

## Seven Decades After Bandung: The evolving landscape for South-South and Triangular Cooperation



## **RESEARCH PAPER**

## 225

# SEVEN DECADES AFTER BANDUNG: THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE FOR SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Seven decades after the landmark Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, its outcomes and principles continue to guide South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTrC) among the nations of the global South. Despite the current challenges facing global governance, multilateralism and international development cooperation, the Bandung Principles or *Dasa sila* remain an effective framework for developing countries to work collectively towards achieving peace, economic growth and sustainable development, and creating a democratic and equitable global order fit for the current moment which ensures that no one is left behind. Highlighting the legacy and continued relevance of the Spirit of Bandung for developing countries, this paper looks at some of the important elements that are contributing to the changing landscape for SSTrC; its opportunities, challenges and future trajectories; and how SSTrC could be strengthened at the national, regional and multilateral level for realizing sustainable development in the global South.

Soixante-dix années se sont écoulées depuis la conférence historique qui s'est tenue à Bandung, en Indonésie, entre l'Asie et l'Afrique, mais ses résultats et principes continuent de guider la coopération Sud-Sud et triangulaire (CSST) entre les nations du Sud. Malgré les défis auxquels le monde est aujourd'hui confronté en matière de gouvernance mondiale, de multilatéralisme et de coopération internationale au développement, les dix principes de Bandung ou Dasa sila demeurent un cadre efficace permettant aux pays en développement d'œuvrer collectivement à la paix, à la croissance économique et au développement durable, et de créer un ordre mondial démocratique et équitable qui soit en phase avec les nouvelles réalités et à même de garantir que nul ne soit laissé pour compte. Soulignant l'héritage et l'importance de l'esprit de Bandung pour les pays en développement, le présent article examine certains des principaux éléments qui contribuent à l'évolution de la coopération Sud-Sud et triangulaire : ses enjeux, les perspectives qu'elle ouvre et sa trajectoire à venir, ainsi que la manière dont elle pourrait être renforcée aux niveaux national, régional et multilatéral en vue de la réalisation des objectifs de développement durable dans les pays du Sud.

Siete décadas después de la histórica Conferencia Afroasiática celebrada en Bandung, Indonesia, sus resultados y principios siguen orientando la Cooperación Sur-Sur y Triangular (CSST) entre las naciones del Sur global. Pese a los desafíos actuales que afrontan la gobernanza global, el multilateralismo y la cooperación internacional para el desarrollo, los Principios de Bandung o Dasa Sila continúan siendo un marco eficaz para que los países en desarrollo trabajen colectivamente con miras a lograr la paz, el crecimiento económico y el desarrollo sostenible, y a forjar un orden mundial democrático y equitativo, acorde con el momento actual y que no deje a nadie atrás. Destacando el legado y la vigencia del Espíritu de Bandung para los países en desarrollo, este documento examina algunos de los elementos clave que están configurando el cambiante panorama de la CSST; sus oportunidades, desafíos y trayectorias futuras; y de qué manera podría fortalecerse la CSST en los planos nacional, regional y multilateral para hacer realidad el desarrollo sostenible en el Sur global.

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Asian-African Conference, which was held in Bandung, Indonesia from 18 – 24 April 1955. It was the first conference held among the newly independent and decolonised countries of the global South to highlight the need to design and build cooperation mechanisms of self-reliance and solidarity. It recognized that the promotion and development of cooperation is the most "powerful means of promoting understanding among nations"<sup>2</sup>.

Yet, seven decades after Bandung, the developing countries are facing a 'perfect storm' of crises on several fronts, manifesting in the impacts of climate change, in armed conflicts and geo-political and geo-economic tensions, in increasing poverty, hunger and inequality. Implementation of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains "woefully off track" and existing gaps have widened, and "the annual SDG funding gap has risen from \$2.5 trillion before the pandemic to an estimated \$4.2 trillion".<sup>3</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the first rise in extreme poverty since 1998, with an additional 93 million people pushed into extreme poverty. The rate of poverty reduction has come to a near standstill, with "691 million people still estimated to be living in extreme poverty in 2023 – only 13 million less than in 2022". Hunger and food insecurity have also risen, with an "estimated 238 million facing high levels of acute food insecurity because of higher food prices driven by economic shocks, conflicts, and extreme weather events".

Multilateralism and trust in international institutions have also been undermined in recent times. The double standards displayed by some countries in the Global North have greatly eroded the trust of developing countries. To quote a senior Group of Seven (G7) country official, "We have definitely lost the battle in the Global South, (...) forget about rules, forget about world order. They won't ever listen to us again". The hoarding of vaccines, the broken pledges on climate finance, the declining engagement at multilateral fora have all contributed to this increase in mistrust.

This has coincided with marked diversion<sup>8</sup> and decline in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided by developed countries. The rise in geopolitics, increasing nationalism and geo-economic fragmentation is having significant consequences, as advanced economies are acting on their changed geopolitical priorities instead of developmental and growth priorities. The proliferation of unilateral trade measures is accelerating trends to restructure global value chains and further reducing foreign investment flows<sup>9</sup>, as well as contributing to record levels of global uncertainty.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Foy, "Rush by west to back Israel erodes developing countries' support for Ukraine", *Financial Times*, 18 October 2023. Available from https://www.ft.com/content/e0b43918-7eaf-4a11-baaf-d6d7fb61a8a5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Final Communiqué of the Asian-African Conference of Bandung (1955), in *Asia-Africa speak from Bandung* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, 1955).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> "Halfway to 2030, world 'nowhere near' reaching Global Goals, UN warns", UN News, 17 July 2023. Available from <a href="https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1138777">https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1138777</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> United Nations (UN), Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022. Available from <a href="https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/goal-01/">https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/goal-01/</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> UN, World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2024, p. 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> UN, WESP 2024, p. 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Philip Loft and Philip Brien, "UK aid: Spending reductions since 2020 and outlook from 2023", UK Parliament, House of Commons Library, 30 October 2023. Available from <a href="https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9224/">https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9224/</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Gita Gopinath, "Geopolitics and its Impact on Global Trade and the Dollar", IMF, 7 May 2024. Available from <a href="https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2024/05/07/sp-geopolitics-impact-global-trade-and-dollar-gita-gopinath">https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2024/05/07/sp-geopolitics-impact-global-trade-and-dollar-gita-gopinath</a>.

