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## Regional Consultation on South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific

Bangkok, 27-29 June 2018

### Chair's Summary

#### **Regional Consultation on South-South cooperation in Asia and the Pacific**

##### **Chair's Summary**

1. The United Nations General Assembly resolutions 71/318 and 71/244 have mandated the United Nations to convene a high-level Conference on South-South cooperation on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA). The second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, will be held in Buenos Aires, Republic of Argentina from 20 to 22 March 2019.
2. The resolutions also encourage the United Nations to hold regional, sub-regional or sectoral meetings prior to the Conference. In line with the above mandates and given the prominence of South-South and triangular cooperation in achieving the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), and the Government of Thailand jointly organized the Regional Consultation on South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific: Towards the Buenos Aires Plan of Action 40th Anniversary. The Regional Consultation took place from 27 to 29 June 2018, at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok.
3. The themes and issues discussed at the Regional Consultation included the following: (i) Trends and diversity of the South-South cooperation landscape in Asia-Pacific – turning challenges into opportunities; (ii) Institutional arrangements and management of South-South and triangular cooperation—experience and good practice; (iii) Modalities to

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strengthen regional and sub-regional cooperation through South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development; (iv) Roles of the United Nations Development System and other stakeholders, including the civil society organizations and the private sector; and (v) Alternative approaches to sustainable development.

4. The Regional Consultation was chaired by the Government of Thailand. The discussions and key outcomes of the regional consultation are contained in the form of a summary below for the information of all participants.

5. The detailed annotated programme of the consultation is provided in Annex 1, and the list of participants in Annex 2.

### **Opening Session**

6. The Regional Consultation on South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific was opened by H.E. Mr. Vijavat Isarabhakdi, Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, who also delivered the welcome address. Opening remarks were also provided by Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP and Mr. Jorge Chediek, Envoy of the UN Secretary-General on South-South Cooperation and Director, UNOSSC. The speakers noted that the outcomes of the consultation will be referred to the negotiating teams for possible use as inputs into the United Nations Second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation. In this context, participants provided further inputs on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the context of this conference during and after the Regional Consultation.

### **Overview Presentation**

7. An overview presentation, prepared by ESCAP and UNOSSC, and delivered by Mr. Adnan Aliani, Director, Strategy and Programme Management Division of ESCAP, followed the opening session. The presentation focused on the evolution of South-South cooperation over the last few decades, and highlighted the key milestones in the process. It also explored the key concepts, global processes, and status of South-South cooperation in Asia and the Pacific, and set the stage for discussions on the way forward for the region in the context of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in 2019.

### **Session 1: Roundtable on Institutional arrangements and management of South-South and triangular cooperation**

8. Session 1 was chaired by Ms. Vilawan Mangklatanukul, Acting Director-General, Department of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. The discussion focused on institutional arrangements and management of South-South and

triangular cooperation and the underlying opportunities and challenges thereof. Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, Research and Development System for Developing Countries (RIS), India, who also acts as the coordinator of the Network for South-South think tanks under a UNOSSC/UNDP project, moderated the session. The following panellists intervened in the roundtable: (i) Mr. Jorge Chediek, Envoy of the UN Secretary-General on South-South Cooperation and Director, UNOSSC; (ii) Dato' Ir. (Dr.) Lee Yee Cheong, Honorary Chairman, Governing Council, International Science Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation, Kuala Lumpur; (iii) Dr. Naruemon Thabchumpon, Assistant Professor, Centre for Social Development Studies, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University; (iv) Mr. Hu Hongtao, Acting Executive Director, Partners in Population and Development (PPD), Dhaka, Bangladesh; and (v) Dr. Myonghee Kim, Executive Director, Asia Pacific Women's Information Network Centre (APWINC), Sookmyung Women's University, Republic of Korea.

9. The panel considered a number of issues, including the participatory approach of South-South cooperation, cost-effectiveness aspects, the need to redefine its architectural framework and methodology, and the functional norms of South-South cooperation. They noted that over the last decade, there has been an enhanced understanding of how countries from the South can collaborate and help each other to implement a demand-driven approach for achieving development agendas, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Policy frameworks and tools have been developed which need to be shared more broadly. The panel further noted the need for capacity building of Southern institutions to enable them to implement South-South cooperation. The participants noted that this form of cooperation should be prioritised in the agenda of governments in the region. In this context, participants identified some challenges and future opportunities. These included realising the difference between operational and articulate principles, devoting more resources for South-South cooperation, and increasing engagement of the private sector and civil society. South-South cooperation is implemented mainly in the form of a “development compact”, which works through five different modalities, including capacity building, grants, concessional finance, technology transfer and trade linkages. South-South cooperation universality is increasingly gaining in momentum in bridging development gaps, where countries at all levels of development can contribute. Discussion also emphasized mainstreaming gender and women’s empowerment as an integral element of South-South cooperation including through use of information and communications technology. The panellists proposed to focus on 3 Is, i.e. Innovation, Initiative and Inclusiveness; and 2Cs i.e. Collaborative governance, and for the ‘Common’ (participatory democratic advancement) as principles for implementation of South-South cooperation.

