

**United Nations Environment Programme  
Strategy for South-South and Triangular Cooperation**

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## BACKGROUND

Cooperation among countries from the Global South has grown significantly over the last four decades and continues to expand. This cooperation is witnessed in almost all sectors but is focused primarily on trade, agriculture, health, education, communication, research, infrastructure, energy and development. Developing countries are increasingly working together to address their common, and/or transboundary development challenges.

Since 1978, when the delegations from 138 states adopted a Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (the Buenos Aires Plan of Action), South-South cooperation (SSC) has been recognised as an important means of development cooperation and technology transfer.

Over the years, cooperation among developing countries – or South-South cooperation – has been endorsed as a mechanism for capacity development and technology transfer in numerous forums and through several resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and UNEP’s governing bodies.<sup>1</sup> (See: [Annex I: List of Key Resolutions that Call for/Endorse South-South and Triangular Cooperation.](#))

In 2005, the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP) on Technology Support and Capacity Building (UNEP/GC.23/6/Add.) recognised SSC as a means of supporting capacity-building efforts in developing countries and countries with economies in transition through systematic partnerships and the exchange of expertise, experiences, best practices and knowledge among experts and institutions of the Global South.

The Nairobi Outcome Document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (2009) requested the United Nations system to support developing countries to establish or strengthen South-South centres of excellence, within their respective areas of competence, and enhance closer cooperation among such centres of excellence, especially at the regional and interregional levels, with a view to improving South-South knowledge sharing, networking, mutual capacity-building, exchanges of information and best practices, policy analysis and coordinated action among developing countries on major issues of concern.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda, 2015) states that “South-South cooperation is an important element of international cooperation for development as a complement, not a substitute, to North-South cooperation.”<sup>2</sup>

The UN-wide “Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation”<sup>3</sup> (2016) calls upon UN agencies to take on the role of convener/advocate,

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<sup>1</sup> First the Governing Council then the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).

<sup>2</sup> Resolution 69/313 adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2015. Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda).

<sup>3</sup> High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, Nineteenth Session (2016). [“Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation”](#).

knowledge broker, partnership builder, analyst and progress monitor of South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC).<sup>4</sup>

In March 2019, during the Second United Nations High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40), the international community reaffirmed its commitment to SSC and called for greater South-South cooperation for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the 2030 Agenda, Goal 17: “Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”, places particular emphasis on the critical role of South-South and triangular cooperation as a means for capacity-building in developing countries (Target 17.9), and access to science, technology and innovation and enhanced knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms (Target 17.6).

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<sup>4</sup> South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) includes both cooperation among developing countries exclusively (SSC) and triangular cooperation between developing countries supported by a developed-world partner (see definitions Section II).

## SECTION I: Purpose of the Strategy

This Strategy provides a framework through which UNEP's support to Member States on South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) will be enhanced during the coming decade (2020-2030). The Strategy is aligned to other corporate policy documents and guidelines such as the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and the Programme of Work (PoW), the Resource Mobilisation Strategy (2018), the Private Sector Engagement Strategy (2019), the partnerships section of UNEP's Programme Manual, the Gender Equality and the Environment Policy and Strategy (2016) and the Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability Framework.

*"Innovative forms of knowledge exchange, technology transfer, emergency response and recovery of livelihoods, led by the South, are transforming lives."*

**Secretary-General in November 2018, during the inauguration of the 10th South-South Development Expo at UN Headquarters in New York.**

This Strategy has been developed to respond to the following:

1. Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and UNEP's governing bodies (see footnote 1);
2. The Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building (2005);
3. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (2015);
4. The Nairobi Outcome Document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (2009);
5. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals;
6. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (2011);
7. The Outcome Document of the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40);<sup>5</sup>
8. Other relevant UN General Assembly resolutions.

The Strategy follows the Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation issued by the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation in 2016 as a guide to UN agencies (and others) in mainstreaming SSTC into their work. It is developed based on lessons learned and consultations with staff from different offices and divisions as well as external counterparts.

It is anticipated that the implementation of the Strategy will result in better design, implementation, coordination, monitoring and reporting of SSTC within UNEP and that Member States will benefit from enhanced, coordinated and coherent SSTC support from the organisation towards the attainment of the objectives of multilateral environmental agreements and of the SDGs.