Developing countries therefore have the opportunity to enhance their South-South and Triangular cooperation (SSTrC) efforts to promote effective sustainable development solutions, as further discussed below. However, South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but a complement to North-South cooperation, as the share of North-South cooperation still dominates international development cooperation.

Some developing countries have expanded their SSTrC capacities to play a dual role as both providers and beneficiaries of development cooperation. Yet the national institutional setup for SSTrC in these countries has not kept pace. Strengthened national institutions are needed in developing countries for increasing the effectiveness of their SSTrC initiatives. Capacity building remains fundamental for empowering developing countries to implement their own development programs effectively and to share their knowledge and expertise with other developing countries.

The international community needs effective global cooperation to address the threats facing humanity today. For developing countries, the emergence of new challenges and deepening of existing ones, especially on climate change, poverty reduction, food security, and sustainable development requires allocating greater focus and resources for SSTrC based solutions. Development innovations from the South, led by the South and supported by Northern partners can accelerate the implementation of the SDGs and narrow global development gaps.

This paper therefore looks at some of the important elements that are contributing to the changing landscape for SSTrC. It first considers the legacy from the Bandung conference and its continued relevance. Then it considers the opportunities, challenges and future trajectories for SSTrC among developing countries, and how it could be strengthened at the national, regional and multilateral levels. The final section provides some policy recommendations.

#### II. THE ENDURING IMPORTANCE OF BANDUNG

The Bandung Conference, also known as the 'Asian-African Conference', gathered 29 developing countries from Asia and Africa in Indonesia in 1955 to bring about a non-aligned comity of nations based on Southern solidarity, anti-colonialism and peaceful coexistence, which would remain outside the binaries conceived by the Cold War. As one commentator notes, "while challenging Western dominance, the Bandung conference also contributed to and strengthened the emerging post-war global normative framework to better reflect the positions and concerns of the newly independent nations (...) The meaning of non-intervention was extended to include non-participation in unequal military alliances conceived in the Cold War context" 10.

Though the global political and economic landscape has changed dramatically since, the Bandung principles have been embraced by developing nations seeking to strengthen their sovereign autonomy and foster South-South cooperation. They are also being adapted for addressing new global realities in the modern era, including safeguarding digital sovereignty and navigating the emerging multipolar world order.

The conference outcome, called the Ten Principles (*Dasa sila*) of Bandung were aimed at guiding the efforts of developing countries to deepen their cooperation and promote peace and security in the world. As Amb. Saran notes, "The Bandung Principles or the *Dasa sila* remain valid as norms for inter-state relations and for creating a more democratic world order. They should be revived" 11. These important principles 12 are reiterated in full below:

- I. Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
- II. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
- III. Recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small.
- IV. Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country.
- V. Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
- VI. Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers, abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries.
- VII. Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.
- VIII. Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties' own choice, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
- IX. Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation.
- X. Respect for justice and international obligation.

The Spirit of Bandung, which emerged as an expression of the unity, non-alignment, and inclusive cooperation for sustainable development among the countries of the South remains a guiding light for reforming the international framework for global governance to make it fair, equitable and representative of developing countries' needs and priorities. The Bandung Message, which was adopted at its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in 2015<sup>13</sup>, reiterated that the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Amitav Acharya, "Studying the Bandung conference from a Global IR perspective", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (2016), pp. 342-357, DOI: 10.1080/10357718.2016.1168359.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Shyam Saran, "Bandung Spirit merits a revival", *The Tribune*, 30 April 2025. https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/bandung-spirit-merits-a-revival/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Bandung Principles. See https://nam.go.ug/bandung-principles.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> South Centre, South Bulletin 85, 15 May 2015. Available from <a href="https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/SB85">https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/SB85</a> EN.pdf.

Spirit of Bandung remains a solid, pertinent and effective foundation for nurturing stronger relations among global South countries.

The Bandung Conference also set the ground for the creation of important institutions for promoting collective action of the global South, most prominently the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961 and the Group of 77 and China (G-77) in 1964. The Spirit of Bandung also played a key role in achieving international milestones that promote the common interests of developing countries, such as the UN resolutions on Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources (PSNR)<sup>14</sup>, the New International Economic Order (NIEO)<sup>15</sup>, and the Declaration on the Right to Development<sup>16</sup>, among many others. The spirit of the *Dasa sila* continues to find resonance in international negotiations today. For instance, principles such as equity, and common but differentiated responsibility and respective capacities (CBDR-RC), are central to developing countries positions in climate summits.

Today, it is essential to revitalise the Spirit of Bandung, but also to account for contemporary realities. The rise of cross-boundary challenges such as climate change, transnational crime and terrorism, illicit financial flows, among others, are beyond the capacity of any single state to address. Instead, it requires deepening cooperation among countries and other stakeholders which requires going beyond the traditional State-centric approach<sup>17</sup>. With the return of the 'spheres of influence' and increasing efforts to 'friendshore' supply chains<sup>18</sup>, the Bandung principles remain critical tools for developing countries to chart their own autonomous development pathways.

