

Subcommittee Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives  
8 November 2018, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.  
United Nations Office at Nairobi Gigiri  
Conference Room 1

**Background Document for Agenda Item 5:  
Secretariat briefing on the South-South Cooperation.**

This note serves as a background document for discussions under Agenda Item 5: Secretariat briefing on the South-South Cooperation.

## Briefing Note on the South-South Cooperation

### A. Introduction

1. In 2012, the 17<sup>th</sup> High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation endorsed a working definition of South-South Cooperation as being: *“a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical knowhow, and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions. South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation.”*<sup>1</sup>
2. The **Sustainable Development Goals** stress the importance of South-South Cooperation in implementing the **2030 Agenda**. Goal 17, “Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development,” particularly places emphasis on the critical role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in achieving this ambitious development agenda. It also sets targets for South-South and Triangular Cooperation that target both technology<sup>2</sup> and capacity-building<sup>3</sup> in which all countries have committed to achieve.
3. The **Paris Agreement on Climate Change** also emphasized the importance of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in tackling climate change.

### B. United Nations Environment Programme mandate for South-South and Triangular Cooperation

4. United Nations Environment Programme’s mandate to conduct South-South and Triangular Cooperation emanates from several decisions of the United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council and the United Nations General Assembly as well as reports of the Secretary General of the UN among others.
5. The UN Secretary-General report to the 62<sup>nd</sup> session of the General Assembly (A/62/295) in 2008, called on the international community, including the UN system, to help to scale up the impact of South-South Cooperation by: (a) optimizing the use of South-South approaches in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, ‘Framework of Operational Guidelines on United Nations Support to South-South and Triangular Cooperation,’ High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, New York, 2012 (SSC/17/3).

<sup>2</sup> Target 17.6 – Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism when agreed upon.

<sup>3</sup> Target 17.9 – Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

Development Goals (MDGs); (b) intensifying multilateral support for South-South initiatives to address common development challenges; (c) fostering inclusive partnerships for South-South Cooperation, including triangular and public-private partnerships; (d) improving the coherence of United Nations system support for such cooperation; and (e) encouraging innovative financing for South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

6. Resolution A/RES/64/222 adopted at the 64<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA, held in December 2009, endorsed the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. The Nairobi conference was held on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1978 United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, held in Buenos Aires, which produced the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.
7. In the Rio+20 Conference outcome document, 'The Future We Want', Member States reiterated their support for South-South Cooperation to provide additional resources for the implementation of development programmes that address the particular needs and expectations of developing countries.
8. Resolution A/RES/69/239 adopted at the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA, held in December 2014, encourages the funds, programmes, specialized agencies and other entities of the United Nations system to take further concrete measures, as appropriate, to effectively mainstream support to South-South Cooperation in their policy and regular programming work,
9. The **2005 Bali Strategic Plan** (BSP) on Technology Support and Capacity Building UNEP/GC.23/6/Add.) recognized South-South Cooperation as a means of supporting capacity-building efforts in developing countries and countries with economies in transition through systematic partnership-building and the exchange of expertise, experiences, best practices and knowledge among experts and institutions of the South.
10. UNEP Governing Council decisions GC24/12 of February 2007 and GC25/9 of February 2009 emphasized the need to intensify multilateral support for South-South initiatives to tackle environmental challenges, highlighted the need for the coherent and coordinated implementation of South-South Cooperation approaches across the Programme of Work (PoW), and the need for United Nations Environment Programme to strengthen its "coordination mechanism and structure of South-South Cooperation, including its regional presence, with a view to enhancing its role and function".

**C. Regional environment ministerial forums have also endorsed South-South Cooperation as a mechanism for promoting regional cooperation for sustainable development**

11. At the 14<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the **African Ministerial Conference on the Environment** (AMCEN) held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania in September 2012, governments resolved to promote South-South Cooperation, including through regional and Africa-Brazil-China cooperation for sustainable development in Africa, and to effectively integrate the economic, environmental and social dimensions into local, national and regional development policies and strategies.
12. At the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Los Cabos, Mexico, in March 2014, the ministers agreed to promote South-South Cooperation to enhance the endogenous capacities of countries in the Latin America and

the Caribbean region, promote a regional cooperation programme on climate change to enhance South-South and Triangular Cooperation in areas of interest to the region and prioritize South-South Cooperation activities with the Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

- *(A list of resolutions related to South-South Cooperation is attached as an annex to this Briefing Note).*

#### **D. South-South and Triangular Cooperation at United Nations Environment Programme**

13. The “*Integrating South-South Cooperation in the UNEP Programmes of Work: Policy Guidance*” document guides the delivery of South-South and Triangular Cooperation efforts at United Nations Environment Programme. Developed in 2011, the document ([provided as an annex](#)) provides strategic direction for inter alia:

- i) Stronger policy and programming support for South-South Cooperation in the organization;
- ii) Strengthening and facilitating opportunities for country-country exchanges through regional offices;
- iii) Initiating and sustaining South-South Cooperation approaches in the UNEP Programme of Work;
- iv) Strengthening the coordination structures and capacities for South-South Cooperation at United Nations Environment Programme headquarters and regional offices;
- v) Establishing strategic partnerships and participation in multilateral forums to promote South-South Cooperation in environment and to leverage synergies and complementary technical expertise and resources for identified South-South Cooperation activities;
- vi) Consistent follow-up and reinforcement through design, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation of South-South Cooperation in the United Nations Environment Programme Programme of Work.

