

The Role of South-South Cooperation in Realization of the Right to Development: the way forward

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Abstract

This essay briefly reviews the history of emergence of south-south cooperation which started in the discourse of the development agenda in the 70s and was closely associated with the New International Economic Order discourse, aimed at overcoming asymmetries and gaps inherited from the previous decades, as a means of enhancing international cooperation among developing countries with the focus on the realization of the right to development. I also examine the recent resurgence of South–South cooperation, which has moved once again onto the center stage of world politics and global economics, leading to a renewed interest in its historic promise to transform world order. This article also provides an overview of contemporary debates on this reality, noting in particular the opportunities that lie therein and the challenges that global south faces in promoting such cooperation. Finally, I will provide some concrete guidelines and recommendations for enhancing the cooperation between developing countries to better achieve the right to development.

Keywords: South-South Cooperation, Right to Development, International Cooperation.

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Mohammad Reza Ghaebi *

Introduction

The desire of developing countries to stop and finally reverse the global process of deepening economic stratification and reduce the growing distance between them and the developed world is widely perceived as fair, understandable, just and deserving support. Tensions between the developing and developed countries often occur when it comes to defining ways and methods to achieve this goal.

The very concept of the Right to Development (RTD) was proposed already more than forty years ago, in 1972¹. The RTD has been officially proclaimed within the United Nations in 1986, when the General Assembly adopted its Declaration on the Right to Development². Article 3.3 of the Declaration imposes social responsibilities in the relevant

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1. K. M'Baye, *Le Droit au developpement comme un Droit de l'homme*, Inaugural Address at the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg (July 3, 1972), in: *Revue des Droits de l'Homme* (1972), vol. 5, p. 503-534.

2. UN Doc. A/RES/41/128.

regard: “States have the duty to cooperate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development.” The declaration also calls upon states to implement effective development cooperation and for the removal of barriers to development at national and international levels. Furthermore, article 4.2 stipulates, “As a complement to the efforts of developing countries, effective international co-operation is essential in providing these countries with appropriate means and facilities to foster their comprehensive development.”

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness also honors that stipulation in its title. The principles spelled out by the Paris Declaration, starting with “national ownership”; seem consistent with the right to development principles of “sovereign equality, interdependence, mutual interest and co-operation among all States”¹.

Since the 1970s, international cooperation has undergone significant changes. Prior to that time, the term used to refer to an exclusively North-South experience, not based in a real exchange of knowledge, but in a hegemonic imposition of economic standards and cultural values. However, from the 1970s and onwards, as an alternative to the asymmetric North-South relationship, and aimed at establishing an equal and competitive balance of power, Southern nations decided to cooperate among themselves in order to promote self-sufficiency² and to strengthen economic ties. (Medeiros, 2012:51)

In this regard, the concept of “South-South Cooperation” (SSC) refers to cooperative activities between newly industrialized southern countries and other, lesser-developed nations, of the Southern hemisphere, also known as Global South. Such activities include developing mutually beneficial knowledge, technologies, resources, services, and trading relationships. (Corbin, 2006 & Medeiros, 2012:52) As described by the United Nations “the underlying principle of South-South cooperation is that it is a partnership among equals based on a shared solidarity born out of similar experiences and sympathies, which is guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty and ownership, free from any conditions”³.

1. Article 3 (3)

2. Self-sufficiency may be a morally controversial concept, as opposed to self-reliance.

3. United Nations General Assembly, Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. General Assembly Resolution 64/222 of 21 December 2009.

Within the SSC framework, there is a potential for the exchange of best practices regarding the challenges of the developing countries: putting human rights at the center of development cooperation. This article partly aims to identify and explore the challenges as well as the potential for South-South cooperation as regards the realization of the right to development.

An Historical Overview

Historically, academics, politicians and policymakers use SSC to describe exchanges of knowledge, resources and technology among developing countries also known as the Global South. The concept of South-South Cooperation originated in South-East Asia more than 50 years ago and has been used for decades as a basis for academic research and voluntary cooperative efforts between southern countries to promote South-South trade and investment.

The end of World War II provided impetus for identifying the underdeveloped regions of the world which, at that time, were neither industrialized nor socialist. These underdeveloped regions were comprised of countries struggling to overcome their colonial heritage while at the same time they were being pressed to take sides in the Cold War which followed World War II. An understanding of their common interests and of the mutual benefits of cooperation was the seed which led to the creation of institutional frameworks for South-South Cooperation.