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<sup>5</sup> BAPA+40 called for establishment of focal points in UN System organisations, development of strategies or frameworks for SSTC and for enhanced efforts in provision of support to countries with regard to SSTC among other instructions.

The Strategy will also enable UNEP to be fit for purpose in engaging with UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and Regional Platforms under a reformed UN Development System. A priority of the reform is the renewed focus and emphasis on UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs or “Cooperation Frameworks”, formerly UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs)) which consider South-South cooperation as an effective means to address development challenges. As stated in the UNSDCF Guidance: “there is **explicit recognition of regional and transboundary elements** within the UN country analysis and the UNSDCF”. The UNSDCF “includes and contributes to regional, sub-regional and transboundary strategies and partnerships, both external and internal to the UN. It **actively facilitates South-South cooperation and contributes to triangular cooperation.**”<sup>6</sup> In this regard, South-South and triangular cooperation can serve as key mechanisms to link different UNCTs and regional platforms, create synergies, and strengthen their individual efforts towards collaborative work and thereby help to address common challenges which multiple developing countries, regions and subregions face. Regional UN collaboration platforms and Ministerial Forums will provide opportunities for dialogues identifying common issues to be addressed through South-South and triangular cooperation.

This Strategy is meant for all staff involved in the design, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of projects and/or the programme of work. This may include project managers, project team members, supervisors, sub-programme coordinators, division directors, country and regional-level staff including regional development coordination officers and regional directors.

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations Sustainable Development Group (2019). [United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework \(UNSDCF\) – Internal Guidance](#).

## **SECTION II: Definition, Principles and Forms of South-South and Triangular Cooperation**

### ***Definition of South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation***

UNEP adopts the definition of SSC as outlined in the 2016 Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation which states that **South-South cooperation** is: “A process whereby two or more developing countries<sup>7</sup> pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how, and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organisations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their [...] mutual benefit within and across regions.” SSC is not a substitute for, but a complement to, North-South cooperation.

**Triangular cooperation** involves Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by (a) developed country(ies) and/or multilateral organisation(s) to implement development cooperation programmes and projects.

Within these definitions, UNEP works to support and facilitate SSTC in areas related to its mandate on the environment.

In alignment with the Nairobi Outcome Document of the High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (2009), UNEP considers that SSTC embraces a multi-stakeholder approach, including governments, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, civil society, academia and other actors that contribute to meeting development challenges and objectives in line with national development strategies and plans.

### ***Principles of South-South and Triangular Cooperation***

UNEP further adopts the following normative and operational principles of SSC outlined in the 2009 Nairobi Outcome Document of the High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. These principles will guide UNEP’s support to both South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation.

#### (a) Normative principles

- Respect for national sovereignty and ownership
- Partnership among equals
- Non-conditionality
- Non-interference in domestic affairs
- Mutual benefit

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<sup>7</sup> Within this strategy countries with economies in transition will fall under the broad category of developing countries and are therefore included in the Global South.

(b) Operational principles

- Mutual accountability and transparency
- Development effectiveness
- Coordination of evidence - and results-based initiatives
- Demand-oriented (initiated or requested by one or several countries from the South).

UNEP's involvement in any SSTC project or initiative will be aimed at raising and upholding environmental and socio-economic standards and will be guided by the principles outlined in paragraph 14 of the BAPA+40 Outcome Document: "We underline the need to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for achieving sustainable development, and to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Good governance, rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms, equal access to fair justice systems, and measures to combat corruption and curb illicit financial flows will be integral to our efforts."

***Forms of South-South and Triangular Cooperation***

SSTC initiatives undertaken by UNEP may take various forms including:

- **Sharing knowledge, experiences and good practices:** one or more developing countries with experience and expertise in a certain domain exchange(s) this experience and expertise with one or more other developing countries.
- **Development/strengthening of networks:** several institutions from different developing countries form a network and work together within this network.
- **Capacity-building:** delivered from stakeholders of one or more developing countries to actors in one or more other developing countries, increasing their ability to promote development within a southern country.
- **Partnership development:** developing countries start a partnership and set up a common project to build on development.
- **Peer-to-peer learning.**
- **Technical cooperation.**
- **Technology transfer and matchmaking between needs and available solutions.**

For any of the above-mentioned forms, to be considered as SSTC, activities should include:

- a. **Exchange** (of knowledge, best practice, technology, etc);
- b. **Application** (of knowledge, best practice, technology, etc, gained from the exchange);
- c. **Transformation** (in the country/countries taking part in the exchange).