10. Participants shared the view that South-South cooperation is gaining recognition in national agendas in the countries in the region, and provided several examples in this regard.

Cataloguing of the experience on South-South cooperation, facilitating mutual recognition of Southern assets, e.g. educational attainment across the South, specifically in sub-regional bodies such as the ASEAN, can help enhance South-South cooperation. The developing countries may have the technical capacity to adapt and fit interventions in their specific country situation, and enhance its applicability, which provides a comparative advantage over North-South Cooperation. As the limited mobility is one of the major constraints for the marginalised groups, including women, e-commerce could be of special interest for South-South cooperation to serve as an important tool for women's entrepreneurship. The meeting also suggested to develop South-South cooperation indicators and align these with the 2030 Agenda. This would also allow the systematic engagement of the civil society organizations, private sector, academia and other key stakeholders. Aligning the principles of South-South cooperation with the specific development philosophies in the countries of Asia and the Pacific would make it easier for them to actively participate in South-South cooperation and strengthen its institutional architecture.

11. The participants indicated that there were issues regarding the divergent views between North and South as well as among countries in the South. The meeting suggested that these issues should be identified for further discussion in the context of BAPA+40. Some issues could be made part of the research agenda for academia and think tanks to resolve through the application of an empirical approach. Some of these include definition and measurement of South-South cooperation, linkages between South-South cooperation and North-South cooperation, as well as the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework in the context of South-South and triangular cooperation.

**Session 2: Modalities to strengthen regional and sub-regional cooperation through South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development.**

12. Session 2 was chaired by Mr. Piyapak Sricharoen, Deputy Director-General, Department of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. This session focused on the modalities to strengthen regional and sub-regional cooperation through South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development. It explored the roles the governments and non-governmental actors as well as the regional and sub-regional organizations and networks in strengthening South-South and triangular cooperation in Asia and the Pacific. The session also showcased some of the innovative good practices, experiences and lessons learned from South-South cooperation in the region.

13. Dr. Rathin Roy, Director, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), India, moderated this session. The panellists included: (i) Mr. Li Hong, Permanent Representative of China to ESCAP, Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to ESCAP, China; (ii) Mr. Ryutaro Murotani, Director, Office for Global Issues and Development Partnership, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan; (iii) Mr.

Francois Martel, Secretary-General, Pacific Islands Development Forum, Fiji; (iv) Ms. Lolita Bildan, Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES), Thailand; and (v) Dr. S.M. Junaid Zaidi, Executive Director, Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South, Pakistan.

14. The panellists shared their experiences in implementing South-South and triangular cooperation and highlighted specific examples where regional and subregional cooperation was underpinned by South-South and triangular cooperation. The session highlighted the use of South-South and triangular cooperation for the establishment of an early warning system for disasters. It emphasized the regional connectivity and infrastructure development; trade and investment promotion; and macroeconomic dialogue and policy coordination as potential areas for greater South-South cooperation. The panel noted that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but a complement to North-South cooperation. It also highlighted the need to improve the governance and coordination of South-South cooperation and that user partners should be at the centre of South-South cooperation, which should be demand driven. For South-South cooperation to be effective, the need for solidarity and respect for diverse cultures and systems was required. The panel also highlighted the value of triangular cooperation in terms of synergizing the learning and benefits from North-South and South-South cooperation.

During the discussion, participants pointed out that South-South and triangular cooperation will be critical for achieving the 2030 Agenda, which requires ownership by countries. The developed countries should deliver the official development assistance commitment fully. While conducting international development cooperation, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, reiterated in the 2030 Agenda, should be reaffirmed. Cooperation among the Southern partners needs to be pragmatic, demand-driven, government-led and economically beneficial especially for the countries receiving this modality of international development cooperation. Human resource development and knowledge sharing should remain at the centre of technical cooperation initiatives among the countries of the South. The role of centres for excellence in developing countries in sharing knowledge was also noted. Participants further noted that South-South and triangular cooperation must be incorporated into the development cooperation strategies of countries. For South-South and triangular cooperation to succeed, it would be critical for all the international development cooperation players to work together in a coordinated manner. To this end, some participants noted the importance of having a regular regional forum to coordinate such efforts for the ultimate benefit of the countries implementing South-South cooperation.