Many developing countries, especially those emerging from colonial rule, began questioning the basis of the international system of economic relations and set out to jointly advance proposals for changing its structure and management. These developing countries realized that they were better off acting together rather than being allies of one or the other of the superpowers. The Bandung Conference, held in Indonesia in 1955 where Afro-Asian nations met and recognized the urgency of promoting economic cooperation among themselves, signaled the beginning of a trend which was to have a profound influence on future international cooperation.

The founding of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961 and the Group of 77 (G-77) in 1964 accelerated the developing countries' drive for collective self-reliance. Both the Non-Aligned Movement

and the G-77 were instances of cooperative political mobilization and collective bargaining, wherein propositions such as a new international economic order were advanced. However, thus far the NAM and the G-77 have failed to yield the economic self-reliance and political independence that developing countries had sought. The 1970s were marked by great optimism about the ability of the South to reshape the international structure of power and economic relations in a more equitable direction. The increased activism of G-77 and NAM during this period led to the adoption by the UN General Assembly of resolutions on the New International Economic Order and on new forms for technology transfer between countries.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 1964) played a central role in that discourse and in supporting developing countries in their calls for restructuring the international division of labor. In 1978, the United Nations created a Special Unit for South-South Cooperation to promote and invest, as well as support academic research among the Southern Nations¹. In the early 1980s however, the notion of development in the international economic relations discourse has undergone a dramatic change. Development disappeared from the international economic discourse inspired by market theories and ideas about a reduced role for the state (cf. minimal state notions), a dominant thinking that prevailed over the past 20 to 25 years. Slow growth in the advanced economies in this period influenced their engagement in the global economy and development cooperation, including achieving longstanding commitments in Official Development Assistance (ODA)², which is yet to be accomplished.

In 1989, at the Ninth Non-Aligned Movement Summit meeting, more than 100 countries decided to establish an international organization, originally known as "the Group for South-South Consultation and

1. For further information, see: <http://ssc.undp.org/content/ssc.html>

2. Official development assistance (ODA) is defined as government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. Loans and credits for military purposes are excluded. Aid may be provided bilaterally, from donor to recipient, or channeled through a multilateral development agency such as the United Nations or the World Bank. Aid includes grants, "soft" loans (where the grant element is at least 25% of the total) and the provision of technical assistance.

Coordination"(G-15)¹. As officially described, the G-15 was predicated on the firm belief of the considerable potential for greater and mutually beneficial cooperation among developing countries, especially in the areas of investment, trade and technology. After 15 official meetings, the membership expanded to 17.² Until now, the G-15 summit meetings have made important decisions,³ and their unified input has influenced other organizations' policies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the G-7 group of seven rich and industrialized nations⁴

The idea of South-South solidarity in the world arena evolved further during the 1980s and 1990s as a strategy for reductions in the foreign aid provided by the Global North. As a result, interregional agreements and bilateral forms of cooperation increased considerably, facilitated not only by governmental actors – although they played a key, and in many instances exclusive, role in this process – but also by private and public businesses and entities.⁵

The beginning of the new millennium has heralded a new phase in the South-South cooperation history. The first South Summit of the Group of 77, an important intergovernmental alliance within the United Nations system, held in Havana, in the year 2000. The Group has played a key role in the South-South cooperation development process. It is the largest intergovernmental organization of developing

1. For further information, see the official website : <http://www.g15.org/>

2. Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Jamaica, Mexico, Venezuela, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Sri Lanka though the former member-state Peru decided to leave the group

3. The most recent of them are : Fourteenth Summit: 2010, Tehran, Iran, Thirteenth Summit : 2006, Havana, Cuba, Twelfth Summit: 2004, Caracas, Venezuela and Eleventh Summit: 2001, Jakarta, Indonesia,

4. France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Japan, United States and Canada

5. Instances of such cooperation can be found in : Corbin, Garin. "South-South Cooperation defies the North", posted on 06/12/2006. Global en Vision: the Confluence of Global Markets and Poverty Alleviation. Available on:

- <http://www.globalenvision.org/library/3/1371>

- <http://www.unops.org/english/whatwedo/news/Pages/Nigeria-India-South-South-cooperation.aspx>

- <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/ssc/emssc-02/presentation/Saint-Lucia-Gaspard-Michel-Andrew-en.pdf>>

- <http://ppd africa.org/en/news/77-south-south-cooperation-in-maternal-health-and-hiv-aids>

countries in United Nations, which provides the means for the countries of the South to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the United Nations system, and promotes South-South cooperation for development.