UNEP's role is primarily that of facilitation of partnerships, provision of technical assistance and capacity building, and provision of knowledge.

### SECTION III: South-South and Triangular Cooperation in UNEP and the UN system

#### ***South-South and Triangular Cooperation in UNEP***

UNEP has for many years used South-South and triangular cooperation as a key mechanism in the delivery of its Programme of Work and Medium-Term Strategy through its projects across all subprogrammes. UNEP's various SSTC initiatives have enabled wide-ranging progress on environmental challenges in developing countries.

The "Integrating South-South Cooperation in the UNEP Programmes of Work: Policy Guidance" developed in 2011 has been the guiding document for the delivery of recent South-South and triangular cooperation efforts within UNEP. Based on this guidance document, UNEP has endeavoured to integrate SSTC into its projects and programmes so that SSTC is not seen as a stand-alone initiative or programme but rather as an integral cross-cutting delivery mechanism that should be systematically integrated into the Programme of Work.

The importance of SSTC in environmental management and governance is evidenced by its use in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and the existence of various South-South and/or regional centres of excellence established at the request of Member States.

However, since SSTC is a mechanism or tool to achieve impact and not a goal in itself, collaboration among countries in the Global South does not always have the visibility which reflects these achievements. For example, although the environmental governance part of the current Programme of Work does not refer directly to SSTC, this type of cooperation is embedded in projects where outcomes have been delivered by providing fora for developing countries to learn from each other's experiences and expertise and to generate good practices that can address environmental concerns. Overall, since numerous projects incorporate SSTC in their design and use it as a core mechanism for their implementation, there is a considerable untapped opportunity to improve the capturing of lessons learnt and reporting on South-South and triangular cooperation at corporate level.

Knowledge-sharing on results and experiences of projects among staff and with Member States can help avoid duplication of efforts, leapfrog development stages through use of appropriate technologies and existing solutions, and help to create new synergies among projects.

Further efforts can be made to optimise the potential for countries to benefit from the numerous successful initiatives that have been undertaken with UNEP support over the years and the learnings extracted from these experiences. A more systematic and targeted use of SSTC in the organisation will help ensure that SSTC activities are well thought out, and that their resulting outcomes are made visible, measurable and replicable.

*"... the multilateral development system must be better positioned to support South-South cooperation and implement the 2030 Agenda. South-South cooperation has evolved significantly over the last decades — but multilateral institutions, including the United Nations, have not kept up."*

**Remarks by UN Secretary-General António Guterres to the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 20 March 2019.**

### ***South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the UN System***

The Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation released by the Secretary-General in May 2016 provided “priority actions and performance indicators for United Nations organisations and agencies, including regional commissions, towards mainstreaming their support for South-South and triangular cooperation at the global, regional and national levels.” It is a “tool and reference manual on ways to mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation in the development planning and programming of United Nations funds, programmes, specialised agencies and regional commissions at the global, regional and country levels.” It states that: “for South-South and triangular cooperation to have its intended impact, it is necessary to improve overall system-wide policy frameworks, governance, coordination, structures, mechanisms and dedicated resources. Some specific actions to help to bolster the mainstreaming of South-South cooperation in United Nations policies and programmes are (a) working with a common definition; (b) setting up intra-agency support structures, such as a dedicated South-South and triangular cooperation unit in each agency, and focal points at all levels; (c) systematically applying guidelines and guidance; (d) systematically using reporting mechanisms; (e) ensuring, where appropriate, adequate funding from agency budgets; (f) taking effective action at the regional level; (g) matching resources to the United Nations mandates regarding South-South cooperation; (h) developing a coherent strategy for triangular cooperation; and (i) strengthening coordination at the regional and country levels.”

Several UN programmes and specialised agencies, have dedicated South-South cooperation strategies and specific programmes<sup>8</sup>, units, guidelines and tools for promoting South-South exchanges.

