



ACP MEAs 3 Contributions to Buenos Aires Plan of Action on the South-to- South Cooperation

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Introduction on South-to-South Cooperation

South-South cooperation (SSC) is defined as the technical cooperation among developing countries in the Global South; a broad framework of collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains¹. It involves two or more developing countries and can take place on a bilateral and regional basis. Countries of the South partner for the purpose of attaining the internationally agreed development goals, including the SDGs.

UNEP adopts the definition of SSC as a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills and resources². UNEP considers that SSC embraces a multi-stakeholder approach that includes non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia and other actors that contribute to meeting development challenges and objectives in line with national development strategies and plans.

The UN-DESA defines SSC as a tool used by the states, international organizations, academics, civil society and the private sector to collaborate and share knowledge, skills and successful initiatives in specific areas such as agricultural development, human rights, urbanization, health, climate change amongst others³.

SSC mechanism is used by the countries, international organizations, institutions, civil society and the private sector to collaborate and share knowledge, skills and successful initiatives in areas such as urbanization, health, climate change agricultural development, human rights amongst others.

SSC derives from the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC)⁴. This was

¹ <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/about/about-sstc/>

² 2016 "Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation"

³ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/intergovernmental-coordination/south-south-cooperation-2019.html>

⁴ <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/bapa40/documents/buenos-aires-plan-of-action/>

adopted by 138 UN Member States in Argentina in September 18, 1978 during the United Nations Conference that adopted the TCDC. Later in 1980, the High-level Committee on TCDC was mandated with functions towards United Nations development system (UNDS) on reviewing their progress in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action; sustaining efforts to strengthen TCDC within the UNDS and supporting policies and innovative approaches to develop TCDC. TCDC also monitors availability and effective use of financial resources in existing programmes and coordination of the promotional and operational TCDC activities. The committee meets every two years to undertake an overall intergovernmental review of TCDC within the UNDS⁵.

SSC is not a substitute for, but rather, a complement to North-South cooperation and Triangular cooperation- as the other types of existing cooperation. The **North-South cooperation** is the most common and ancient type of cooperation, that occurs when a developed country provides financial support or support of other resources to a less developed country. The division of “North” and “South” refers to the social, economic and political differences existing between developed countries and developing countries (North and South respectively⁶). **Triangular cooperation** involves Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by developed countries/or multilateral organization(s) to implement development cooperation programmes and projects. It is collaboration in which traditional donor countries and multilateral organizations facilitate South-South initiatives through the provision of funding, training, management and technological systems as well as other forms of support⁷. It involves three actors, two from the South and one from the North. The northern one can also be an international organization that provides financial resources so that the countries of the South can exchange specific technical assistance.

⁵ <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/our-work/policy-and-intergovernmental-support/high-level-committee-on-south-south-cooperation/>

⁶ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/intergovernmental-coordination/south-south-cooperation-2019.html>

⁷ http://unoss1.undp.org/sscexpo/content/ssc/about/what_is_ssc.htm

Importance of South-South cooperation

SSC can take various forms that entail the following:

- **Learning-** this is achieved through the sharing knowledge, experiences and good practices: one or more developing countries with experience and expertise in a certain domain exchange.
- **Technical cooperation partnership development** and strengthening of networks: developing countries start a partnership and set up a common project to build on development. In addition, several institutions from different developing countries form a network and work together within this network.
- **Capacity-building:** delivered from stakeholders of one or more developing countries to actors in one or more other developing countries, increasing their ability to promote development within a southern country.
- **Technology transfer**

The principles of SSC that are outlined in the Nairobi outcome document of the UN conference on South-to-South cooperation which was held in 2009. The document entails normative and operational principles such as national sovereignty and ownership; partnership among equals; non-conditionality nor interference in domestic affairs; mutual benefit, mutual accountability and transparency; development effectiveness; coordination of evidence - and results-based initiatives⁸. The Conference requested the United Nations system to help developing countries to establish and enhance closer cooperation of centres of excellence at the regional and interregional levels, so as to improve South-South knowledge sharing, networking, mutual capacity-building, exchanges of information including on best practices, policy analysis and coordinated action among developing countries. It called for UN agencies to promote

⁸ Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation.

knowledge sharing, partnerships, analysis and to carry out monitoring of South-to-South and Triangular Cooperation.