Furthermore, in December 2003 the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 58/220, declaring December 19th the annual United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation. Another measure to promote the Cooperation was the establishment of the South-South Cooperation Fund by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This fund supplements unilateral efforts by individual nations¹ to assist less developed Southern nations

Developing countries' growth in the 2000s led to the idea of decoupling from the historical dependence on the North, a growth that carried out its fragilities as cautioned by UNCTAD and based mainly on speculative capital. This period also saw an impressive rise in South-South Cooperation. Despite their development challenges and based on different principles from that of North-South cooperation, developing countries boosted an agenda of alternative ways of development cooperation focusing on sharing experiences on issues abandoned in the past decades such as industrial policy.

The most important UN meeting on South-South Cooperation in decades highlighted growing political and economic ties within the developing world, as countries from the South assume leading roles in decisions on global issues ranging from economic recovery to food security and climate change. Hosted by Kenya and held at the UN's Nairobi headquarters in 2009, the conference sought to promote and sharpen the benefits of mutual support among developing and transition economies, as well as maintain support for the process from the developed world through Triangular Cooperation. It also reviewed 30 years of progress since the 1978 United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries held in Buenos Aires.

Against this backdrop, over the past decades the productive economic agenda replaced with greater focus on the social component in the development cooperation discourse. At the same time, there has

1. Such as China, India, Brazil, Egypt and Japan

emerged a degree of fragmentation within the South camp over the past three decades, resulting in different growth experiences now reflected in their initiatives in South-South Cooperation with differentiated focus on human capital, services and infrastructure.

In recent history, new alternatives and structures, which are more democratic, have formed with the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in response to the previous discontent with the dominant structures of finance and the development of the Washington based institutions.

Principles of South-South Cooperation:

As reaffirmed in the Ministerial Declaration of the 33rd Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Group of 77 and China, in September 2009, New York, USA, the principles of SSC are:

- South-South Cooperation is a common endeavor of peoples and countries of the South and must be pursued as an expression of South-South solidarity and a strategy for economic independence and self-reliance of the South based on their common objectives and solidarity;
- South-South Cooperation and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South;
- South-South Cooperation must not be seen as a replacement for North-South Cooperation. Strengthening South-South Cooperation must not be a measure of coping with the receding interest of the developed world in assisting developing countries;
- Cooperation between countries of the South must not be analyzed and evaluated using the same standards as those used for North-South relations;
- Financial contributions from other developing countries should not be seen as official development assistance from these countries to other countries of the South. These are merely expressions of solidarity and cooperation borne out of shared experiences and sympathies;
- South-South Cooperation is a development agenda based on premises, conditions and objectives that are specific to the historic and political context of developing countries and to their needs and expectations.

- South-South Cooperation deserves its own separate and independent promotion;
- South-South Cooperation is based on a strong, genuine, broad-based partnership and solidarity;
- South-South Cooperation is based on equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit;
- South-South Cooperation respects national sovereignty in the context of shared responsibility;
- South-South Cooperation strives for strengthened multilateralism in the promotion of an action-oriented approach to development challenges;
- South-South Cooperation promotes the exchange of best practices among developing countries in the common pursuit of their broad development objectives (encompassing all aspects of international relations and not just in the traditional economic and technical areas);
- South-South Cooperation is based on the collective self-reliance of developing countries;
- South-South Cooperation seeks to enable developing countries to play a more active role in international policy and decision-making processes, in support of their efforts to achieve sustainable development;
- The modalities and mechanisms for promoting South-South Cooperation are based on bilateral, sub-regional, regional and interregional cooperation and integration as well as multilateral cooperation.

Types of South-South Cooperation

Numerous variations of South-South Cooperation exist. Depending on the criteria that have been used, several types of SSC can be differentiated. Examples of such criteria are: the way the cooperation is financed, the role of each stakeholder, the domain in which the cooperation takes place, etc. UNESCO describes a classification system which distinguishes between several types of South-South Cooperation based on the activity of the cooperation. UNESCO differentiates the following types of cooperation as follows:

- Sharing experiences and good practices: one or more developing countries with experience and expertise in a certain domain

exchange(s) this experience and expertise with one or more other developing countries.