14. Based on this guidance document, the United Nations Environment Programme has endeavoured to integrate South-South Cooperation into its projects and programmes so that South-South Cooperation is not seen as a stand-alone initiative or programme but rather as an integral cross-cutting delivery mechanism that should be systematically mainstreamed into the work of United Nations Environment Programme. In 2015 UN Environment developed criteria to characterize South-South Cooperation-focused projects for use in project documents. This was an effort to entrench the South-South Cooperation approach in project development and implementation and to develop a mechanism for monitoring of such projects. These criteria were shared with the Committee of Permanent Representatives in a briefing held in 2015.

- *(CPR Briefing document of 2015 provided as an annex).*

#### **E. Key Areas of work of the South-South Cooperation Unit**

15. The South-South Cooperation Unit in the Policy and Programme Division coordinates South-South Cooperation efforts in the organization. The main components of the work of the Unit are:

- i) Coordination and provision of support to projects that employ South-South Cooperation as a mechanism for project implementation;
- ii) Development and facilitation of innovative partnerships;
- iii) Coordination of a South-South Cooperation Community of Practice and;
- iv) Interagency coordination and engagement.

***E.1. Coordination and provision of support to projects that employ South-South Cooperation as a mechanism for project implementation***

- 16. The South-South Cooperation Unit acts as policy hub and focal point for South-South related activities in the organization. It is working towards enhancing internal coordination and systematically strengthening South-South and Triangular Cooperation within UN Environment Programme and across its regional offices. It is also working on improving the monitoring and reporting of commitments made under the Programme of Work.
- 17. There are currently over 20 projects that are focused on South-South Cooperation implementing the current programme of work. The following are the primary sources of funding for South-South Cooperation projects.

*The Environment Fund*

- 18. Several projects are funded through the Environment Fund. A Partnership Development and South-South Cooperation Fund was established 2015 to support projects that were exclusively focused on development of new partnerships or South-South Cooperation as the primary mechanism for implementation. Seven projects received funding. The cycle of funding under this Fund was completed in December 2017.

*The Global Environment Facility (GEF)*

- 19. At least 14 projects are funded through the Global Environment Facility.

*The Brazil Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation and support to the implementation of the broader SDG framework*

- 20. Brazil provided US\$ 5.2 million to support the implementation of projects in Africa and the Latin America and Caribbean region across four sub-programmes – Resource Efficiency, Environment Under review, Environmental Governance and Ecosystem Management, as well as the strengthening of UNEP’s presence and delivery in Brazil. This fund expired in December 2017.

*UNEP-China Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation (Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China)*

- 21. Under this Fund US\$ 6 million was received for the period 2013-2016. Twenty projects received support from the fund during this period. For the period 2017-2020, another US\$ 6 million has been committed. Currently two projects, “Sharing Experience and Knowledge for a Sustainable Belt and Road” and “Implementing Chemicals and Waste Multilateral Environmental Agreements in Asia Through Sustainable Chemistry” have been approved and are receiving support from this fund. Two other projects are under review. Each of the projects should receive approximately US\$ 1 million. US\$ 1 million has also been committed to support the China-Africa Environmental Cooperation Centre with the possibility of an additional US\$ 1 million being added to this.

*The China South -South Cooperation Assistance Fund – (Ministry of Commerce of China)*

22. Under this Fund the “South-South Cooperation on Green Global Value Chains” project is receiving support (\$1.3 million). Two additional projects are currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Commerce in China for possible support from this Fund.

### ***E.2. Innovative Partnerships***

23. The South-South Cooperation Unit develops and facilitates innovative South-South and Triangular Cooperation initiatives, particularly those that cut across the work of different regions and sub-programmes of the organization. It is also working to develop agreements that have been made with partners organization into solid implementable projects that support the programme of work.

#### ***Greening the Belt and Road Initiative***

24. The International Coalition for Green Development on the Belt and Road (referred to as “the Coalition”) is being established based on a memorandum of understanding signed between the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China and UN Environment Programme on December 2016. The main goal of the Coalition is to promote interaction between stakeholders involved in the Belt and Road Initiative with a view to jointly integrating sustainable development, in particular environmental sustainability, across the five priorities of the Belt and Road Initiative: policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bonds. It aims to promote international consensus and collective actions on the development of a Green Belt and Road and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

#### ***China-Africa Environmental Cooperation Center***

25. The China-Africa Environmental Cooperation Center was established by the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which is a key platform for collective dialogue and practical cooperation between China and African countries. It is therefore based on a multilateral agreement made between China and over 50 African countries.