To help countries navigate the current geopolitical landscape, as Samir Amin noted, "what we need and what is historically possible, is not a precise remake, but something in the same spirit as the original Bandung, compelling imperialism to retreat. It will not disappear, but might retreat, might accept the national independence of countries of the south, and accept a multipolar pattern of social and economic change" 19. For the countries of the global South, the Bandung Principles offer vital guidance to reimagine SSTrC for a new multipolar era, which continues to be influenced by different elements elaborated in the following section.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> UN General Assembly (GA) Res. 1803 (XVII), Permanent sovereignty over natural resources, 14 December 1962. Available from <a href="https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/204587?ln=en&v=pdf">https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/204587?ln=en&v=pdf</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> UN GA Res. 3201 (S-VI), Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, 1 May 1974. Available from <a href="https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/218450?ln=en&v=pdf">https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/218450?ln=en&v=pdf</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> UN GA Res. 41/128, Declaration on the Right to Development, 4 December 1986. Available from <a href="https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/126476?ln=en&v=pdf">https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/126476?ln=en&v=pdf</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Arif Havas Oegroseno, "The Bandung Declaration in the Twenty-First Century: Are We There Yet?", in *Bandung, Global History, and International Law: Critical pasts and pending futures*, Eslava *et al.*, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Danish, *Foreign Investment Flows in a Shifting Geoeconomic Landscape*, Research Paper 185 (Geneva, South Centre, 2023). Available from <a href="https://www.southcentre.int/research-paper-185-13-october-2023/">https://www.southcentre.int/research-paper-185-13-october-2023/</a>.

<sup>19</sup> Samir Amin, "The world without Bandung, or for a polycentric system with no hegemony", *Inter-Asia Cultural* 

Samir Amin, "The world without Bandung, or for a polycentric system with no hegemony", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2016), pp. 7–11. Available from <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2016.1151186">http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2016.1151186</a>.

#### III. ELEMENTS INFLUENCING THE CHANGING SSTRC LANDSCAPE

#### 1. Erosion of global trust

There has been a decline in trust between countries, especially emerging from a "litany of broken promises between the global North and the global South"<sup>20</sup>. For instance, estimates suggest that equitable sharing of the COVID-19 vaccines could have saved at least 1.3 million lives in the first year of the vaccine rollout alone<sup>21</sup>. While the pharmaceutical companies prioritized the rich countries of the Global North, countries like India acted to meet the vaccine needs of the Global South. SSTrC also played "an important role in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and in the establishment of vaccine production facilities in developing countries, including in Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates"<sup>22</sup>.

The failure of developed countries to meet their pledge of providing \$100 billion in annual climate finance to developing countries also decreased trust in the promises made by the global North. This was reemphasized when the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) was adopted at the 29<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) and was regarded by developing countries as an "optical illusion" that will not address the enormity of the climate challenge.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, while the Loss and Damage Fund was operationalized at COP28, the financial resources pledged for it remains wholly insufficient when compared with the needs of developing countries, which are estimated to be at least \$400 billion per year.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the UN Secretary-General has noted that developing countries are seeing greater value in South-South cooperation for climate change, as "reflected in their updated nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement on climate change, which increasingly feature South-South and triangular cooperation as important climate action modalities".<sup>25</sup>

#### 2. Downturn in official development assistance

ODA fell in 2024 by 7.1 percent in real terms compared to 2023 representing 0.33% of donor countries' combined gross national income (GNI), which is well short of the UN target of allocating 0.7% of GNI as ODA, recently reiterated in the Pact of the Future<sup>26</sup>. It had already been declining in real terms and increasingly used for addressing issues within the developed countries, such as for military spending and for hosting refugees<sup>27</sup>. As per Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data, bilateral ODA to sub-Saharan African countries, which includes several least developed countries (LDCs), dropped 3 percent from

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Mark Suzman, "The Roots of the Global South's New Resentment", *Foreign Affairs*, 8 September 2023. Available from <a href="https://www.foreignaffairs.com/africa/roots-global-souths-new-resentment">https://www.foreignaffairs.com/africa/roots-global-souths-new-resentment</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> The People's Vaccine, Never Again. Available from <a href="https://peoplesvaccine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/PVA-Never-Again-Open-Letter-FINAL-EMBARGOED-UNTIL-MARCH-11.pdf">https://peoplesvaccine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/PVA-Never-Again-Open-Letter-FINAL-EMBARGOED-UNTIL-MARCH-11.pdf</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> UN Secretary-General South-South Cooperation Report, 2023, para. 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Carol Schaeffer, "The 'Worst COP' Concludes With a 'Heartbreaking' Climate-Finance Deal", *The Nation*, 27 November 2024. https://www.thenation.com/article/environment/cop29-baku-climate-final-deal/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Julie-Anne Richards and Tariq Jowahir, "The Loss and Damage Fund and Pledges at COP28: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Or to the annual earnings of a megastar footballer?", The Loss and Damage Collaboration, 11 December 2023. Available from <a href="https://www.lossanddamagecollaboration.org/pages/the-loss-and-damage-fund-and-pledges-at-cop28-shall-i-compare-thee-to-a-summers-day-or-to-the-annual-earnings-of-a-megastar-footballer.">https://www.lossanddamagecollaboration.org/pages/the-loss-and-damage-fund-and-pledges-at-cop28-shall-i-compare-thee-to-a-summers-day-or-to-the-annual-earnings-of-a-megastar-footballer.</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> UN Secretary-General report on South-South Cooperation, 2023, para. 18.

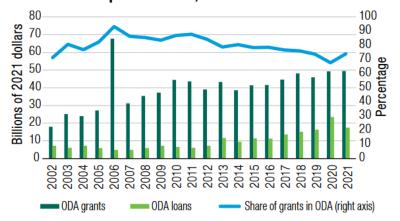
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Danish et al., Will the Pact for the Future Advance a Common Global Agenda on the Challenges Facing Humanity?, Research Paper 216 (Geneva, South Centre, 2025). Available from <a href="https://www.southcentre.int/research-paper-216-27-february-2025/">https://www.southcentre.int/research-paper-216-27-february-2025/</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Nikolaj Nielsen, "EU states spending development aid on themselves, report finds", *EU Observer*, 18 October 2023. Available from <a href="https://euobserver.com/world/157565">https://euobserver.com/world/157565</a>.