- **Strengthening of networks:** several institutions from different developing countries form a network and work together within this network.
- **Capacity-building:** Capacity-building in the context of South-South Cooperation is about increasing the ability of a southern country to promote development. The southern countries help each other build up their capacity to promote development. For example, capacity-building can include the training of personnel and the purchase of equipment.
- **Partnership development:** the developing countries start a partnership and set up a common project to build on development

Benefits

Drivers of South-South Cooperation that developing countries have found to have long-lasting benefits and deserve further attention include:

- **Health:** South-South Cooperation in public health increases the collective ability of southern countries to fight inequality and to promote the highest attainable level of health for all. In the midst of different crises, the South has seen tremendous success in combating a number of infectious diseases¹.
- **Education:** The developing nations have worked hard to provide education and skills to their respective work-forces.
- **Policy:** Effective policy frameworks in countries that have efficient governance and functioning economies could share their experiences with other developing countries whose weak policy-making structures and inefficient and often corrupt governments hamper their development.
- **Science & technology:** Developing countries are rapidly moving ahead to create hubs of knowledge based on bright and educated people and are looking for ways to exchange relevant technology across the South.

1. Data from the World Health Organization shows that 36 million cases of tuberculosis have been cured over the past 15 years and 8 million deaths have been averted. In the past 8 years, new HIV infections world-wide have been reduced by 17%, with a 15% reduction in sub-Saharan Africa, and a nearly 25% reduction in East Asia.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p style="text-align: center;">Learning from each other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic, environmental, cultural and social advances ▪ Changing North-South relations and changing balance of power ▪ Lower transaction costs 	<p style="text-align: center;">Benefits are not evenly shared among developing countries</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The gap between North and South will remain for a long time</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lack of resources and ineffective coordination</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p style="text-align: center;">SSC will still increase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities as a result of globalization <p style="text-align: center;">Increased awareness of the differences among developing countries will have a positive impact on policy</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Complications about ownership or management</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Northern fears of the rising South</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Political problems are an obstacle for cooperation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Trade barriers and intellectual property rights</p>

Challenges

While the commitments to technical and economic cooperation among developing countries are strong, the challenges present equally serious concerns. International Cooperation deemed a core mechanism to promote global development in times of global economic liberalization. However, despite the multitude of efforts and formal assistance agreements, many voices been raised to point out that the gains of cooperation are not as high as expected.

Developing countries face multiple challenges in their path of south-south cooperation:

- The global South is an increasingly fragmented group, divided by levels of development, regional, cultural and political concerns and other nuances, which make solidarity for achieving common goals a complex endeavor.
- Global economic and financial crises with worldwide impacts, in particular, in their efforts to implement the Right to Development;
- Difficulties to implement their development strategies ranging from technology access to difficulties to implement industrial policy due to impediments arising from international trade regimes;
- linkages between climate change and South-South Cooperation and the Right to Development including the challenges due to climate change and on the implementation of the Paris Agreement as rules on the implementation of the agreed outcome are yet to be written and to be negotiated;. (Developing countries to be more at the front of the discourse)
- Several Southern nations still depend on the industrialized Northern countries for export markets, foreign investment, concessionary finance and technology.
- On the health agenda, new challenges such as those posed by the crisis of antimicrobial resistance;
- Challenges for sustainable development and how they will implement the Agenda 2030 and SDGs, calling for special attention to the concerns of developing countries particularly the means of implementation which are necessary for the success of the agenda;
- Challenges for multilateralism with a greater emphasis on a universal agenda having commitments and obligations to be applied for all and greater pressure, from developed countries, being placed on developing countries to give up on differential and preferential treatment which have been longstanding features of international trade and cooperation regimes.
- The negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures and international sanctions on the enjoyment of right to development through impeding cooperation between developing countries
- The rise of more exclusionary economic trade arrangements with potential emergence of new global norms without participation of developing countries and the increasing lack in providing

assistance to developing countries by donors either through official development assistance or means of implementation.

Current state & Recommendations

These challenges notwithstanding, the South-South Cooperation has brought along a new wave of optimism for innovative opportunities to encourage increased hemispheric partnership and solidarity, and this encouragement has a positive impact not only on economic or technological ties, but on civil society issues as well.

The Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement are the largest groups of developing countries, within the broader framework of a mosaic of groupings of States and the United Nations. From across the South, new groups have emerged, including BRICS (consisting of Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa); IBSA (consisting of India, Brazil and South Africa); and ALBA-TCP¹, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-Peoples' Trade Agreement,² in addition to numerous earlier groupings. Both South-South and regional cooperation would be supported by thinking outside the mainstream model in order to enhance human-centered development and human-centered globalization. The right to development after all requires socioeconomic and political development of the sorts that are predicated on humane development environment.