26. The Centre is intended to serve as:

- 1) A forum for environmental policy interaction and dialogue.
- 2) A clearing house for information exchange and technical co-operation in sustainable business development and innovative technology.
- 3) A platform for capacity development in support of environmental policy and best practice to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
- 4) A catalyst for joint environmental programmes and project development and implementation.
- 5) A platform for mobilization of funds for environmental projects and programmes that will contribute towards Africa’s development priorities.

27. The Interim Secretariat of the Center was launched in August 2018. The United Nations Environment Programme expects to host the Interim Secretariat of the Centre for a period estimated not to exceed 6 months from its establishment, in order to facilitate the establishment of a permanent Secretariat of the Centre.

#### ***International Solar Alliance***

28. The United Nations Environment Programme and the International Solar Alliance signed a Joint Declaration 3 October 2018 in which the two parties committed to work together towards promoting solar energy and especially off-grid solar energy system and solar cook stoves in rural areas. The implementation arrangements for this Joint Declaration will be developed in the coming months.

#### Global Peatlands Initiative

29. The Global Peatlands Initiative, launched in Marrakech in 2016, is a targeted effort of leading governments, experts and institutions to save the world's largest terrestrial carbon stock. The Initiative aims to scale up the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of peatlands in countries with significant peat deposits, aiming to reduce up to 5 per cent of current global greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2030. Coordinated by UN Environment, the Initiative has grown to over 28 organizations in just over a year – ranging from Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, the European Space Agency, Wildlife Conservation Society, Wetlands International, Ramsar Convention, and Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil, International Union for Conservation of Nature, and others. The four pilot countries of the initiative are: Indonesia, Republic of the Congo, Peru and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Interim Secretariat for the Center was launched in October 2018.

#### **E.3. South-South Cooperation Community of Practice**

30. A South-South Cooperation Community of Practice was set up in February 2015. Its aim was to bring together resource persons involved in South-South Cooperation work and to help drive the South-South Cooperation agenda in the organization, develop common definitions and play an advocacy role while sharing best practices and lessons learned to enrich the practice of South-South Cooperation in the organization. Although the group has not been active over the past two years, efforts are being made to revitalize it. A workshop is planned for 5-6 December 2018 during which the initial steps to re-establishing this community of practice will be made and its operation mechanisms determined.

#### **E.4. Interagency coordination and engagement**

##### Global South- South Development Expo

31. UN Environment has been participating in the Global South- South Development Expo for many years. In 2013, the Expo was hosted by UN Environment in Nairobi compound. 2018 marks the 10th anniversary of Global South-South Development Expo (GSSD Expo). UN Environment is hosting a solution forum on “promoting sustainable development through engaging youth and women in South-South Cooperation” and will be exhibiting a project “African Women Energy Entrepreneurship Framework” at the Expo which is being coordinated by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and the UN General Assembly High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation.

##### Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation

32. The South-South Cooperation Unit works with the Environmental Management Group and other UN agencies and bodies to coordinate and harmonize South-South-related activities. The UN Environment Programme is a member of the Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The objective of this Mechanism is to promote a coordinated approach to United Nations system policy and programmatic work on South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The Inter-Agency Mechanism will promote engagement of the system in mainstreaming South-South and Triangular Cooperation into United Nations system operational activities and work to strengthen and align United Nations South-South policy instruments, collaborative frameworks and institutional arrangements.

#### **F. Staff and Costs**

33. The operations of the South-South Cooperation Unit are, at present, funded through Norwegian funds. US\$ 400,000 was utilized in this manner in 2016 and a further US\$ 500,000 in 2017. The Unit is staffed by a small team. The level and time allocation for each staff member is indicated below.

- 1 D1 (100%)
- 1 P3 staff (80%)
- 1 JPO fully funded by Chinese government (100%)
- 2 consultants (100% + 50%)

#### **G. Next Steps**

- 1) Facilitating new partnerships and alliances relevant to priorities of developing countries and geared towards attainments of the SDGs.
- 2) Enhancing monitoring and reporting of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in projects and their contribution to Programme of Work with the aim of distilling lessons learned and best practices.
- 3) Reinvigorating the South-South Cooperation Community of Practice in United Nations Environment Programme and identifying best practices, common challenges and developing tools to resource United Nations Environment Programme staff as they implement the Programme of Work.
- 4) Continued engagement in UN system-wide strategy and mechanism on South-South Cooperation.
- 5) Development of a new United Nations Environment Programme South-South and Triangular Cooperation Strategy based on lessons learnt from projects and their recommendations and targeted at providing support for the attainment of the SDG. The strategy will be aligned to the UN Strategy on South-South Cooperation which will be released in early 2019.

#### **Annexes:**

- i) List of resolutions related to South-South Cooperation.
- ii) Integrating South-South Cooperation in the United Nations Environment Programme Programmes of Work: Policy Guidance.
- iii) Briefing document on South-South Cooperation (2015).
- iv) List of South-South Cooperation projects.