



Intervention by Carlos Correa at the Global South Media and Think Tank Forum, Kunming, 6 September 2025

Let me start by thanking the organizers for inviting the South Centre to participate at this meeting.

The South Centre is the [intergovernmental](#) think tank of the Global South with [55 Member States](#) from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. We help developing countries to combine their efforts and expertise to promote their common interests in the international arena. The South Centre's [vision](#) is the empowerment of the Global South to achieve fairer international trade, tax and investment systems, eliminate poverty and inequalities, realize human rights, respond to climate change, fight disease and health emergencies, and harness South-South and Triangular Cooperation as well as digital and other technologies for innovation and sustainable development.

The current global scenario is in transition. From a colonial past and marginalization, the Global South is emerging as a driving force of the world economy. It has also been able to get important achievements, although many asymmetries and weaknesses remain.

Several indicators confirm this. The Global South accounts for more than 40% of the global GDP. It is the origin of 46% of global goods exports, and of 45% of global manufacturing. Of course, China has played an outstanding role in achieving these levels.

The average annual economic growth rate of the Global South from 2000 to 2024 has been at 5.08%, significantly higher than the global average of 3.52%. Today the growth of the world economy largely depends on the dynamism of countries of the Global South, notably China and India.

The progress made in science and technology is also impressive. While 30 years ago the Global South accounted for only 6% of global research and development expenditures, today it is responsible for around a quarter of them. This has led to significant advancements in areas such as quantum computing, 5G, electric batteries, artificial intelligence, robotics, nano manufacturing, and many others.

For instance, according to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, China is ahead of the US in 37 of 44 areas of technology. Technological progress can be found in other countries of the South as well. For instance, in Nigeria, engineers are building agricultural drones to help farmers monitor crops. Ethiopia and South Africa are developing domestic drone industries for surveillance and mapping.

We should not overlook that the Global South is the place where 85% of the world's population lives. As poverty is eradicated and the living standards of the population improve, the importance of markets in the Global South will continue to grow. This explains, for instance, that despite a recent decline, the Global South receives 57% of global foreign direct investment inflows.

The Global South has made important achievements in building infrastructure, reducing poverty, providing health services and improving education, among others.

Of course, many inequalities and gaps still exist that cannot be overlooked. Poverty, lack of access to clean water, decent jobs and social security protection, climate change events, the digital divide, to mention a few, affect a large part of the Southern population and constrain the realization of human rights.

Those persistent challenges should be the focus of decisive policy actions at the national and regional level; international cooperation is also essential. South-South and Triangular Cooperation, which has grown in scope and impact, can play a crucial role in this regard.

The scenario just depicted is very different from that prevailing 70 years ago when the Bandung principles were adopted, and when 51 years ago developing countries succeeded in obtaining the adoption of the Declaration on a New International Economic Order and its Program of Action, which remained largely unrealized.

In the new international scenario, the Global South can be the driving force in building up a new international system based on values of inclusiveness, solidarity, protection of the environment, and a human-centered development. This requires, inter alia, the reform of the international financial architecture and of the functioning of the UN system, addressing the challenges posed by the dominance of the US dollar and establishing mechanisms for developing and sharing technologies that improve productivity and well-being.

A more assertive role of the Global South is not only possible today; it has become more urgent as the unilateral policies implemented by the US government, notably through the weaponization of tariffs, have disrupted global value chains and flows of foreign direct investment, while severely undermining the system of trading rules built in the last 80 years. A system that, ironically, the US largely shaped to serve its own interests. While addressing its imbalances and gaps, a rules-based system is necessary to give predictability and allow developing countries to rely on trade as a source of growth.

The expansion of BRICS, the outcomes of its last Summit in Brazil, including on artificial intelligence, and the recent Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Tianjin, indicate that a new phase in Global South relations is emerging despite diversity in culture, socio-economic levels and development strategies.

The South Centre will continue to support the efforts of the Global South to shape a new international order and is keen to cooperate with the think tanks meeting here to attain that objective.

Thank you.