2023 to 2024<sup>28</sup>. For these countries, ODA remains a vital part of their development financing mix, outstripping all sources as a share of gross domestic product (GDP)/GNI except government revenue.

Loans are also increasing as a share of ODA (see Figure 1), as the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) notes that "while total ODA to LDCs increased in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the increase in flows was accompanied by a sudden and pronounced fall in the share of grants in ODA (down 6 percentage points from the previous year) and a corresponding rise in the share of loans"<sup>29</sup>. This will further boost the rise of non-traditional providers of financial assistance on a South-South basis. For example, since its establishment in 2019, the Indonesian Aid agency (LDKPI) has provided over \$125 million in grants to over 20 developing countries and LDCs<sup>30</sup>.

## Figure 1 Grants vs. loans in official development assistance flows to the least developed countries, 2002–2021



Source: UNCTAD secretariat calculations, based on data from the OECD Creditor Reporting System database (accessed 24 May 2023).

Note: Equity investments are not presented, as they account for less than 1 per cent of total ODA flows to LDCs.

#### 3. Global economic uncertainty and rising inequality

The adoption of unilateral trade measures by advanced economies have upended the multilateral trading system, leading to global economic growth forecast slowing to 2.3% in 2025<sup>31</sup>. This added to the already sluggish post-pandemic economic recovery in many developing countries and has led to near record levels of global economic and trade uncertainty (see Figure 2). Recent forecasts suggest that merchandise trade could see a -0.2% contraction in 2025 – down from +2.9% in 2024.<sup>32</sup> The lack of predictability and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> See <a href="https://www.oecd.org/en/about/news/press-releases/2025/04/official-development-assistance-2024-figures.html">https://www.oecd.org/en/about/news/press-releases/2025/04/official-development-assistance-2024-figures.html</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *The Least Developed Countries Report 2023*. Available from <a href="https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ldc2023">https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ldc2023</a> ch2 en.pdf, Chapter 2, p. 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Indonesian Agency for International Development, Grant Recipients.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> UNCTAD, "Trade tensions and rising uncertainty drag global economy towards recession", 25 April 2025. Available from <a href="https://unctad.org/news/trade-tensions-and-rising-uncertainty-drag-global-economy-towards-recession">https://unctad.org/news/trade-tensions-and-rising-uncertainty-drag-global-economy-towards-recession</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> World Trade Organization (WTO), Global Trade Outlook and Statistics, April 2025. Available from <a href="https://www.wto.org/english/res\_e/booksp\_e/trade\_outlook25\_e.pdf">https://www.wto.org/english/res\_e/booksp\_e/trade\_outlook25\_e.pdf</a>.

increased trade tensions are leading to weak global demand for trade in goods and services, while developing countries are struggling to mobilise domestic resources and attract foreign investment.

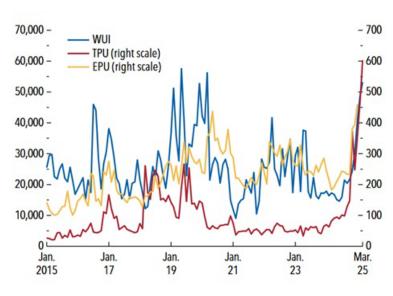


Figure 2 – Overall Uncertainty, EPU and TPU (Index)

Sources: Ahir, Bloom, and Furceri 2022; Caldara and others 2020; Davis 2016; and IMF staff calculations.

Note: The uncertainty measures are news- and media-outlets-based indices that quantify media attention to global news related to overall uncertainty (WUI), economic policy uncertainty (EPU), and trade policy uncertainty (TPU).

Within countries, increasing inequality continues to "choke economic and social mobility, and human development and, consequently, depress economic growth (...) There are growing evidence that high level of income and wealth inequality is propelling the rise of nativism and extreme forms of nationalism"<sup>33</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic also caused the largest rise in income inequality between countries in three decades<sup>34</sup>. The fiscal space available to the advanced economies allowed them to soften the impacts of the pandemic "through stimulus packages, estimated at over US\$16 trillion globally. Meanwhile, in LDCs, stimulus packages per person were almost 500 times less than richer countries"<sup>35</sup>. Similarly, the scale of 'green' subsidies being provided by the largest economies pose risks to the domestic markets and international competitiveness of many developing countries. The global energy transition requires significant increase in international cooperation to facilitate equitable access to finance and technology, without which developing countries risk being left behind.

#### 4. Deepening of existing challenges in developing countries

New and emerging threats such as those posed by climate change are increasing existing vulnerabilities (see Figure 3). The UN has underscored how "climate change is often called a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> UN, "Inequality – Bridging the Divide", UN 75. Available from <a href="https://www.un.org/en/un75/inequality-bridging-divide">https://www.un.org/en/un75/inequality-bridging-divide</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> UN, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition*. Available from <a href="https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023.pdf">https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023.pdf</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Zach Christensen, Hayley Lelourec, "Inequality: Global trends", Development Initiatives, 2 May 2023. Available from <a href="https://devinit.org/resources/inequality-global-trends/">https://devinit.org/resources/inequality-global-trends/</a>.

threat multiplier as it intensifies resource scarcity and worsens existing social, economic and environmental factors (...) many of the countries that are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change already are among the most politically and economically fragile"<sup>36</sup>.

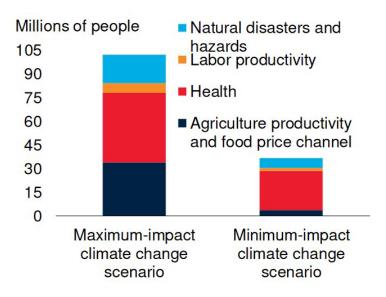


Figure 3 – Impact of Climate Change on Extreme Poverty by 2030

Source: World Bank, Global Economic Prospects 2024, p. 29.

