

**Regional Consultation on South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific  
“Towards the Buenos Aires Plan of Action 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary”**

**27-29 June 2018, Bangkok  
UNCC, CR-4**

**Opening Remarks  
by  
Mr. Kaveh Zahedi  
Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP**

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this Regional Consultation on South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific: “Towards the Buenos Aires Plan of Action 40th Anniversary”. We’re delighted to be co-hosting this event with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and the Royal Thai Government.

**ESCAP’s long standing experience**

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific – ESCAP – has facilitated South-South and triangular cooperation for the past seventy years. It has been central to the support we have provided our member states to overcome development challenges across sectors and across borders. South-South and triangular cooperation has driven our technical assistance, informed our analysis and underpinned much of our intergovernmental work. It has helped strengthen regional cooperation, and in doing so, powered trade, foreign direct investment, technology transfer and growth. Let me give you just a few examples.

- ESCAP's south-South cooperation has strengthened information sharing and early warning systems to guard against natural disasters and build resilience. Through its Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development (RESAP), we have promoted the application of space technology and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for disaster risk reduction and inclusive and sustainable development. The Typhoon Committee has enabled the sharing expertise on multi hazard early warning systems and contributed to substantially reducing typhoon related deaths in Asia over the past half century.
- ESCAP's South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives have helped improve and integrate transport infrastructure. Including the Asian Highway, the Trans-Asian Railway and our recent efforts to share best practice in the planning and design, development and operation of dry ports.
- It has also underpinned our efforts to facilitate trade across Asia-Pacific. For instance, switching from paper to electronic solutions could increase our region's international trade revenues significantly and the recently agreed Framework on Cross-border Paperless Trade provides a readymade framework for countries.
- ESCAP's capacity development programmes, often delivered through our institutes, have promoted south south exchanges of agricultural mechanisation and machinery, technology transfer, ICT for development and data and statistics. They have broadened regional trade and investment research and knowledge base through the Asia

Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade, ARTNeT. And government officials and experts have been trained in areas ranging from molecular rice breeding to the design of high power electricity transmission cables.

These are successes of which we are proud and want to build on. That's why South-South and triangular cooperation is at the heart of our push to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: an agenda very much in step Thailand's efforts to achieve a sufficiency economy. This cooperation will be a corner stone for our collective implementation of the Regional Roadmap for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development – the APFSD – provides the perfect opportunity to share good practices and exchange experience on south-south cooperation.

### **Future South-South cooperation**

Looking to the future, Asia-Pacific's mix of international development cooperation players is a major asset. From large emerging economies like China and India, to high-income assistance providers like Japan, to middle-income countries which are increasingly active donors and technical cooperation providers, there is enormous potential for stronger South-South cooperation. Cooperation which could be especially beneficial to countries with special needs. But also much more broadly - including in ASEAN - matching the universality of the 2030 Agenda.

At ESCAP, we are keen to work with all our partners to achieve just that. And to make the most of the funding available to support it. There are several South-South cooperation funds which the UN family and member States can tap. The United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund - established with China's support - has a sub-fund dedicated to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The new India-UN Development Partnership Fund supports Southern-led sustainable development projects across the developing world, with a focus on least-developed countries and Small Island Developing States. And there is the United Nations Fund on South-South Cooperation and the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank also offer alternatives to the existing multilateral development banks.

### **Regional Consultation Objective**

Our ambition for the next three days, is to establish how we - as UN agencies and governments - can work together to make the most of these opportunities. We are eager to hear your experiences as providers or users of South-South and triangular cooperation.

- What are the recent institutional arrangements and policies that have been particularly successful?
- How can we develop stronger partnerships with all interested parties - including the civil society, think tanks and the private sector?
- Could a regional forum on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific - a "DG Forum" - be a useful way for countries to

exchange good practices and coordinate the provision of the technical assistance to Southern partners?

This Regional Consultation will shape our approach to the second United Nations High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation – the BAPA+40 Conference – taking place next March in Buenos Aires. It's our opportunity to reinvigorate South-South and triangular cooperation. I'm looking forward to working with you to seize it and accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda across our region.

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