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2018) – [South-South Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific – A brief overview](#)

## SECTION IV: UNEP South-South and Triangular Cooperation Objectives

The aim of this Strategy is to enhance the application of SSTC in the delivery of UNEP’s mandate in order to help Member States achieve the SDGs and incorporate the environmental dimension of sustainable development in national and regional policies, plans and initiatives. SSTC is broad tool which will serve as a means of delivery for all of UNEP’s projects and sub-programmes and is not restricted to any thematic area of UNEP’s work or section of the organisation’s MTS and Programme of Work. This Strategy forms a broad framework that will help to reinvigorate SSTC in the organisation and inform the related programmatic and operational processes and procedures.

This will be done through enhancing three main areas:

1. UNEP’s Programme of Work.
2. Engagement with the UN system.
3. Partnerships and strategic initiatives.

It is anticipated that enhancement of SSTC in these areas will result in more efficient and targeted support to Member States and other stakeholders in environmental governance and management efforts and in achieving the SDGs.

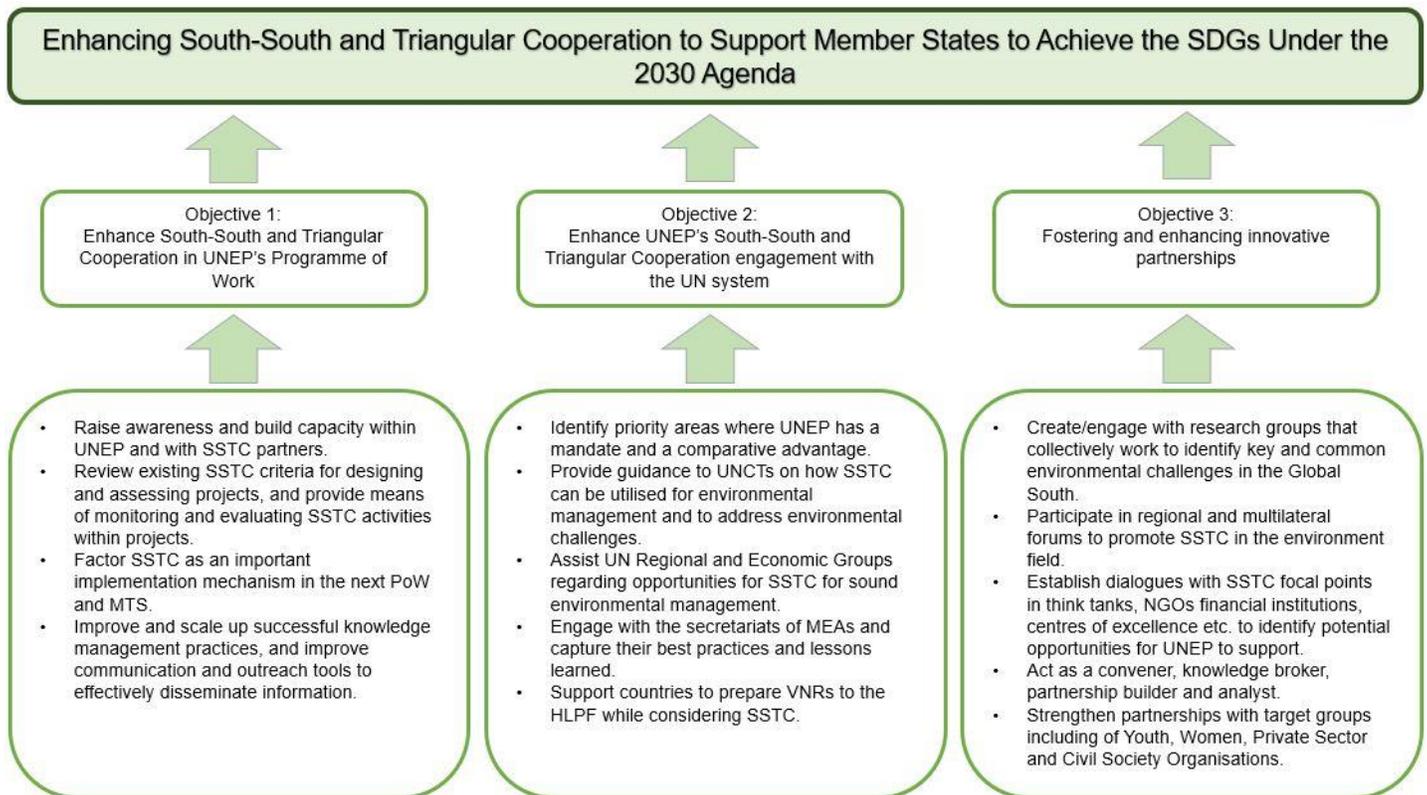


Figure 1: UNEP South-South and triangular cooperation objectives and actions.