In November 2018, during the inauguration of the 10th South-South Development Expo at UN Headquarters in New York, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, discussed on the importance of South-South cooperation to generate new ideas and concrete projects. He believes that it is also a means to enable voices from the Global South to drive innovation and promote development⁹. He explained that the countries of the South have contributed to more than half of the world's growth in recent years whereby intra-south trade is very high, accounting for more than a quarter of all world trade. He stated that innovative forms of knowledge exchange, technology transfer, emergency response and recovery of livelihoods, led by the South, are transforming lives and believes that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is likely to be achieved with the ideas and tremendous ingenuity of the countries of the Global South¹⁰.

Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation

BAPA+40 is the Second South-to-South Cooperation and is defined and explained as the technical cooperation among global south developing countries.

High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation marks the 40th anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 20-22 March 2019.

The plan established collaborations among least developed countries that are located in the south of the planet, focusing on how South-South cooperation can be utilized to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The conference adopted the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries. During BAPA+40;

⁹ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2018-11-28/global-south-south-development-expo-2018-remarks>

¹⁰ See footnote 9

- Members reviewed four decades of trends and launch a new strategy in order to implement the 2030 Agenda.
- BAPA+40 provided an opportunity to review the lessons learned since 1978.
- Identification of new areas and mechanisms where South-South and Triangular cooperation can add value, have a greater impact and build systematic follow-up in the framework.
- Discussions on a political declaration aimed at increasing South-South cooperation.
- Countries shared their successful experiences, to elaborate on the effectiveness of SSC, and the potential of the countries in the Global South.

Strengthening the South-to-South Cooperation

Achieving sustainable development also include the sharing of knowledge, skills and technology among partners and stakeholders. However, key gaps (that need to be strengthened) can be identified, such as that SSC does not have an accountability framework to allow monitoring and reporting as granular as it exists in the North-South development cooperation under OECD regulations. There are no formal data on results, beneficiaries and spending unless. Countries are now considering developing a monitoring framework¹¹ and the follow up work led by Columbia and other developing countries. The monitoring framework aims at generating lessons and enable learning of what works and what does not work in SSC.

Below are initiatives that have strong SSC, exploring best practices and identifying further gaps where ACP MEAs programme can get involved.

i) The Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States

The OACPS (formerly known as the ACP Group of States) is an intergovernmental association made up of 79 countries from across the global South: 48 from sub-Saharan Africa, 16 from the Caribbean and 15 from the Pacific.

¹¹ <https://www.effectivecooperation.org/content/monitoring-exercise-south-south-co-operation-effectiveness>

OACPS has 38 out of the world's 47 least developed countries (LDCs), 37 small island developing States (SIDS) and 15 landlocked developing countries. OACPS constitutes of the largest transregional intergovernmental association of developing States, in partnership with the European Union (EU) under the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement. The establishment of the OACPS was a manifestation of the will of developing countries from the ACP regions to collaborate in defending their shared interests in relevant domains, such as to improve the living standards of our people through South-South and North-South cooperation as well as to accelerate the political, economic and social advancement of our peoples through poverty eradication and sustainable development amongst others. It provides a strong foundation for South-South cooperation among Member States.

The Seventh Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government highlights South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as cornerstones of the approach of the OACPS to international cooperation, even calling for the establishment of a "South-South economic cooperation organization"¹².

The OACPS faces international context that is constantly changing, where international development challenges often shift while new challenges emerge. ACP group highlights issues such as climate change threaten the survival of the planet and the livelihoods of populations in all the ACP countries. Part of international development responses to such trends is the efforts to attaining the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), framed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The OACPS aims to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development for the one billion people of the ACP countries.

The ACP countries have established a firm and functioning governing structure that facilitates regular dialogue and joint decision-making. These intergovernmental processes lead to policies and decisions that directly affect development agendas at the national levels, mostly through development cooperation via the EU.

¹² Sipopo Declaration (2012)

To sum up, it is notable that the President of the Seventh Summit, H.E. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of Equatorial Guinea, developed a proposal for the setting up of an ACP centre for South-South cooperation to be located in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. An approved policy framework document “Towards the ACP we want¹³” that elaborates on South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as other key mechanisms for delivering on the 2030 Agenda.