### **Session 3: Multi-stakeholder partnerships to enhance South-South and triangular cooperation.**

15. Session 3 was chaired Mr. Piyapak Sricharoen, Deputy Director-General, Department of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. It focussed on the evolution of South-South Cooperation from technical cooperation among developing countries to a vehicle for implementing the SDGs, with the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including civil society, academia and the private sector. Dr. Netithorn Praditsarn, Vice President, Group Sustainability and Communications, Charoen Pokphand Group, Co. Ltd., and Deputy Secretary-General, Global Compact Network Association (GCNA), moderated this session. The panellists included: (i) Mr. Mitchell Lee, Deputy Director, Technical Cooperation Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore; (ii) Ms. Valerie Cliff, UNDP Deputy Regional Director for Asia and Pacific; (iii) Mr. Thomas Parks, Country Representative Asia Foundation, Thailand; (iv) Dr. Alex B. Brillantes Jr., President, Asian Association for Public Administration; and (v) Ms. Joyce Zhang, Vice Director-General of the Finance Center for South-South Cooperation, Hong Kong, China.

16. The panel discussed the strong political foundations associated with South-South cooperation. It noted that South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation are key platforms for all stakeholders to be engaged in knowledge and technology exchange, investment, and trade. Giving examples within their scope of work, the panel members underpinned the importance of innovative financing mechanisms, including mainstream financial institutions, venture capital and equity funds. As some of the enabling factors for South-South cooperation, they also highlighted innovative approaches to resource mobilization, preparation of profitable and bankable projects and the engagement of the private sector. To attract the private sector, discussions underlined that such cooperation should be made more business-oriented, suggesting a win-win environment for investors. Multi-stakeholder partnership, including state and non-state actors, are key to the success of South-South cooperation and for establishing solidarity as the basis for cooperation. This partnership includes governments at national and local levels, regional institutions and frameworks, intergovernmental organisations, multilateral agencies, civil society organizations, international finance institutions, the private sector, foundations, investment banks etc, who can all contribute to the success of South-South cooperation.

17. In this context, some participants questioned the relevance of the BAPA documents of 1978 in the context of the current changed environment. Some participants though suggested that the key tenets and principles of BAPA were still very valid. They noted it would be best to build upon BAPA principles and improve upon them to come up with a vision of what future South-South cooperation could be and implement it in future years. The participants reiterated the needs of capacity building, particularly for smaller countries, resource mobilization, knowledge sharing and innovation to achieve the SDGs. It was

emphasized that South-South cooperation needs to bring a human face to development in line with “leaving no one behind” through multi-stakeholder efforts.

#### **Session 4: Approaches to sustainable development – alternative development models through South-South and triangular cooperation**

18. Session 4 was held on 28 June 2018 at the Golden Jubilee Museum of Agriculture. It took place in conjunction with the field visit, organized by the Government of Thailand, to Khlong 6 Community Occupational Learning Centre based on the application of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) as one of the home-grown approaches to sustainable development. The session was chaired by Mrs. Suphatra Srimaitreephithak, Director-General, Thailand International Cooperation Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. The objective of this session was to provide a platform for dialogue and knowledge-sharing on how alternative and home-grown development approaches or models contribute to the strengthening of South-South and triangular cooperation and the achievement of SDGs in Asia and the Pacific. The session was moderated by Associate Professor Krittinee Nuttavuthisit, Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration, Chulalongkorn University. The panellists included the following: (i) Mr. Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere, Tui Macuata, Macuata Province of the Republic of Fiji; (ii) Mr. Jose Maria Carino, Chair-Alternate, Technical Cooperation Council of the Philippines; (iii) Mr. Jaesang Hwang, Director, Planning Team, Planning and Coordination Department, KOICA; and (iv) Ms. Amornrut Det-Udomsap, Advisor on Sustainable Development to Director of L.P.N. Academy, L.P.N. Development Public Company Limited, and Thai Green Building Institute Committee.

19. Panellists shared various practices and approaches to sustainable development, which have been implemented through different modalities of South-South and triangular cooperation. Some highlighted that South-South cooperation helps their countries mitigate challenges, including those related to geographical and environmental factors such as climate change, and limited availability and quality of resources. They further shared experiences of implementing home-grown sustainable development approaches, such as the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, which are applicable in different countries and contexts including the urban setting. Panellists also discussed challenges and lessons learned in implementing South-South and triangular cooperation programmes and directions of strengthening global partnership through such cooperation, highlighting, among others, a role in building bridges between different development partners and actors.

