Commemoration of the UN Day on South-South Cooperation and Intergovernmental Organisations Meeting in Asia-Pacific 2021

14 September 2021
09:30 – 12:00 hours (Bangkok time)
Virtual format

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The United Nations Office of South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) is the designated focal point for promoting and facilitating South-South and Triangular cooperation for development on a global and United Nations system-wide basis. Within the last decade, the United Nations General Assembly has reinforced this role through resolutions 69/239 of 19 December 2014, 70/222 of 22 December 2015, 71/244 of 21 December 2016 and the recent Decision of the High-Level Committee SSC/20/L.5 of 3 June 2021. These resolutions pertain to “establishing a more formalized and strengthened inter-agency mechanism, coordinated by UNOSSC, to encourage joint support to South-South and triangular initiatives and share information”.

Since its establishment in 2017, the UNOSSC Regional Office for Asia-Pacific (ROAP) has been actively engaging with members of intergovernmental organisations in the region. Key partner organisations include regional and subregional intergovernmental organisations and groupings. Some have been invited to take part in several regional platforms/forums, including the Asia-Pacific Director-Generals (DGs) Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, led by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in collaboration with UNOSSC and other development partners. Some have also participated in South-South focal points network retreats, where information on the latest developments and trends in South-South and triangular cooperation and views on how to better integrate South-South and triangular cooperation in their work are exchanged. The latest edition of such consultations was the UN Regional South-South and Triangular Cooperation Focal Points Network Retreat, held in December 2020. During that consultation, participants learned about the UN Systemwide Strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation, related funds and resources available and the UN Development Reform at regional and national levels. Many of the regional and subregional intergovernmental organisations and groupings have South-South Cooperation as the central modality of delivering development cooperation in their work. Hence, the path to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic includes such institutions.

The 20th session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, successfully held on 1-4 June 2021, reviewed progress made in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA), the New Directions Strategy for South-South Cooperation, the Nairobi Outcome Document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and the Buenos Aires Outcome Document of the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40). The Global South-South Development (GSSD) Expo 2022, to be co-hosted by the Royal Thai Government, ESCAP, and UNOSSC, is scheduled to take place in Bangkok under the theme of “Advancing South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable COVID-19 Recovery: Towards a smart and resilient future”. Furthermore, following the High-level Committee, the annual commemoration of the UN Day for South-South Cooperation follows shortly on 12 September.

Given these developments, and particularly, in the context of activities leading up to the GSSD Expo 2022, UNOSSC ROAP, ESCAP and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, as the co-

1 The previous meeting (19th session) was held in 2016.
organisers, propose to hold an *inaugural* Meeting of regional and subregional intergovernmental organisations and groupings in the region on South-South and triangular cooperation. The meeting may evolve into an informal Network depending on the outcome of the discussions.

**OBJECTIVES**

This meeting is intended to be a networking platform for regional and subregional intergovernmental organisations and groupings in Asia and the Pacific, with the objective to:
- discuss the latest developments in South-South and triangular cooperation at the global and regional levels;
- exchange ideas, experiences, good practices and lessons learnt;
- showcase successes, address challenges, and explore opportunities/solutions to further strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation.

Discussions will focus on 3 priority areas for the year 2021, i.e., climate change and green recovery, digital transformation, and SMEs Recovery and entrepreneurship. These thematic areas are perceived as key areas in mitigating socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and in helping countries in the global South to build back better.

**CONVENORS**

The co-convenors are ESCAP, UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and UNOSSC ROAP. The Meeting will take place as part of the commemoration of the UN Day for South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific on 14 September 2021, from 09:30 to 12:00 hours Bangkok time. The Director General of Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) is invited to give opening remarks as Thailand will co-host the upcoming Global South-South Development Expo.

**MODALITIES AND TENTATIVE AGENDA**

The Meeting will be organised in a virtual format. It will consist of an opening session, three thematic breakout sessions (held simultaneously for 1.5 hours), and a closing session. The duration of the event will be 2.5 hours.

Although the core of the Meeting will be for intergovernmental organisations, member states will be invited to the event.

**Draft Agenda**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tr>
<td>09.30 – 10.00 hrs</td>
<td>Opening session</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Remarks by Mr. Adel Abdellatif, Director a.i., UNOSSC (5 min)</td>
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<td>- Remarks by Mrs. Ureerat Chareontoh, Director General, TICA (5 min)</td>
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<td>- Remarks by Mr. Christophe Bahuet, UNDP Deputy Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific (5 min)</td>
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<td>- Remarks by Mr. Adnan Aliani, Director of Strategy and Programme Management Division, ESCAP (5 min)</td>
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<td>- The Launching of South-South Profile by Mr. Denis Nkala, UNOSSC Regional Coordinator for Asia and the Pacific (3 min)</td>
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<td>Video presentation: Remarks from the UN Secretary-General on the UN Day for South-South Cooperation 2021</td>
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<td>10.00 – 11.30 hrs</td>
<td>Three breakout sessions</td>
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<td>Breakout Session 1: Climate change and green development</td>
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<td>Panelists:</td>
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<td>- Ambassador Solo Mara, Secretary General, Pacific Islands Development Forum Secretariat (PIDF);</td>
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<td>- Dr. Md Masumur Rahman, Director General, South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP);</td>
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- Mr. Iosefa Maiava, Head, ESCAP Pacific Office;
- Mr. Li Yonghong, Deputy Director General, Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition (BRIGC);
- Ms. Ofa Kaisamy, Manager, Pacific Climate Change Centre, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

