



ACP-MEAs 3 Operational Plan on South-to-South Cooperation

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Introduction

The African, Caribbean and the Pacific Multilateral Environmental Agreements programme (ACP MEAs) is a European Commission-UNEP partnership programme, currently implemented to address challenging environmental governance issues through implementation of MEAs in the ACP regions. The ACP MEAs programme covers 79 countries in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions.

The purpose of developing this ACP MEAs operation plan to support South-to-South Cooperation (SSC) is to delve into how the programme can also focus on SSC, as a result of the ongoing SSC partnership that is within the programme and also to support UNEP's work on SSC. The plan targets the 79 ACP MEAs member states that come from the South.

In the ACP MEAs programme, SSC is a cross-cutting issue and is applied in the course of technical exchanges, expertise of information, joint webinars, joint-capacity building exercises amongst others. The ACP MEAs programme will extend beyond 2024 and there is need to consider strategic dimensions at UNEP level on the SSC.

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 or regional basis. Countries of the South also partner with each other to attain the internationally agreed development goals, such as the SDGs.

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

UNEP defines SSC as a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchange of knowledge, skills and resources². 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.

Annex I details the evolution of South-to-South cooperation from the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC).

² 2016 "Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation" - High Level Committee of SSC.

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

Importance of South-South cooperation

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 respectively). **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 support. 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.

SSC can take various forms that entail the following:

- **Learning-** this is achieved through the sharing knowledge, experiences and good practices where developing countries with experience and expertise in a certain domain, exchange knowledge.
- **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** – technology transfer mechanism in South-South Cooperation can be aimed at technological transfer platforms to meet the demands and supplies of technology transfers and to provide the South-South cooperation partners with suitable solutions for sustainable development technology.

Strengthening the South-to-South Cooperation

Achieving sustainable development also includes 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 exists in the North-South development cooperation under OECD regulations. There are no formal data on results, beneficiaries and spending. Countries are now considering developing a monitoring framework⁴ and the follow up work is led by Colombia and other developing countries. The monitoring framework aims at generating lessons and enable learning of what works and what does not work in SSC.

Annex II details key stakeholders initiatives that explore best practices of SSC and identifying further gaps where ACP MEAs programme can get involved.

⁴ <https://www.effectivecooperation.org/content/monitoring-exercise-south-south-co-operation-effectiveness>

The ACP MEAs 3 Programme

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

As mentioned earlier, 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 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 a year. The ACP MEAs can further its implementation of the 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 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 in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and the Pacific regions.

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, the ACP MEAs programme can

support the exchange of information on this initiative as well as provide experts who can share their expertise through field visits, virtual meetings and in group platforms.

❖ **Capacity Building**

SSC can be used 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 Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building which was adopted by the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum 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 and chemicals (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 , 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 on the role of digital technologies 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**

ACP MEAs can provide lessons learnt and best practices to UNCT teams on how SSTC can be used to address environmental challenges, through incorporation in the Common Country Analysis process for the development of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF).

ACP MEAs work is delivered through government, hence through the UNSDCF the ACP MEAs programme can work with governments on their SSC strategy at the level of UNCT support to RCs. The idea to support to government on SSC can first be suggested during an ambassadorial briefing (in September 2022). In addition, ACP MEAs programme can coordinate with its secretariats in the ACP regions to identify/ provide lessons on SSC from their member countries.

The ACP MEAs programme can use the UN south-south galaxy⁵ to share information on its work SSC, to publish their Southern development practices, knowledge exchange, utilize the platform to meet its needs for learning from others, strengthening its SSC, SS partnerships, a platform for research, for the purpose of capacity building and learning.

⁵ <https://www.southsouth-galaxy.org/>

❖ **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.

As mentioned in the UNEP's strategy for SSTC⁶, the ACP MEAs can periodically share best practices and lessons learnt on implementation of MEAs, such as through its regional secretariats or through country examples. It is key for ACP MEAs to participate in UNEP's CoP (Community of Practice) meetings that discuss joint SSC programmes and projects implemented by UNEP's partners.

As UNEP utilizes SSTC as a mechanism for engaging youth from developing countries, ACP MEAs can provide its youth networks on sustainable development efforts along SSC.

According to UNEP's paper on South-South Cooperation in action- stories of success document, the Secretariat of the Pacific Region Environmental Programme (SPREP) had recommended that South-South cooperation facilitate exchanges among key decision-makers, to include parliamentarians amongst other actors. This is an area that the ACP MEAs phase 3 programme can start rolling out.

⁶ *Figure 1: UNEP South-South and triangular cooperation objectives and actions.*

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 up on mutually beneficial trainings conducted and to provide accountability on the impact of the cooperation.