### **Objective 1: Enhanced South-South and Triangular Cooperation in UNEP's Programme of Work**

Adjustments will be made in the different stages of the project and programme cycle to allow for better delivery of SSTC. Efforts will be made to ensure that SSTC is promoted as a mechanism for project implementation and that it is used in a deliberate and structured manner. The implementation of SSTC activities will be better monitored and reported on, and the learning and best practices that emerge from these activities will be shared among staff, with Member States and partners. To achieve this, the following priority actions will be undertaken.

#### ***i) Awareness and capacity***

- Awareness-raising activities within UNEP and with partners on the potential for SSTC to advance the environment agenda at global, regional and national levels through experience sharing forums and dialogues, and online platform and publications.
- Development of guidance material for staff and project teams on how to better integrate SSTC in their projects (criteria, approaches, examples, knowledge products, capacity-building tools).
- Capacity-building of countries including through supporting departments responsible for coordination of SSTC to ensure that the environment is incorporated in their SSTC strategies, and that environmental impacts and management are assessed when large South-South initiatives are being developed for economic, social or other objectives.

#### ***ii) Project design, assessment, monitoring and evaluation***

##### **At the project level**

UNEP will foster the strategic use of SSTC in implementation of the PoW, through enhanced focus on SSTC in project design and implementation and analytical monitoring and reporting of SSTC activities at all levels. Some key actions to ensure this occurs are:

- Review and adjustment of existing criteria for SSTC in the project document template;
- Development of process and activity indicators that demonstrate progress towards the outlined goal (e.g. number of people trained, number of institutions engaged or whose capacity has been improved, number of activities conducted) and progressively start to measure outcome and impact level (e.g. number of policies and regulations adopted, technologies and methodologies adapted);
- Provision of means for systematic monitoring and reporting of SSTC activities within projects, even if SSTC is not featured as an outcome, output or milestone in project documents;
- Consider means of tracking financial resources dedicated to SSTC project;
- Review and adjustment of fields in the Project Information Management System (PIMS);
- Development of evaluation criteria for SSTC projects;
- Feature SSTC in Project Performance Reviews;
- Create/enhance awareness among evaluators of projects regarding the objectives of SSTC;
- Promote SSTC in fora of environment and other regional bodies;

- Promote SSTC in UNEP’s regional and sub-regional thematic meetings.

At the programme level

- Factor in SSTC as an important implementation mechanism in the next PoW and MTS;
- Integrate SSTC into the programme framework of each sub-programme.

**iii) Knowledge Management, Communication and Outreach Tools**

Knowledge management, communication and outreach will be enhanced at all the project and programme level. Some of the actions related to this will be:

- Catalogue and disseminate best practices to make use of knowledge and lessons learnt from programme implementation over the years for the benefit of Member States. Generating this information for use by Member States will serve as a multiplier of the benefits accrued from projects already implemented;
- Develop a digital platform that also links to the UN system wide SSTC platform and other external SSTC portals. A public platform will increase countries’ awareness of existing solutions they could replicate domestically.  
Note: the UNEP platform will feature UNEP projects and development solutions related to its mandate and will link to the global UN system platform – SSC Galaxy – which will cover broader topics. The platforms will be complimentary and there will be no duplication;
- Provide SSTC environmental solutions to the UN system-wide SSTC platform (South-South Galaxy). Convene dialogues/high-level policy meetings on thematic topics that are pertinent to needs of countries of the Global South;
- Revive the UNEP SSTC Community of Practice;
- Disseminate SSTC materials and information at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and UN system meetings;
- Include criteria on SSTC in the publication approval guidelines;
- Support countries preparing Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) using a SSTC approach;
- Strengthen learning across regions through platforms such as the regional ministerial fora and take forward their inputs to regional collaboration platforms, UNEA and the HLPF;