A strategy was also developed to foster genuine cooperation among members of the ACP Group looking towards the future of the ACP Group from 2020 and beyond¹⁴. The strategy is known as the Cotonou Agreement, which was adopted in 2000 between the EU and 79 members of the OACPS, with the aim to reduce and eradicate poverty and to contribute to the integration of the ACP countries into the world economy. It is based on the pillars of development cooperation; economic and trade cooperation and political dimension. They amended it further to widen its scope towards sustainable development and growth, human rights and peace and security and regional empowerment.

ii) South to South Cooperation for SIDS

SIDS in the Pacific and the Caribbean regions face common threats such as high climate change and the increasing natural disasters. At the same time, SIDS have a range of capacities and practices for disaster management and adapting to climate change. SSC for SIDS historically, have worked seamlessly in crisis response contexts (disasters, disease outbreaks, the COVID-19 pandemic) hence SSC is central to the humanitarian response.

CARICOM in collaboration with UN-DESA, UNDP and other regional organisations, developed a report on “*SIDS-SIDS Success Stories- Innovative Partnership in South-to-South Cooperation*¹⁵” that details inter-regional cooperation in ***Disaster Risk Management mechanisms and Climate Change Adaptation*** between the Pacific and Caribbean SIDS,

¹³ <http://www.acp.int/sites/acpsec.waw.be/files/Towards%20the%20ACP%20we%20want%20-%20Version%201%20May%202017.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NoLxPxIFuSqzQsjVjV3mc7CtCmLDUiUp/view>

¹⁵ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/961sids-sids_success_stories.pdf

Educating for Sustainable Development and Global Island Partnerships. The Pacific and Caribbean SIDS aim to strengthen this programme through the transfer of appropriate 'Southern' expertise and technologies and methodologies;¹⁶ systematic sharing of knowledge and experiences specific to the SIDS context, mainstreaming of disaster risk management and climate change adaptation into national action planning in order to strengthen community safety and resilience to a range of natural disasters in their regions.

iii) UN Entities and the Work of South-to-South Cooperation

The UN Secretary General detailed that South-South and triangular cooperation needs to be mainstreamed in the development planning and programming of United Nations funds, programmes, specialized agencies and regional commissions at the global, regional and country levels. In addition, it is necessary to improve overall system-wide policy frameworks, governance, coordination, structures, mechanisms and dedicated resources¹⁷. He released the Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation in May 2016 where he details on "priority actions and performance indicators for United Nations organizations and agencies, including regional commissions, towards mainstreaming their support for South-South and triangular cooperation at the global and regional levels¹⁸.

Many UN programmes and specialized agencies, including UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, FAO, and ILO, have dedicated South-South cooperation strategies and specific programmes promoting South-South exchanges. South-South cooperation has evolved

¹⁶ file:///C:/Users/kanyuam/Downloads/south-south_cooperation_between_pacific_and_caribbean_small_islands_developing_statessids_on_climate_change_adaption_and_disaster_risk_management.pdf

¹⁷ António Guterres to the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 20 March 2019

¹⁸ "Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation"¹ (2016)

significantly over the last decades. But multilateral institutions, including the United Nations, have not kept up¹⁹.

BAPA +40 called for establishment of focal points in UN System organizations, development of strategies or frameworks for SSTC and for enhanced efforts in provision of support to countries with regard to SSTC among other instructions. Support is needed on technical knowhow and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their mutual benefit within and across regions.²⁰

iv) UNEP's Strategy for South-to-South Cooperation

The 2005 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, endorsed the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP) that intensifies efforts to be directed towards Technology Support and Capacity Building.²¹ SSC needs to support capacity-building efforts in developing countries and countries with economies in transition through systematic partnerships and the exchange of expertise, experiences, best practices and knowledge among experts and institutions of the Global South. South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) will help to strengthen countries' capacities to address urgent priorities such as climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution management. The UNEP strategy provides a framework through which UNEP's support to Member States in conducting SSTC will be enhanced in the 2019-2029 decade. It aims to ensure that the opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation are systematically considered within UNEP, that related activities in projects are designed in a deliberate and structured manner, and that relevant results and outcomes are visible and measurable. The strategy is aligned to other corporate policy documents and guidelines such as the partnership policy, the resource

¹⁹

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/29393/Sec%20breifing%20note%20on%20SSCT%2023%20August.pdf?sequence=8&isAllowed=y>