Increased exposure to natural disasters is being seen across developing countries and LDCs, with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warning that climate-related losses and damages will increase with increasing global warming while remaining strongly concentrated among the poorest and vulnerable populations<sup>37</sup>. The structural transformation of national economies requires upskilling of labour and moving to high-productivity economic activities. The challenges posed by the digital divide and climate change impacts among others requires adopting holistic approaches and not single-issue fixes. For example, addressing climate change also requires averting the looming debt disaster in the global South, as "doing too little too late would result in cascading crises across dozens of developing countries, threatening social and political stability and further derailing the international climate agenda" <sup>38</sup>.

#### 5. Evolution in priorities of developing countries

Some developing countries have adopted the dual role of provider and beneficiary of SSTrC, with greater focus and resources being made available towards sharing their sustainable development solutions, knowledge and expertise with other developing countries. This is seen in their upgrading of national institutions for SSTrC. For example, Indonesia established its national entity, the Indonesian Agency for International Development (Indonesian AID) as a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> UN, "Five ways the climate crisis impacts human security". Available from <a href="https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/human-security">https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/human-security</a>.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report*, Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)], DOI: 10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647 (Geneva).
 <sup>38</sup> María Fernanda Espinosa, Ulrich Volz, and Yuefen Li, "The Debt-Climate Nexus", Project Syndicate, 13
 December 2022. Available from <a href="https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/debt-crisis-climate-change-developing-countries-g20-cop27-by-maria-fernanda-espinosa-et-al-2022-12">https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/debt-crisis-climate-change-developing-countries-g20-cop27-by-maria-fernanda-espinosa-et-al-2022-12</a>.

public service agency mandated to manage funds for the country's international development cooperation initiatives<sup>39</sup>. Similarly, Thailand established the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) to better address its shifting role from receiver to provider of technical assistance and development cooperation<sup>40</sup>. This dual role is also found in some countries' national policies, which have increasingly mainstreamed SSTrC as a development modality<sup>41</sup>. Recipient countries are also more discerning in their choice of development partners, with higher priority being given to those partnerships that will address their own domestic priorities.

However, an international enabling environment for fully realizing the potential of SSTrC still faces considerable hurdles. For instance, since its creation eighty years ago, the international financial architecture has not adapted to the changing times and is no longer fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Bretton Woods institutions (International Monetary Fund and World Bank) need urgent reform to make them suitable to address the needs of developing and least developed countries, especially on climate change and sustainable development<sup>42</sup>. In the meantime, developing countries have established institutions such as the New Development Bank, which are more attuned to their financing needs. Southern-led multilateral development banks have been actively funding projects in developing countries, having increased their loan portfolios from US\$ 7.2 billion in 2000 to \$73.4 billion in 2021<sup>43</sup>. Similarly, the share of South-South trade has been on an upward trajectory, having long surpassed North-South trade (see Figure 4).

#### Figure 4



Source: <u>UNCTAD</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Indonesian Agency for International Development, History. Available from <a href="https://ldkpi.kemenkeu.go.id/profil/sejarah">https://ldkpi.kemenkeu.go.id/profil/sejarah</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Thailand International Cooperation Agency, 29 November 2022. Available from <a href="https://tica-thaigov.mfa.go.th/en/page/60701-history?menu=5d7da97015e39c3fbc00b5f5">https://tica-thaigov.mfa.go.th/en/page/60701-history?menu=5d7da97015e39c3fbc00b5f5</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> South Centre and Islamic Development Bank, Policy Paper on National Strategies for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, April 2021. Available from <a href="https://www.southcentre.int/sc-and-isdb-joint-publication-april-2021/">https://www.southcentre.int/sc-and-isdb-joint-publication-april-2021/</a>

<sup>2021/.

42</sup> Kevin P. Gallagher, Rishikesh Ram Bhandary, Rebecca Ray, Luma Ramos, "Reforming Bretton Woods institutions to achieve climate change and development goals", *One Earth*, Volume 6, Issue 10, 2023, Pages 1291-1303. Available from <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2023.09.009">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2023.09.009</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2023: Financing Sustainable Transformations* (New York, United Nations, 2023), p. 92. Available from <a href="https://desapublications.un.org/publications/financing-sustainable-development-report-2023">https://desapublications.un.org/publications/financing-sustainable-development-report-2023</a>.

At the same time, there has been an uptick in the promotion of local currencies for settling trade and facilitating cross-border payments between developing countries. In the Johannesburg II Declaration, the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) stressed "the importance of encouraging the use of local currencies in international trade and financial transactions between BRICS as well as their trading partners" Initiatives to boost South-South financial integration and cross-border digital payments in local currencies are also being enhanced, for example, through the adoption of Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services between India, Mauritius and Sri Lanka<sup>45</sup>, alongside several other countries<sup>46</sup>.

The indicative list of elements above showcase how the geopolitical landscape for developing countries is shifting rapidly. SSTrC initiatives can provide much needed stability and open opportunities for addressing the sustainable development needs and priorities of developing countries, as further elaborated in the following section.

<sup>44</sup> BRICS Johannesburg II Declaration, August 2023, para. 44.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> "Prime Minister jointly inaugurates UPI services with Mauritius Prime Minister & Sri Lankan President", Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 12 February 2024. Available from <a href="https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/37616/Prime\_Minister\_jointly\_inaugurates\_UPI\_services\_with\_Mauritius\_Prime\_Minister\_amp\_Sri\_Lankan\_President">https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/37616/Prime\_Minister\_jointly\_inaugurates\_UPI\_services\_with\_Mauritius\_Prime\_Minister\_amp\_Sri\_Lankan\_President</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). See <a href="https://www.npci.org.in/what-we-do/upi-global/upi-global-acceptance/live-members">https://www.npci.org.in/what-we-do/upi-global/upi-global-acceptance/live-members</a>.