Moderator:
Mr. Koji Fukuda, Chief Technical Advisor, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Session notes

According to ESCAP’s Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2021, progress is lacking on most of the environment related goals in the region. The situation is deteriorating on climate action as the region continues to produce half of global greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, the fast economic growth in the region is still dependent on intensive use of natural resources, resulting in a heavy material footprint far higher than the global average (1.16kg/$ and 1.82kg/$ in Asia Pacific in 2017).

Although countries in the Asia and the Pacific are still grappling with the profound impact of COVID-19 pandemic, it is also widely recognized that there is opportunity to redesign public and private policies to address the climate change crisis and structure a transition to a green economy during and after the pandemic. To achieve a sustainable and green recovery, policies and investments towards a greener and circular economy are required. More climate resilient infrastructure, low-carbon mobility and clean energy investment should be included in the recovery plan and distorted policies such as subsidy for fossil fuels should be avoided. By strengthening international coordination, building solidarity and enhancing mutual learning, intergovernmental organisations can play a key role in supporting developing countries in implementing their green recovery pathways and much can be done through South-South and triangular cooperation.

Breakout Session 2: Digital transformation for COVID-19 Recovery

Panelists:
- Mr. Masanori Kondo, Secretary General, Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT);
- Prof. Dr. Bambang Pramujtati, Vice Rector for Research, Innovation, Partnership and Alumni, Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology (ITS), Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) Center of Excellence;
- Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Regional Director, International Telecommunication Union/Telecommunication Development Bureau (ITU/BTD) Asia and Pacific Office;
- Ms. Kate Sutton, Head of the Regional Innovation Centre, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub

Moderator:
Prof. Shahbaz Khan, Director and UNESCO Representative to the People’s Republic of China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea

Session notes

In the first half of 2021, many countries in Asia and the Pacific continued to suffer from the COVID-19 pandemic which has pushed the countries
into trying new ways of doing things. To adapt to the changing world, it is essential, now more than ever, for countries of the Global South to invest in digital transformation. This digital transformation will need to encompass different sectors such as health, economy, governance etc. Many countries in the region have already demonstrated success in digitalizing some of these sectors. Other countries can learn from those practices through regional collaboration. The session objective is to provide policy guidance for digital transformation for inclusive and sustainable development in the region.

Breakout Session 3: SMEs and Entrepreneurship for COVID-19 recovery

Panelists:
- Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Executive Director, Mekong Institute;
- Dr. Sayed Yahya Akhlaqi, Deputy Secretary General, Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO);
- Mr. Chanchal Chand Sarkar, Director, Economic Trade Finance, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC);
- Ms. Penchan Manawanichkul, Head of Enterprise & Stakeholder Engagement Division, ASEAN Secretariat
- Pacific Green Entrepreneurship Network, Global Green Growth Institute, Pacific – TBC

Moderator:
Mr. Kelvin Sergeant, Sustainable Enterprise Development Specialist, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Session notes

According to the Asia Development Bank report “The Asia Small Medium-Sized Enterprise Monitor 2020”, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and the informal sector have spurred rapid economic development in Asia-Pacific. MSMEs account for on average 97% of all enterprises and employ 69% of the national labor force in the region. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the region hosts about 65% (1.3 billion/2 billion) of global informal workers. Health and economic shocks from the COVID-19 pandemic have hampered productivity and mobility, severely hitting MSMEs and the informal sector. ESCAP projects that an additional 89 million people in the region could be pushed back into extreme poverty ($1.90 per day threshold), erasing years of progress in poverty reduction. MSMEs can play an important role in socio-economic recovery through digitalisation and other innovative solutions, supported by enabling legal and regulatory environmental frameworks to promote inclusive and sustainable socio-economic growth across the region. In this context, regional cooperation frameworks and intergovernmental institutions can facilitate and provide support to governments, private sector and labor organizations in creating more opportunities for a v-shaped recovery, that is inclusive, green and resilient.

11.30 – 12.00 hrs  Brief on the discussions from each breakout session (5 min each)
Closing remarks by Mr. Denis Nkala, UNOSSC Regional Coordinator for Asia and the Pacific