20. As the way forward, discussion suggested that simple and practical approaches be pursued with no need to reinvent the wheel. The implementation of these approaches should be tailored to fit specific contexts of each community and country to be successful. Discussion also highlighted the need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of South-

South and triangular cooperation as well as the need for more innovative and creative ideas in order to improve development cooperation's efficiency and effectiveness. Participants emphasized that countries should seek commonalities to foster better development partnerships. They also emphasized the significance of multi-stakeholder partnerships, particularly with the private sector, in enhancing collective commitment to sustainable development and in reinforcing South-South and triangular cooperation. The practice of starting small and being focused was also suggested as a good way to make development cooperation work. It was raised, as an example, that agriculture is often an easy starting sector in development cooperation in most developing countries. Then, such cooperation can be extended further by including other sectors, such as science and technology, trade and industry.

### **Asia-Pacific Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation**

21. The inaugural Asia-Pacific Forum on South-South and Triangular Cooperation – a regional 'DG Forum' – was held on 29 June 2018. The Forum was chaired by Mrs. Suphatra Srimaitreephithak, Director-General, Thailand International Cooperation Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. The Forum was attended by the heads of the development cooperation and South-South cooperation agencies and units from developing countries. The Forum was organized in format of an interactive roundtable. Prepared by ESCAP and UNOSSC, Mr. Adnan Aliani, ESCAP, delivered a brief presentation on the key findings of a survey conducted among ESCAP member States in preparation for the Regional Consultation.

22. The discussions at the forum focused on four key issues: (i) comparative advantages and opportunities of South-South cooperation in Asia and the Pacific (as a provider of technical assistance and as a user of technical assistance); (ii) challenges of South-South cooperation in Asia and the Pacific (as a provider of technical assistance and as a user of technical assistance); (iii) strengthening of the institutional framework of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation in Asia and the Pacific, including the roles and functions a DG Forum could play and undertake in Asia and the Pacific, opportunities for financing South-South cooperation and the Forum's partnerships with other stakeholders; (iv) sharing of experiences, best practices and success stories in promoting South-South and triangular cooperation in the region. The value-addition and purpose of establishing annual dialogue of the Heads of the national South-South cooperation agencies and focal points through the regional DG Forum was also discussed.

23. Some of the key outcomes of the DG Forum included the following:

- i. Some of the major challenges highlighted included coordination at the national and regional levels; need to strengthen information-sharing between providers and users to match solutions with demand for South-South cooperation. Some



participants suggested the convening of the next regional DG Forums could be aligned to other meetings by ESCAP or sub-regional offices and sub-regional organisations.

- ii. The Forum should be results-oriented with clear objectives, focused topics in line with global developments and concretised terms of reference. The Forum should also explore concrete actions to take forward the idea of establishing an online portal to match the needs of users to resources and expertise of providers.
- iii. It was suggested that the next Forum could be held after the BAPA+40 Conference, to follow-up and contextualise them for implementation at the regional level. It was further suggested that an informal meeting of focal points/DGs of South-South cooperation can also take place during the Global South-South Development Expo and the Global DG Forum in New York in November 2018. Objectives of this meeting would be to (i) review the issues paper that UNOSSC will have prepared for BAPA+40; (ii) provide inputs towards BAPA+40 outcome document; and (iii) to interact with Permanent Representatives of Member States in New York.
- iv. It was also suggested that ESCAP, UNOSSC and TICA could organize a regional-level event in September 2018 to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BAPA and the International Day for South-South Cooperation.
- v. A detailed report of the inaugural Forum will be circulated to all participants in due course.

### **Closing Session**

24. The Chair, Mrs. Suphatra Srimaitreephithak, Director-General, Thailand International Cooperation Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, presented the draft Chair's summary to the participants. The Chair stated that the draft Chair's summary would be circulated by Monday, 2 July 2018 by email. She requested that comments on the draft Chair's summary be submitted to the ESCAP secretariat within 15 working days, by 20 July 2018, after which it would be finalized and posted on the event website.

25. H.E. Mrs. María Alicia Cuzzoni de Sonchein, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Embassy of Argentina to Thailand, delivered special address on behalf of Argentine, the host country of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South in 2019.

26. Closing remarks were made by Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP, and Mr. Jorge Chediek, Envoy of the UN Secretary-General on South-South Cooperation and Director, UNOSSC.

27. The Chair delivered her concluding remarks and closed the Regional Consultation.