²⁰

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/29393/Sec%20breifing%20note%20on%20SSCT%2023%20August.pdf?sequence=8&isAllowed=y>

²¹ UNEP/GC.23 /6/Add.)

mobilization strategy, the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and the Programme of Work²². This strategy has been developed to respond to Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and UNEP's governing bodies.²³

Within the earlier definition of SSC-SSTC, UNEP works to support and facilitate SSTC among Member States in areas related to its mandate on the environment. In alignment with the Nairobi outcome document of the High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (2009), Principles of South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

While UNEP uses SSTC in numerous projects, the use of the mechanism has often been ad hoc and unstructured in nature. It is often not always monitored or reported on.

The ACP MEAs 3 Programme

The ACP MEAs (African, Caribbean and the Pacific Multilateral Environmental Agreements) programme is an EC-UNEP partnership programme that is being implemented since March 2009, aiming to address challenging environmental governance issues through implementation of MEAs in the ACP regions.

Phase I of the ACP MEAs programme focused on mitigating the adverse effects of climate change, loss of biodiversity, drought, land degradation, chemicals, hazardous waste and other threats to the environment. Phase II was building on the experiences, lessons learned, and achievements gained from the initial phase, to further enhance the capacity of the ACP countries on two clusters of MEAs (Biodiversity and chemicals and waste management). The third phase of the programme (ACP MEA 3) (2020-2024) focuses on assisting ACP-countries to enforce, comply and strengthen implementation of MEAs related to biodiversity, chemicals and wastes, strengthening ocean/seas governance challenges and supporting mainstreaming

²² See footnote 21

²³ <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/United-Nations-system-wide-strategy-on-South-South-and-triangular-cooperation-for-sustainable-development-2020%E2%80%932024.pdf>

agriculture and biodiversity as well as dealing with reducing impacts of chemicals and pollution in agriculture.

The multi-country, multi-year programme is being coordinated by UNEP through implementing partners such as the African Union Commission (Africa), CARICOM Secretariat (Caribbean) and SPREP (the Pacific) as regional hubs as well as a number of MEAs belonging to biodiversity and chemicals. Activities related to ocean governance and marine issues are implemented through four regional seas programmes, namely, Cartagena Convention, Nairobi Convention, Abidjan Convention and Noumea Convention. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) implements activities related to agriculture.

The ACP Group of States (ACP) is composed of African, Caribbean and Pacific states. There are 48 countries from Africa, 15 from the Pacific and 16 from the Caribbean.

Linking ACP MEAs Programme and South-to-South Cooperation

ACP MEAs can support strategic thinking to SSC as follows;

❖ Regional Cooperation

Linkages with The African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States

The OACPS has convening power, established structures and opportunities to draw out good practices and solutions to development challenges. ACP MEAS programme can nurture this through OACPS framework that allows for joint discussion, open communication, collaborative agenda-setting, the sharing of research and expertise and shared programmes. Such a framework is strategic in its landscape of global development cooperation due to the membership of 79 countries, which convenes on sharing experiences, common interests, accrued knowledge and expertise derived from their lengthy cooperation with Europe. Hence, OACPS has potential to bring about meaningful positive change through South-South and triangular cooperation.

The ACP MEAs programme can utilize the ACP Secretariat (a technical arm that services all organs of the OACPS), to engage with the ACP group council of ministers that engages in policymaking. This council of ministers is supported by the committee of ambassadors, made up of one representative of each ACP State. Noting too that the ACP Parliamentary Assembly meets several times in a year. The ACP MEAs can further its multilateral environmental agreements through this engagement on SSC.

The ACP group reinforces and brings visibility to shared concerns of some of the poorest and most vulnerable countries in the world. It increasingly, takes joint positions on such global issues of common interest as climate change, ocean governance and multilateral trade, by speaking as one cohesive voice through declarations, resolutions and decisions issued at the highest political levels. The ACP MEAs programme can utilise this platform to enhance its programme objectives on ocean governance, regional sea conventions and multilateral environmental agreements.

On South-South Cooperation on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) between Pacific and Caribbean SIDS, the ACP MEAs programme can provide a platform for documentation and dissemination of best practices on the programme. In addition, ACP MEAs can showcase these initiatives through Communications and media; showcasing case studies, utilizing social media and media and carrying out advocacy work in the Pacific and Caribbean regions and countries.

