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Remarks

by

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High Representative

and

Under-Secretary-General

Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries

and Small Island Developing States

Interactive Panel Discussion II

“Challenges and the strengthening of the institutional framework of South-South and triangular cooperation”

Thursday, 21 March 2019, 15:00-18:00

Conference Room D, Buenos Aires Convention Centre
HE Mr Bambang Brodjonegoro, Minister of National Planning for Development of Indonesia,
HE Mr Santiago Chavez, Vice Minister Human Mobility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Argentina,
Fellow Panelists,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be with you and thank you for giving me the opportunity to share some thoughts with you on this important topic.

Planning for and then holding such large conferences is not an easy task.

You, the organizers have gone the extra mile putting heart, soul and conviction into this effort.

This is not just a standard thank you I wish to express - in doing what you did and how you did it,

you support the work we all do,

you support the aspirations that we all share,

you work with us all to spread the word and action on the contribution South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation can and must make to inclusive, sustainable development.

I myself am a citizen from a vulnerable small island country.

So, for me, now being the High Representative for the most vulnerable countries and our conversation here on the challenges and the strengthening of the institutional framework of South-South and triangular cooperation is very special and full of responsibility.

Like for so many aspects of life - it is one thing to read and hear about them, and another to live them, experience them with your own soul and body.

Vulnerability for me is not an abstract, rising sea levels are not an abstract, no access to clean energy, being left out from technology advances - this is all real when you live in vulnerable countries.

But who are the most vulnerable countries?

Now, our common globe counts 91 countries with a combined population of about 1.1 billion classified "vulnerable." They all face multiple and complex development challenges, and have the least capacities to address these challenges.

The good thing if I may use this word is that the last couple decades have seen an upward trend of South-South cooperation.
This cooperation is broad and covers areas such as trade, technology transfer, development finance, infrastructure and now to addressing climate change, health epidemics and migration.

This is, as we have recalled since yesterday, a critical contribution, a contribution that must grow, in working with vulnerable countries to advance the implementation of their sustainable development agendas.

I have personally seen South-South cooperation at work in my previous positions. What stands out is the flexibility, the context-appropriate approaches and solutions South-South cooperation offers and how it helps that key goal of the United Nations: mutual understanding, respect and solidarity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I think we all agree that we ought to aim for a rapid expansion of South-South cooperation.

Like with everything, easier said than done!

To make this call for action reality, a more structured and strengthened institutional framework for South-South cooperation is a MUST.

A MUST at all action levels – national, regional and global.

It is a great sign of hope that this action has started already.

For example, an increasing number of Southern countries are cooperating to design systems and processes to assess outcomes and more importantly impact of projects and programmes.

Much more attention is now paid to the quality, effectiveness and contribution of South-South development cooperation to sustainable development.

In other words, a very critical move is taking place from a more ad-hoc approach to systematized ways of delivering South-South cooperation.

On the recipient side, countries have established national policies and processes to make South-South and triangular cooperation and integral component of national development.

At the regional level, institutional arrangements aimed at scaling up South-South cooperation have taken shape.

Examples that come to mind are: the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, the New Development Bank of BRICS, and the African Free Trade Agreement.

So, what about the global level?
UN entities have integrated South-South and triangular cooperation into their strategic programmes of work. We call this "mainstreamed" - so South-South cooperation no longer is an exception but must be the rule!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is great consensus on the need to enhance the impact of south-south and triangular cooperation. That is good.

The question is:

what institutional arrangements is the most effective in going forward?

A wide variety of stakeholders is involved in South-South and triangular cooperation.

South-South cooperation is broad in its scope.

The very principles, or if you wish philosophy of South-South cooperation, is one of inclusiveness and broad-based flexible cooperation.

All this points to the merit of having plural institutional arrangements, while keeping coherence and complementarity in mind.

LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS are very strong advocates for South-South and triangular cooperation.

Their experience shows that we all have much to gain from more effective, coordinated and accountable engagement. Ultimately it is about generating impact for people and impact that we must accelerate.

In the context of the implementation phase of the UN development system reform, South-South and triangular cooperation hold a special place.

The reform is all about "getting things done" and South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation must systematically be incorporated into policies, programmes and planning instruments that are aimed to deliver more targeted and effective results at the national level.

The state of play of South-South and triangular cooperation could also usefully be reviewed in global and regional reporting processes on international development frameworks.

Indeed, South-south cooperation could also be subject to discussions in global fora, just as we do here in our interactive panel discussion.

It could also be brought more explicitly into the deliberations of the High-level Political Forum, for instance, in the context of voluntary national reviews.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
There is this saying "Rome was not built in a day." - yet we also do not want to see Rome burning!

We must act now and fast - people want impact, climate change will not wait for us. It is our shared responsibility to act.

Strengthening the institutional framework of South-South and triangular cooperation will take political leadership and commitment, technical capacity and a systematized approach by all stakeholders.

UN-OHRLSS with all our partners will continue to provide a platform to champion South-South and triangular cooperation for the benefit of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

OHRLSS is deeply committed to working with partners from around the globe, North, South, East and West. This is all our shared globe and I would say as a team we ought to have one goal: deliver on the 2030 Agenda for the world’s most vulnerable countries and peoples to ensure we leave no one behind.

I look forward to listening to you, to insightful deliberations and innovative thoughts.

Thank you. Gracias.