



Statement for the Third South Summit of the Group of 77 and China

Kampala, Uganda

21-23 January 2024

Mr. President, Excellencies, and Distinguished Colleagues,

First of all, the South Centre would like to express our deep appreciation for the generous hospitality of our hosts, the Republic of Uganda and their impressive organizational work of this Summit.

Mr. President,

The theme of the Summit, 'Leaving No One Behind', is extremely significant today, as it reflects the urgent needs and aspirations of the Global South towards meeting their sustainable development priorities. This theme encapsulates the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, representing an unequivocal commitment to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty, to heal and secure our planet, and to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world into a sustainable and resilient path.

The fulfilment of this promise requires combined and concerted efforts by the global community across all areas of international cooperation. This Summit is, therefore, an important opportunity to bring renewed momentum to the cooperation among the member states of the G77 and China. Since the South Centre's establishment in 1995, we have worked closely with the G-77 and China and its member states on issues of high importance to developing countries, seeking to arrive at common positions and understanding in the areas of climate change, international trade, foreign investment, sovereign debt, global health, intellectual property rights, and digital economy, among many others.

We note with great appreciation that the Outcome Document of this Third South Summit re-confirms the important role of the South Centre as a think tank of the countries of the South and emphasized its importance in enhancing South-South Cooperation through promoting solidarity and mutual understanding among the countries and peoples of the South, as well as providing the intellectual and policy support required by developing countries for collective and individual action in the international arena.

Developing countries continue to face serious hurdles, as well as new and emerging challenges, in implementing and attaining the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite being over halfway to the 2030 deadline, progress remains woefully off-track, with more than 30 per cent of the SDGs having stalled or even gone into reverse. At the same time, the annual SDG funding gap has risen from \$2.5 trillion before the COVID-19 pandemic to an estimated \$4.2 trillion today. This situation is extremely worrying and requires the international community to come together and find innovative and equitable solutions that will enable developing countries to ensure the upliftment and protection of the poorest and most vulnerable.

While not a substitute to North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation is an important mechanism for developing countries to collaborate and promote sustainable development. For this purpose, South-South cooperation initiatives must be determined by the countries of the South and guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit.

The global landscape of South-South cooperation has undergone a paradigm shift since the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying financial and debt crises. South-South cooperation during the pandemic featured a high level of people-to-people exchanges, which translated into sharing knowledge and experiences and promoting local solutions to address and minimise the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. The recent armed conflicts and geopolitical tensions have deepened the integration of South-South cooperation in the national development strategies of many developing countries.

The importance of South-South cooperation for developing countries in dealing with the most critical challenges of our times cannot be underestimated. Efforts towards recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and building more resilient societies can be significantly enhanced through increasing cooperation and experience sharing among developing countries as a complement to traditional North-South cooperation. Leveraging South-South cooperation can also promote broader coordination among the various connected actors and institutions of developing countries, such as the South Centre, for building capacities to respond to crises and promote sustainable development.

The 1978 Buenos Aires Plan of Action anticipated the need to enhance the institutional arrangements in developing countries to support technical cooperation among developing countries effectively and promote Southern-led cooperation initiatives. Over four decades later, the implementation of the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) presents another important opportunity to strengthen the institutional capacities of Southern countries to assess their capacity gaps, define their comparative advantages and matching needs of other developing countries, towards South-South cooperation programmes and initiatives that will increase solidarity and result in mutual benefits.

Significant changes are currently taking place in the international economic order, which creates opportunities and conditions conducive to promoting South-South cooperation, pursuing sustained economic growth, as well as national and collective self-reliance. Finding common positions and mutual understanding among developing countries in key areas of global governance and multilateral negotiations is vital for effectively addressing the multiple global crises that define our times, particularly climate change, unsustainable debt, and increasing poverty and food insecurity.

Finally, South-South cooperation needs to be strengthened through providing greater support to the South's own institutions, including the South Centre, the G-77, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the various regional and inter-regional institutions.

As we move forward, the South Centre as the intergovernmental think-tank of developing countries, stands ready to support the G-77 and China and its member States to achieve the sustainable development objectives and priorities of the Global South.

Thank you, Mr. President.