#### IV. FUTURE TRAJECTORIES FOR SSTRC

The Bandung Declaration provided a framework to guide developing countries' efforts to find common ground on sustainable development priorities. Despite reflecting the realities of the 1950s, the *Dasa sila*'s emphasis on respecting sovereignty, building economic self-reliance and fulfilling international obligations has remained relevant over the decades and even had a recent resurgence as a counter to current geo-economic trends. It should continue to form the basis of developing countries' priorities for the multilateral agenda, including for reforming the international economic order to make it fair, equitable and responsive to the current and actual needs of developing countries.

Many of the most serious challenges facing humanity today, such as climate change, pandemic risks, global trade uncertainty, unsustainable sovereign debts, and digital divide among others, requires exploring collaborative responses and strengthening unity among Southern nations, encouraging economic and technical cooperation to achieve progress based on respect, equality and mutual benefit. Facing declining western hegemony in international affairs and an increasingly multipolar world, global South countries are taking the lead to support the realization of the SDGs, while maintaining their strategic independence and non-alignment<sup>47</sup>. The Spirit of Bandung should guide developing countries' efforts, including in the areas described below, to reform global governance, accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and transform Southern solidarity into collective action for promoting peace and sustainable development<sup>48</sup>.

#### 1. Strengthen multilateralism through SSTrC

In the face of deepening global divides, there is an urgent need to strengthen multilateralism so that it works for everyone and enables the effective implementation of the SDGs. Rebuilding trust requires deep reforms to global governance mechanisms to manage geo-economic tensions during a 'new era of multipolarity'<sup>49</sup>. At the same time, addressing the urgent needs of the poorest and most vulnerable remains the top priority for the international community for any global challenges to be met. The full potential of SSTrC can be effectively harnessed to support sustainable development across its three dimensions and ensure that no one is left behind<sup>50</sup>.

It is evident that many of the global challenges facing developing countries today require action and agreement at the multilateral level, which requires making it inclusive and representative. The Group of Twenty (G20) New Delhi Declaration specifically considers that "the need for revitalized multilateralism to adequately address contemporary global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and to make global governance more representative, effective, transparent and accountable, has been voiced at multiple fora. In this context, a more inclusive and

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Matias Spektor, "Rise of the Nonaligned: Who Wins in a Multipolar World?", *Foreign Affairs*, 7 January 2025.
 Available from <a href="https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/rise-nonaligned-multipolar-world-matias-spektor">https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/rise-nonaligned-multipolar-world-matias-spektor</a>.
 <sup>48</sup> T. Lumumba-Kasongo, "Rethinking the Bandung conference in an Era of 'unipolar liberal globalization' and movements toward a 'multipolar politics'", *Bandung Journal of the Global South* 2, 9 (2015). Available from <a href="https://doi.org/10.1186/s40728-014-0012-4">https://doi.org/10.1186/s40728-014-0012-4</a>.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> António Guterres, UN Secretary-General's Special Address to the World Economic Forum, United Nations, 17
 January 2024. Available from <a href="https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2024-01-17/secretary-generals-special-address-the-world-economic-forum-delivered">https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2024-01-17/secretary-generals-special-address-the-world-economic-forum-delivered</a>.
 <sup>50</sup> Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), South Centre, United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), South Centre, United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), Leveraging the Potential of South-South and Triangular Cooperation for the Decade of Action, 30 April 2024. Available from <a href="https://www.southcentre.int/isdb-sc-unctad-unossc-joint-publication-april-2024/">https://www.southcentre.int/isdb-sc-unctad-unossc-joint-publication-april-2024/</a>.

reinvigorated multilateralism and reform aimed at implementing the 2030 Agenda is essential"51.

There is significant political will among developing countries to enhance SSTrC in this regard. For example, in the outcome document of the Third South Summit, the G-77 has called for joint and coordinated action-oriented efforts to strengthen multilateralism, better harness and utilize the growing potential of South-South cooperation<sup>52</sup>. The BRICS Johannesburg II statement also notes that "multilateral cooperation is essential to limit the risks stemming from geopolitical and geoeconomic fragmentation and intensify efforts on areas of mutual interest..."<sup>53</sup>. Translating this to concrete action at the multilateral level, including at the UN and G20, remains key.

#### 2. Build national capacities on SSTrC

It is essential to build capacity in developing countries for engaging in international cooperation, especially through strengthening their national ecosystems for SSTrC<sup>54</sup> in line with the country's requirements and priorities. Greater efforts are also needed to enhance and mainstream SSTrC in the national development plans and actions of developing countries, to reach its full development potential.

The national institutional setup of SSTrC is important because entities such as cooperation agencies can guide a country's SSTrC efforts and support the mobilization of external and internal resources, improving their value and efficiency. Institutional structures can also provide greater coherence and visibility to the country's SSTrC activities at the global level, as well as render them more accountable and transparent both to domestic society and the international community.

Building the capacity of stakeholders and connected actors to engage in SSTrC can similarly help coordinate their efforts and greatly augment the ability of countries to engage in SSTrC, both as providers and beneficiaries. Several developing countries provide capacity building through SSTrC across many sectors, such as public administration, science and technology, disaster management etc. This frequently takes the form of technical assistance and trainings. For example, Cuba has a proven record in providing medical assistance and training across developing countries, and even to some developed countries. The Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in Havana has trained thousands of physicians from low-income communities in Africa, Asia and the Americas, including the United States.