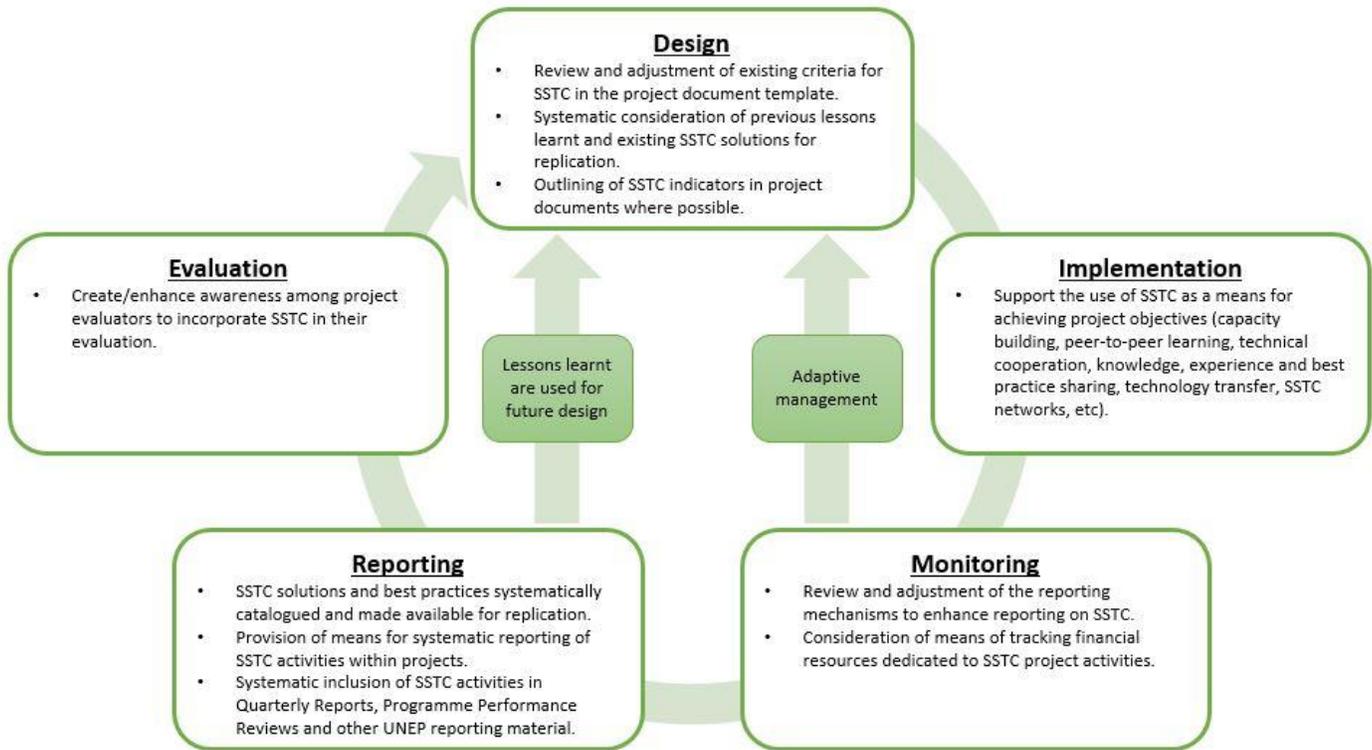


Figure 2: Strengthening South-South and triangular cooperation in the project lifecycle.

**Objective 2: Enhanced Collaboration and Engagement on South-South and Triangular Cooperation with the UN system**

UNEP has a wide range of collaborative work with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), UN Country Teams, the Environment Management Group (EMG), regional UN mechanisms, and project level partnerships with other UN agencies. These can be further harnessed for enhanced SSTC, in line with the guidance from the outcome of the BAPA+40 conference. The UN Development System reform guidelines also call for increased collaboration among UN agencies and renewed focus on delivery of support at the country level. In order to step up its collaboration with UN agencies in support of SSTC UNEP will focus on the following actions:

- Identify priority areas in which UNEP has the mandate and comparative advantage and establish collaborative arrangements with relevant UN agencies, enhancing SSTC in these areas;
- Provide guidance to UNCT teams on how SSTC can be used for environmental management and to address environmental challenges. This includes guidance on how environment and SSTC should be incorporated in the Common Country Analysis process for the development of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks;
- During the Common Country Analysis, identify lessons from other countries or projects that can be used to support programmes being developed in the country in which the Corporation Framework is being developed;

