

**The Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of the
United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation**

12 September 2018

09:00-12:00 hours

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**Opening Remarks
by
Mr. Kaveh Zahedi
Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP**

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this Regional Commemoration of the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation. After our recent “Regional Consultation on South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific”, we are delighted to be again partnering with the Royal Thai Government and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

Today marks the fortieth anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries: a blueprint for South-South cooperation. As we prepare to return to Buenos Aires next year for the second United Nations High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40), this is an excellent opportunity to consider how this cooperation could better support sustainable development.

That is crucial, because a new multilateralism is taking shape in Asia and the Pacific. One responding to a shift in the world's centre of economic gravity. To the reality that we are now the world's largest trading region, sitting at the heart of global value chains and international investment, and at the forefront of technological innovation. Countries in our region are leading investments in frontier technologies: 3D printing, robotics and nanotechnology. They have valuable expertise to share, with neighbours and the global south. Expertise which, deployed intelligently, could improve competitiveness, reduce inequality and make globalization fairer - more sustainable.

So we must ensure South-South cooperation becomes an integral part of this new multilateralism, complementing but not replacing traditional North-South development assistance. It can support trade, especially for least developed countries, strengthen our response to climate change, and improve countries' ability to raise their tax-take to finance sustainable development.

Many South-South initiatives are underway. Last week's China-Africa summit captured the attention of the world. It explored financial and technological support for infrastructure critical development, building capacity to implement free trade, strengthening financial stability and fighting climate change.

China, India and Japan have institutionalized South-South and triangular cooperation platforms to bolster climate action and its financing. Action

plans have been developed for disaster risk resilience and climate adaption. Thousands of registered clean development mechanism projects have taken place to share knowhow on mitigation technologies. Regional technical cooperation on domestic resource mobilization is underway. A regional push to build the capacity needed to combat international tax avoidance is happening in lockstep with the global fight against base erosion and profit shifting.

At ESCAP, we are committed to supporting these initiatives in any way we can. South-South and triangular cooperation has always been at heart of our work and has a major role to play in delivering sufficient financing for development. But a major challenge we face is the lack of adequate statistics – partly explained by the absence of a single definition or an internationally agreed approach to measuring and monitoring South-South cooperation. This is a gap we must work together to plug.

What we do know is that ESCAP's South-South and triangular cooperation has strengthened information sharing and early warning systems to guard against natural disasters. It has built resilience and reduced typhoon related deaths. Initiatives have helped improve and integrate transport infrastructure - including the Asian Highway, the Trans-Asian Railway and our recent efforts to develop dry ports. And ESCAP's capacity development programmes have promoted south south exchanges of agricultural mechanisation and machinery, technology transfer, regional trade and investment research, ICT for development and data and statistics.

South-South and triangular cooperation must be a corner stone for our collective implementation of the Regional Roadmap to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Asia-Pacific's mix of international development cooperation players is a major asset. From large emerging economies like China and India, to high-income assistance providers like Japan, to middle-income countries which are increasingly active donors and technical cooperation providers, there is enormous potential for stronger South-South cooperation. Cooperation which could be especially beneficial to countries with special needs.

Our challenge is to ensure all future South-South cooperation is demand driven, innovative and built on strong partnerships. To make this happen, we want to work with all of you, very much including the national development cooperation agencies, between whom collaboration is vital. It is with this objective in our sights that ESCAP, United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and the Thailand International Cooperation Agency created the Asia-Pacific Directors-General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

This Asia-Pacific DG Forum will meet later this year in New York at the upcoming Global South-South Development Expo. It will shape the region's perspectives and concrete inputs for Global DG Forum and the BAPA+40 process. We need your active engagement to give South-South and triangular cooperation the support it deserves. I am looking forward to

working with you to do so and accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda across Asia, the Pacific and beyond.