#### 3. Identify national resources, knowledge and expertise on SSTrC

Many developing countries have unique experiences, expertise and lessons learned on their unique developmental and industrialisation pathways. Many solutions found in the global South are better adapted and useful to developing countries which have similar circumstances and requirements, making them more useful and efficient. Concerted efforts need to be made at the national level to identify which development solutions could be shared with other developing countries through SSTrC.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> G20 New Delhi Leaders Declaration, 2023, para. 47. Available from <a href="https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/CPV/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf">https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/CPV/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Third South Summit Outcome Document, January 2024, para. 23. Available from <a href="https://www.g77.org/doc/3ssoutcome">https://www.g77.org/doc/3ssoutcome</a> doc(en).pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> BRICS Johannesburg II Declaration, August 2023, para. 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> South Centre and Islamic Development Bank, *Developing National Ecosystems for South-South and Triangular Cooperation to Achieve 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, September 2019. Available from <a href="https://www.southcentre.int/sc-and-isdb-joint-publication-september-2019/">https://www.southcentre.int/sc-and-isdb-joint-publication-september-2019/</a>.

Some countries build extensive knowledge bases in areas which could be effectively applied in other countries and regions as well. For example, Argentina has shared its expertise in agro-industry with Mozambique to modernize food production processes and strengthen its food security<sup>55</sup>. It focused on sharing of knowledge, skills and technologies for improving food production in Mozambique including for raising livestock, producing animal feed, growing crops and grain preservation. It also built human capacities required for sustaining the development made in the agricultural sector. Similarly, Vietnam's experience and knowledge in rice cultivation were identified as a resource and is now being shared through SSTrC aimed at "capacity building and knowledge exchange among parties and partners in developing countries on innovative technologies in rice-based agriculture, food and nutrition security, digital agriculture, climate-resilient agriculture, and smart agriculture"<sup>56</sup>.

Mapping at the national level is a useful tool to identify available resources, qualified institutions and experts who can contribute to SSTrC. It can also be used to identify gaps which can be addressed using SSTrC, where other partners have the required knowledge and expertise. Developing countries can thus promote the transfer of good practices, lessons learned, and innovative solutions, enriching the collective knowledge base and fostering mutual learning and collaboration.

#### 4. Scale up Triangular cooperation

Triangular cooperation remains an important modality for international development cooperation, but it needs to be scaled up further to better address the needs of developing countries, while being led by and at the request of developing countries. Its importance was recently reaffirmed by the G-77, acknowledging that "triangular cooperation is aimed at facilitating, supporting and enhancing South-South initiatives, through the provision of, *inter alia*, funding, capacity-building, technology transfer, resource mobilization, policy dialogue and exchange of best practices as well as other forms of support"<sup>57</sup>.

Scaling up of triangular cooperation has posed challenges. As one report notes, "In triangular cooperation, there is often a tendency either to focus on the development results in the beneficiary country, which neglects the process of joint and mutual learning among all partners, or to emphasize the strong partnership between the pivotal partner and the facilitator, which may give the impression that the beneficiary partner plays a weaker role"58. This could be addressed, for example, by tailoring the triangular cooperation projects to the on-ground realities and needs of all the partners, relying on their local knowledge, respective expertise and existing capacities. Full ownership and trust in these initiatives can be built by making them inclusive and transparent from the very beginning. Having the views of all partners reflected in the jointly developed solutions from their conception to conclusion is essential.

There are also regional differences in the use of triangular cooperation. A report shows that the Latin American and Caribbean region accounted for nearly half of all triangular cooperation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Federico Villegas, "South-South and Triangular Cooperation: lessons from partnership between Argentina and Mozambique", *SouthViews* No. 221, 6 July 2021. Available from <a href="https://www.southcentre.int/southviews-no-221-6-july-2021/">https://www.southcentre.int/southviews-no-221-6-july-2021/</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> "MARD and IRRI sign a MoU to enhance South-South cooperation", Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 27 December 2023.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Third South Summit Outcome Document, January 2024, para. 84. Available from https://www.g77.org/doc/3ssoutcome\_doc(en).pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> See: Lessons learned from the EU-LAC Programme for Triangular Cooperation (ADELANTE) and the OECD Toolkit, South-South Galaxy.

related ODA disbursements between 2016-2021<sup>59</sup>. Cross-regional triangular cooperation also has significant potential and needs to be developed further.

#### 5. Adapt SSTrC to deal with new and emerging global challenges

SSTrC must be adaptable and flexible to address the new and emerging challenges of developing countries. As witnessed during the pandemic, or in the context of natural disasters, deploying SSTrC based solutions can be more effective and cost-efficient in developing countries than those provided by traditional aid providers. For disaster risk reduction, regional cooperation takes centre stage as simultaneous impacts are felt across the region. Establishing people-centred early warning systems using the knowledge exchange and technology transfers to build resilience and minimize losses and damages can be transformative<sup>60</sup>.

Efforts towards a global green transition also require effective transfer of climate technologies to developing countries, which can be complemented through SSTrC. Some developing countries are also sharing their nature-based solutions for ecological restoration and climate change adaptation via SSTrC, leading to positive outcomes in the partner countries<sup>61</sup>.

The emergence of new digital technologies such as artificial intelligence also raise new challenges and opportunities for SSTrC. Harnessing the digital economy through SSTrC, including through building of shared digital infrastructure, increasing skilled human resource and leveraging platforms is critical for boosting economic outputs and realizing mutual benefits<sup>62</sup>. For instance, India has been at the forefront of sharing its pioneering Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) based technological innovations with other developing countries, especially with African countries, which have fostered digital and financial inclusion, accelerated access to digital services, enhanced e-governance and drove the digital transformation agenda across the continent<sup>63</sup>. Similarly, the 2024 ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Advancing Digital Transformation<sup>64</sup> acknowledged India's contributions to the realization of ASEAN's digital goals and agreed to further strengthen their cooperation for digital transformation, including in DPI, fintech, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence, among others. As developing countries gain more experience, resources and capacities, SSTrC in this domain will be further enhanced.