In this regard, China's and India's experiences in development cooperation are appropriate examples of south-south cooperation that entail a more complementary rather than competitive function. While India's focus over past decades has been largely on capacity building and the region, China has placed a greater focus on infrastructure and connectivity in the region and throughout Africa.

The greater involvement of Asian and Latin American countries in Africa is increasing that continent's cooperation at the bilateral level.

1. ALBA-TCP is an international cooperation organization based on the idea of social, political and economic integration between the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, which will include bartering and mutual economic aid rather than trade liberalization and free trade agreements. Members are Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), with Saint Lucia and Suriname as guest members
2. Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América-Tratado de Comercio de los Pueblos

Trade and investment arrangements with newly emerging economies, notably China, are seeing a large increase in economic activity in Africa. India also has become a key trading partner for sub-Saharan Africa, including in the sale of life-saving medicines at affordable prices, and Brazil's annual trade with Africa has increased substantially.¹

An example of Latin American initiatives in international solidarity is contained in the principles of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). Invoking a shared culture and history and a future of integration, and inspired by the spirit of the wars of independence, South American presidents reaffirmed the ideals of freedom, equality and solidarity in the foundation documents.² They have declared that "their common political and philosophical thought recognizes the primacy of human beings, their dignity and rights, and the plurality of peoples and cultures; and that a South American identity and shared common values, including solidarity and social justice, been established"³.

Brazil also adopts a policy of "solidarity diplomacy" whereby it makes its own experience and knowledge available to other developing countries to promote economic and social progress without imposing conditions, and areas of cooperation are defined by recipient countries (Medeiros, 2012:54). The experiences of IBSA Development Forum, also represents, three major democracies of the developing world that have undertaken valuable initiatives in development cooperation.⁴ There is also the good example of the African region, with the recent decision to establish the African Energy Initiative, a homebred initiative that support projects of energy in the continent and with the focus on sectors such as small scale farming systems, an important element in development cooperation for the African continent.

Given the fact that formal nature of SSC among the nations from

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1. "The state of South-South cooperation: report of the Secretary-General" (A/66/229)
 2. Paragraph 2 of the Declaration of Ayacucho, signed on 9 December 2004 by Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
 3. Section I of the Cuzco Declaration, signed on 8 December 2004 by Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
 4. More recently in 2015, the IBSA Fund to fight hunger and poverty supported programmes in Haiti focusing on combating child labor and youth employment

the South has already been recognized, the following concrete recommendations are in order for consideration of developing countries:

- Re-think “cooperation” more in terms of a new dialogue of inclusion and self-determination”
- Develop and implement a Code of Conduct or guidelines on how to build horizontal partnerships for development cooperation, which will be adaptable to country, regional and global development priorities and monitored through a continued learning process.
- Enable practice-policy alliances to empower change agents to enrich policy making , trigger the emergence of formal and informal private practitioners networks and facilitates their participation in policy-making processes,
- Support country-led capacity development plans for mutual accountability, transparency and results management. They may include improving the quality of information, reinforcing results oriented approaches and achieving better alignment to national systems and development plans. The support of multilateral organizations and donors, including through the adaptation of their aid experiences and lessons learned, as well as the involvement of Southern academia will be key for the success of these plans. a comprehensive information bank should be also set up to track South-South cooperation efforts
- A regional framework is in place to promote knowledge sharing about best practices of South-South Cooperation, but there is a need for inter-regional and global frameworks to gather best practices about South-South Cooperation.
- Good practices in South-South should be better communicated to the international community; there is a low degree of understanding about the nature and effectiveness of South-South Cooperation.
- The efforts of bilateral donors, international financial institutions and UN organizations to support South-South Cooperation should be coordinated to avoid overlaps.
- While sustainable development remains primarily an economic challenge in the 21st century, a shared commitment regarding the promotion of human rights protection should be a priority for these nations in foreign policy affairs, in order to assure the social and political sustainability of the sought-after growth and development.