ACP MEAs can also support processes of mainstreaming SIDS issues in national strategies and position papers for the purpose of national action planning,

❖ **Knowledge Sharing**

ACP MEAs to continue to facilitate exchange of expertise and knowledge between these different regions even for SIDS regions in Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific.

In the context of engaging with the OACPS, ACP MEAs can support with resources and online platforms to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experiences pertaining the

development challenges faced by SIDS. Platforms such as the ACP MEAs website, blogs and knowledge management platforms can be managed by the programme for the purpose of information sharing and knowledge exchange with key partners in SSC (on the key areas of the ACP MEAs programme) so as to enhance learning and to share latest trends in SSC.

Pertaining the ***South-South Cooperation between Pacific and Caribbean SIDS on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management (DRM)***, the ACP MEAs programme can support the exchange of information pertaining this initiative as well as to provide experts who can share their expertise through field visits, virtual meetings and in group platforms.

❖ **Capacity Building**

Pertaining the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building which was formed by UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, it aims at strengthening technology support and capacity-building in developing countries. ACP MEAs can partner with UNEP on this strategy, to promote capacity building on the Multilateral Environmental Agreements which will further enhance cooperation between states.

ACP MEAs continues to focus on capacity building to assist implementation of the Biodiversity (CBD, Ramsar, CITES) and Waste (Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Minamata, SAICAM) clusters of MEAs and the regional seas conventions. It can continue strengthening the capacity of designated regions; Africa Union Commission, CARICOM in Caribbean and SPREP in Pacific.

❖ **Technology Transfer**

On the Cooperation between Pacific and Caribbean SIDS on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management (DRM), ACP MEAs programme can provide the Pacific and the Caribbean regions with information on appropriate technologies, which can be utilised by SIDS for their effective disaster risk management and climate change

adaptation. For instance, ACP MEAs can create awareness and train these regions pertaining role of digital in accelerating the transition to a green economy; role of IoT to achieve the sustainable development goals; quantifying the contribution of 5g to sustainability ; tackling climate change with blockchain, amongst other tools that can be used to assess and manage disasters and climate change.

❖ **Linkages with United Nations Agencies and Other Multilateral Organisations**

Triangular cooperation in the ACP Group of State's publication is drawn primarily from the various development programmes funded by the European Commission and often implemented by international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), amongst others. An example is such as the Pacific Agricultural Week, hosted by the Government of Vanuatu in October 2017, with the support of the ACP-European Union Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development, FAO and the Pacific Community was first launched in 1999, aimed to explore strategies to boost the agri-food sector. The concept and model was successfully reproduced in the Pacific. The ACP MEAs programme can utilise and replicate such events to highlight that SIDS face challenges in terms of climate change impacts, high food imports, small internal markets and reliance on a few export commodities and then move further to create capacity on potential to develop the agri-food sector in these regions.

❖ **Linkages with UNEP Strategy**

ACP MEAs programme can provide visibility for the SSTC within UNEP. In addition, ACP MEAs can take up specific actions to help to bolster the mainstreaming of South-South cooperation in UNEP's policies and programmes such as setting support structures within UNEP programmes and focal points; encourage appropriate adequate funding from programme budgets; and strengthening coordination within UNEP programmes.

Conclusion

South-South cooperation will be important to ensure that countries are in the long run, protect their interests and yielding to development and the achievement of sustainable development goals for the developing countries. Good governance and environmental governance are at the core of implementation of innovative solutions. Countries of the Global South should continually focus on policies protecting the environmental resources.

In order for South-to-South Cooperation to be effective, there is need to carry out capacity development as well as capacity assessment. It will also be important to follow ups on mutually benefitting trainings conducted and to provide accountability on the impact of the cooperation.

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ACP MEAs Programme

The ACP MEAs is a joint UNEP- EU-FAO-OACPS partnership programme. It aims to build the capacity of 79 countries in Africa, Caribbean, and the Pacific to fulfil their obligations to multilateral environmental agreements. Phase III (ACP MEAs 3) of this programme is being implemented in Africa by the African Union Commission (AUC), Abidjan Convention and Nairobi Convention, in the Caribbean by the Secretariat of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Cartagena Convention, in the Pacific by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) is the civil society partner.