#### 6. Enable partnerships for SSTrC

The private sector, civil society, academia and other stakeholders, together comprising the connected actors for SSTrC, have an important role in its promotion as they bring in important elements and practical experiences which governments alone may not have. Such inclusive

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), *Global Perspectives on Triangular Co-operation* (Paris, OECD, 2023). Available from <a href="https://doi.org/10.1787/29e2cbc0-en.">https://doi.org/10.1787/29e2cbc0-en.</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> See: Enhancing Early Warning Systems in the Caribbean, South-South Galaxy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Global Environment Facility (GEF), "South-South Cooperation for Upscaling Nature Based Solutions for Climate Adaptation", Good practice briefs 2022/1. Available from <a href="https://www.unep.org/gan/resources/publication/good-practice-brief-south-south-cooperation-upscaling-nature-based-solutions">https://www.unep.org/gan/resources/publication/good-practice-brief-south-south-cooperation-upscaling-nature-based-solutions</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> See: South-South Cooperation in a Digital World: 2018 Annual Report in South-South Cooperation, United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and the Finance Centre for South-South Cooperation. Available from <a href="https://www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Final-Report.pdf">https://www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Final-Report.pdf</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Africa Press, "India Aims to Boost Africa Ties through Digital Cooperation", 27 April 2025. Available from <a href="https://www.africa-press.net/angola/all-news/india-aims-to-boost-africa-ties-through-digital-cooperation">https://www.africa-press.net/angola/all-news/india-aims-to-boost-africa-ties-through-digital-cooperation</a>.
<sup>64</sup> ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Advancing Digital Transformation, 10 October 2024. Available from <a href="https://asean.org/asean-india-joint-statement-on-advancing-digital-transformation/">https://asean.org/asean-india-joint-statement-on-advancing-digital-transformation/</a>.

stakeholder initiatives must be in line with the four shared effectiveness principles, i.e. country ownership, results focused, inclusivity, and transparency and mutual accountability.

Realizing the potential of such partnerships also requires assessing various elements, such as the common interests, complementarity of available resource, shared values and alignment with mutually agreed goals. Effective partnerships require having strong connections with local governments and communities that may be affected by the SSTrC initiative, keeping them informed about progress, and incorporating their inputs from the very beginning of any project. This would also strengthen the demand driven and solutions-oriented approach of SSTrC initiatives, while enhancing local ownership and participation at the same time.

The plurality of connected actors for SSTrC also allows for unique and complementary resources and expertise to be utilized through effective partnerships. This has also been echoed by the UN Secretary-General, whose report has highlighted the importance of forging "new partnerships with other stakeholders, in particular local governments and municipal authorities, civil society, academia, the private sector and philanthropists, to increase the scope and scale of South-South cooperation for sustainable development, including through triangular cooperation" <sup>65</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> UN Secretary-General South-South Cooperation Report, 2023, para. 75.

#### V. FINAL REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The solidarity and cooperation displayed at Bandung by the newly independent nations of the global South and carried forward to this day is testament to its abiding value for developing countries in guiding their sustainable development. To fully realise the promise of the Spirit of Bandung, it is essential for developing countries to further utilize SSTrC to address their sustainable development needs and priorities. At the Third South Summit, the G-77 underscored that the "steady decline in international development assistance and prevailing geopolitical context, make it necessary for us to take appropriate collective actions to reinvigorate South-South cooperation (...) to maximize the full potential of capacities, knowledge, technologies and infrastructure existing in the South to effectively address the new development challenges facing the developing countries, as well as providing for a better playing level field for all of our countries in the multilateral processes" 66.

The following recommendations can therefore be considered for harnessing SSTrC to support the global South in a rapidly changing global landscape:

- Strengthening domestic institutions and national ecosystems for SSTrC can help developing countries to mainstream international cooperation initiatives in their national plans and strategies for sustainable development<sup>67</sup>. Increasing SSTrC initiatives among developing and least developed countries can support the building of institutional and people-to-people links, sharing of knowledge and experiences, and learning good practices implemented across the different pillars of the national ecosystems to foster economic growth and sustainable development.
- Developing countries and development partners should increase their investment in effective SSTrC initiatives that can address the current needs of recipients, while remaining adaptable and scalable for the future. The needs and opportunities offered by increasing digitalisation and green industrialisation should be integrated into countries' SSTrC agendas. Such investment may have very positive return particularly when solutions designed in the context of developing countries, often with limited resources, can be deployed in other countries facing similar needs as illustrated, for instance, by the case of Argentina's cooperation with Mozambique mentioned above.
- Ensuring stakeholder partnerships are inclusive and properly leveraged to elevate SSTrC towards transformative change remains important. The role of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) as the focal point for SSTrC within the UN system should be further promoted, especially towards developing SSTrC partnerships among Northern partners, international organizations and regional institutions. Connected actors can enhance SSTrC initiatives through several ways, especially by promoting mutual understanding and people-to-people contact. They also bring in skills, resources and financing which should be paired with the needs of local authorities and communities towards economic growth and sustainable development.
- Finally, it is important to make greater use of robust data-driven policy research to inform SSTrC activities and increase their effectiveness. Knowing and understanding the ground realities and circumstances can help policymakers, connected actors and development

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Third South Summit Outcome Document, January 2024, para. 79. Available from <a href="https://www.q77.org/doc/3ssoutcome\_doc(en).pdf">https://www.q77.org/doc/3ssoutcome\_doc(en).pdf</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> South Centre and Islamic Development Bank, Policy Paper on National Strategies for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, April 2021. Available from <a href="https://www.southcentre.int/sc-and-isdb-joint-publication-april-2021/">https://www.southcentre.int/sc-and-isdb-joint-publication-april-2021/</a>.

partners to design and implement SSTrC initiatives that are viable, effective and can fulfil the demands and objectives of all stakeholders.

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