The Buenos Aires Plan of Action on Improving Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

South-to-South Cooperation (SSC) derives from the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC)⁷, adopted by 138 UN Member States in Argentina on September 18, 1978 at the United Nations Conference on promoting and implementing TCDC. Later in 1980, the High-level Committee on TCDC was mandated with functions towards reviewing 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 UNDS⁸.

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 include 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 initiatives⁹. The Conference requested the United Nations system to help developing countries to establish and enhance closer cooperation of centers 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

⁷ <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/bapa40/documents/buenos-aires-plan-of-action/>

⁸ <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/our-work/policy-and-intergovernmental-support/high-level-committee-on-south-south-cooperation/>

⁹ Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation.

coordinated action among developing countries. It called for UN agencies to promote knowledge sharing, partnerships, analysis and to carry out monitoring of South-to-South and Triangular Cooperation.

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

The high-level United Nations Conference on South-to-South Cooperation is defined and explained as the technical cooperation among global south developing countries. BAPA+40 is the Second high-level United Nations Conference on South-to-South Cooperation that was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 20-22 March 2019. It marks the 40th anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries.

The conference adopted the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries. The plan also 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.

During BAPA+40;

- 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 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.

Best practices on South-to-South Cooperation

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.

OACPS has 38 out of the world's 47 least developed countries (LDCs), 37 small island developing States (SIDS) and 15 landlocked developing countries. The establishment of the OACPS was a manifestation of the will of developing countries from the ACP regions to collaborate in promoting 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 through poverty eradication and sustainable development amongst others.

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"¹⁰.

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

¹⁰ Sipopo Declaration (2012)

eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development for the one billion people of the ACP countries.

To sum up, it is notable that 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 want¹¹” 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 beyond¹². 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.

ii) South to South Cooperation for SIDS

SIDS in the Pacific and the Caribbean regions face common threats such as 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*”¹³

¹¹ <http://www.acp.int/sites/acpsec.waw.be/files/Towards%20the%20ACP%20we%20want%20-%20Version%201%20May%202017.pdf>

¹² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NoLxPxIFuSqzQsjVjV3mc7CtCmLDUiUp/view>

¹³ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/961sids-sids_success_stories.pdf

that details inter-regional cooperation in Disaster Risk Management mechanisms and Climate Change Adaptation between the Pacific and Caribbean SIDS, 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;¹⁴ 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. 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 levels¹⁵.

South-South cooperation has evolved significantly over the last decades and many UN programmes and specialized agencies, including UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, FAO,

¹⁴ file:///C:/Users/kanyuam/Downloads/south-south_cooperation_between_pacific_and_caribbean_small_islands_developing_states_sids_on_climate_change_adaption_and_disaster_risk_management.pdf

¹⁵ “Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation”1 (2016)

and ILO, have dedicated South-South cooperation strategies and specific programmes promoting South-South exchanges.

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.¹⁶

According to the UNEP's Strategy for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, the United Nations Development System reform guidelines also call for increased collaboration among UN agencies (UN country teams). This will result into a focus on establishing collaboration with relevant UN agencies to enhance SSTC on environmental management, incorporation of SSTC in the Common Country Analysis process for the development of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation developed a global knowledge sharing and partnership platform known as the South-South Galaxy¹⁷. The platform is for southern partners in the UN system that aims to support developing countries to connect, learn and collaborate with potential partners.

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

UNEP's strategy for SSC aims to enhance the application of SSTC in the delivery of UNEP's

¹⁶

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

¹⁷ <https://unsouthsouth.org/library/south-south-galaxy/>

mandate in order to help Member States achieve the SDGs and incorporate the environmental dimension of sustainable development in national and regional policies, plans and initiatives. SSTC is used to deliver UNEP's projects and the strategy will be applied to enhance (i) UNEP's Programme of Work, (ii) Engagement with the UN system and (iii) Partnerships and strategic initiatives. This will in turn result in efficient and targeted support to Member States in environmental governance matters, to achieve the SDGs¹⁸.

The UNEP strategy provides a framework through which UNEP's support to Member States in conducting SSTC will be enhanced in the 2020 - 2030 decade¹⁹. It aims to ensure that the opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) 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 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.²⁰

UNEP's paper on South-South Cooperation in action- stories of success document details the implementation of MEAs in the ACP regions as a SSC mechanism in itself, through inter-regional cooperation of regional hubs that enabled the regions to understand issues that are common between regions.

¹⁸ See footnote 21

¹⁹ United Nations Environmental Programme Strategy for South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

²⁰ UNEP/GC.23 /6/Add.)

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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.