C: Non-financial modalities (non-monetized data)

At present, SDG indicator 17.3.1 solely includes financial resources mobilized for developing economies, lacking a provision for non-financial flows among its current items, namely:

- 17.3.1a: Official sustainable development grants
- 17.3.1b: Official concessional sustainable development loans
- 17.3.1c: Official non-concessional sustainable development loans
- 17.3.1d Foreign direct investment
- 17.3.1e: Mobilised private finance, on an experimental basis
- 17.3.1f: Private grants

Recognizing this gap, the Experts advocated for complementing indicator 17.3.1 to include additional data on items suitable for monetization and non-monetized in-kind support to comprehensively reflect the scope of South-South cooperation (as in the Framework groups A to C), either under Target 17.3 or any other Target related to development support.

As this requires substantial changes, the Experts discussed an interim solution: the development of a standard reporting table for non-monetized in-kind flows (group C of the Framework) to enable reporting based in units provided in the Framework (open for refinement); data on monetized inputs of non-financial development cooperation modalities (group B) to be reported with changes to existing series, while data on financial modalities (group A) would continue to be reported according to the existing series 17.3.1a-c. Such format could temporarily include data reporting to the global SDG indicator database with a footnote referring to in-kind flows data as published by the country or by UNCTAD on countries' request.

In parallel, the experts requested further conceptual and methodological refinement of the Framework itself based on countries' feedback, notably the delineation between financial and non-financial flows, and distinct reporting of existing modalities in groups B and C. Based on discussions in Qatar, a proposal for related refinements and an interim format of data reporting could be submitted for consideration by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs). It was also pointed out that reporting for each of the three Groups (A, B and C) can be done separately.

An eventual adaptation of indicator 17.3.1 would ensure all aspects of the voluntary Framework to remain visible, facilitating a comprehensive understanding and recognition of the full spectrum of South-South cooperation. This inclusiveness is vital for accurately reflecting the contributions of developing economies and ensuring that non-financial modalities are appropriately acknowledged and valued.

The arrangement expected to be approved could become the basis for the future measurement of South-South cooperation, including in the post-2030 conceptual and methodological set up.

Final messages

The Experts underscored the need to convey to the respective national authorities the call for greater advocacy on the significance of measuring South-South Cooperation, including in inter-governmental processes such as the High-level Committee for South-South Cooperation, General Assembly Second Committee, relevant United Nations Conferences, including the Financing for Development and other fora.

The Experts agreed on the need for defining a brand for the measurement of South-South cooperation, to substitute the expression “conceptual framework”.

The following next steps have been identified throughout the meeting:

1. Support pilot countries in testing the Framework and launching data collection and reporting within the Framework, including by finalizing its Manual for all countries.
2. Review and refine the methodologies of distinction, division and complementarity of financial and non-financial modalities as defined in groups A, B, and C; and their integration and quantification for reporting to SDG indicator 17.3.1.
3. Support countries by developing interoperable information system to be used for national collection, analysis, and reporting, including regional and global reporting of South-South Data.
4. Increase advocacy activities, including on branding, and ensure space for collaboration, exchange of information and knowledge sharing to establish data-to-policy links.
5. Identify resources to scale up technical and methodological support and training activities for all interested countries on measurement and analysis of South-South Data.

The Experts expressed their appreciation and gratitude to the State of Qatar and its people for the excellent organization and hosting of the Second Inter-Regional Expert Meeting on Measuring South-South Cooperation and the warm hospitality extended to them in the city of Doha.

The Experts commended the organizers of the second Inter-Regional Expert Meeting, UNCTAD, the UN Regional Commissions for West Asia (ESCWA), Africa (ECA), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), UNOSSC and the Islamic Development Bank, as well as pioneering countries, notably Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, for bringing together member States and organizations to advance this important agenda.