- Southern nations should open and promote a wider dialogue to strengthen legal institutions and human rights defense mechanisms. The imperative of human rights could thus become a core foundation of each cooperation development project, as is already happening in a number of good examples found among the presently cooperating countries of the South.
- “It is a relationship between equal partners” in which priorities are set by partners based on their needs and challenges and how developing countries, even with modest resources, could align themselves to cooperate. Two key pillars of development cooperation are partnership for mutual benefit and prosperity and ownership by partners.
- The development compact consists of five main elements namely capacity building, grants, lines of credit, trade and investment. Among them capacity building is a strong component with transfer of know-how through trainings and education programs at the centre of development cooperation
- South-South Cooperation is an important component to support efforts to implement the Right to Development. However, it is not a substitute for North-South cooperation based on the historical responsibilities of developed countries for development cooperation to compensate and make sufficient remedies for the negative impacts of colonialism on the third world countries.
- Developing countries must leave the position of working on the agenda set by others and instead taking a position in which they can set the agenda, particularly when it comes to the Paris Agreement and the SDGs, two important outcomes in which measures of implementation will play a crucial role.
- A greater level of South-South learning, sharing, and information exchange is needed among developing countries in order to ensure that South-South cooperation reflects on innovations and the experiences of the South;
- South ownership with respect to South-South development cooperation must be at the foundation of such cooperation;
- The development focus of South-South cooperation should establish a key link to the Right to Development;
- Given the diversity among developing countries, it is necessary that South-South development cooperation is pursued through a

variety of models and alternative approaches to allow South-South cooperation for development to be innovative and transformative.

Conclusion

Development cooperation is indeed the key to implementing and promoting the right to development. The UN Declaration on the Right to Development makes it mandatory that States have the duty to cooperate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development. Furthermore, it emphasizes that as a complement to the efforts of developing countries, effective international co-operation is imperative for providing these countries with appropriate means and facilities to foster their comprehensive development.

In this context, the global landscape of development cooperation has changed drastically in recent years. The era of one-way cooperation has become outdated, as countries of the South are engaging in collaborative learning models to share innovative, adaptable and cost-efficient solutions to address their development challenges. Conscious that effective cooperation should go far beyond financial contributions and North-South technical assistance, a large and expanding group of Middle and Low Income Countries (MICs and LICs) are creating new and innovative responses to their socio-economic-environmental challenges, ranging from poverty and education to climate change, post-conflict and reconstruction.

Indeed, South-South cooperation derives from a joint struggle for justice, and bonds that are nurtured a spirit of solidarity and friendship. It implies cooperative interaction through building solidarity based on mutual benefits among developing countries in their collective struggle to compensate for their relative lack of global power. South-South Cooperation (SSC) has become the expression of collaboration and partnership among countries from the South, interested in sharing, learning, and exploring their complementary strengths to go beyond their traditional role as aid recipients. South-South cooperation also was found to be extensive and diverse in terms of financing for development, knowledge and experience sharing, networking, institution building and formalization of cooperative arrangements. Knowledge Sharing, one of the most dynamic dimensions of SSC, has developed into a third pillar of development cooperation, complementing finance and technical

assistance. This changing context is allowing the emergence of a paradigm where “Horizontal Partnerships”, based on equity, trust, mutual benefit and long-term relations, become an alternative way to do development cooperation.

The new global architecture for international cooperation calls for strengthening of all forms of international cooperation: North-South, South-South, triangular¹, as well as South–North framework. However, the global South is an increasingly fragmented group, divided by levels of development, regional, cultural, and political issues and other context-specific factors and nuances, which make solidarity in the process of achieving common goals a daunting task. The changing geopolitical realities will have significant implications for international relations, especially in the economic sphere, in the coming years. The proliferation of new actors and cross-regional modalities is enriching the understanding and practice of development cooperation and generating important changes in the global development architecture towards a more inclusive, effective, and horizontal global development agenda. The evolution of SSC leaves important lessons about its strategic role in enhancing ownership and strengthening national capacities.

South-South trade relations hold much promise for the future, provided they are implemented in the context of equality of sovereign, fairness and equity, information-sharing, and equal partnerships for all, while also avoiding historical patterns of exploitation.² The emergence of the South-South Cooperation in the international relations arena has also created a unique opportunity for the Southern countries’ governments and civil societies to commence a new dialogue on human rights diplomacy and legal institutions. There is a need for emerging democracies and southern countries to contribute to democracy-promotion initiatives, while assuring the centrality of human rights in any model of development that seeks to be socially and politically sustainable.

1. Triangular Cooperation is the result of technical cooperation among two or more developing countries that is supported financially by northern donors or by international organizations. Triangular Cooperation often consists of a financial contribution from a northern donor together with technical skills provided by a southern donor, which is then implemented in a partner country.

2. A/HRC/15/32, para. 58

Their historical commonalities, as well as similar present-day challenges, should not be viewed as negative legacies and a tough road ahead, but rather as great opportunities and evolving capabilities regarding the attainment of a more equitable, sustainable form of development, not influenced or mediated by power relationships and asymmetries. Such dialogue and collaboration are indeed a necessary condition to make the right to development a reality in the coming years.