- Work closely with Regional UN Sustainable Development Groups, Regional Coordination Mechanisms and Regional Economic Commissions on SSTC and provide them with information on opportunities for SSTC related to environmental management in their respective regions. This should include analysis of opportunities on both the demand (instances where countries lack capacity and need support in certain sectors, environmental issues,) and supply (where there is experience, knowledge, technical capacity, that can be shared with others) sides;
- Participate in and lead where appropriate Issue-Based Coalitions under the Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs);
- Collaborate with the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and other UN agencies through active engagement in the UN System interagency SSC mechanisms and related activities. Recruit friends and champions in other UN agencies and Country Teams. Select a few topical themes to focus on (e.g. the UN Climate Action Summit);
- Engage with the secretariats of MEAs and centres of excellence to capture their best practices and lesson learned;
- Engage in thematic UN agency fora to support further SSTC objectives.

**Objective 3: Innovative partnerships fostered and enhanced**

The UNDP report “South-South Cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa : Strategies for UNDP Engagement” (2017) indicated that poor communication/knowledge management and lack of awareness about SSTC at all levels is a challenge that needs to be addressed and suggests that increased networking, platforms and partnerships that include a broad range of stakeholders for experience sharing should be stepped up.

Under this objective, UNEP will aim to facilitate the development of innovative platforms and networks for SSTC knowledge and solution sharing. This will enhance rigour and advance the sharing of solutions and best practices among countries and stakeholders of the Global South. Through these platforms, countries and stakeholders will be able to share cutting-edge innovations/solutions and practices and gain access to knowledge and advisory services.

Several organisations conduct research, have implemented projects, or are thought leaders in specific thematic areas related to development and environmental challenges experienced by developing countries. UNEP will seek to develop or join networks which bring the holders of such knowledge and information together with those who are able to benefit from it. Much research has been done by research institutes and think tanks which is not informing policy. Developing and enhancing networks will help to link existing and emerging solutions to environmental challenges with the policymakers who can help adopt them for within respective contexts.

UNEP will seek to establish dialogues with SSTC focal points in international organisations, think tanks, thematic centres of excellence, other SSTC organisations, civil society, private sector, financial institutions, NGOs, etc, to identify existing and potential opportunities for UNEP to support SSTC partnerships.

Support may include hosting policy thematic dialogues among stakeholders for exchange and sharing lessons learnt, experiences, best practices and solutions particularly where there are shared/similar challenges as in the case of transboundary challenges. UNEP's support may also include advisory services including, where required, support to partners for resource mobilisation.

In line with the UN-wide Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation (2016), UNEP's role in developing innovative partnerships will be as follows:

- Convener: bringing parties together and facilitating dialogue.
- Knowledge broker: linking supply and demand of Southern development solutions.
- Partnership builder: organising forums, meetings and events and facilitating developing countries' participation in global events.
- Analyst and progress monitor: gathering and analysing data with regards to the effectiveness of South-South cooperation in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

UNEP's work in enhancing and fostering innovative partnerships will be carried out in line with other existing UN and UNEP guidelines for such activities including the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact<sup>9</sup>, UNEP's Private Sector Engagement Strategy (2019) and UNEP Programme Manual's partnerships section.

### ***Target groups for collaborative partnerships***

Target groups for collaborative partnerships will include national institutions with the institutional capacity for sustaining partnerships and initiatives after the end of UNEP involvement, and that conform to the guiding principles for SSTC, as summarised below, as well as research institutes and universities. Other key groups to target are:

**Private sector:** The private sector (including private companies, trade and investment promotion agencies, chambers of commerce) is a major source of innovation, technological solutions, financial resources, job creation and has knowledge and reach beyond those of UNEP, all of which cannot be neglected if the SDGs are to be achieved. The Agenda 2030, Paris Agreements and Addis Ababa Action Agenda, among other international agreements, recognise and call for a strengthened relationship with the private sector to promote private sector sustainability and transformation.

The private sector is evolving fast, away from corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a mere obligation and towards business models which attempt to incorporate sustainability to their core, providing UNEP with increasing opportunities for engagement. Private sector engagement initiatives already exist within UNEP.

Emerging markets of the Global South are witnessing rapid growth and change. Through early engagement with the private sector, which is a major driver of this transformation, and by facilitating SSTC, UNEP can encourage the early adoption of innovation and solutions enabling

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<sup>9</sup> [The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact](#).

both long-term profitability and sustainability. The private sector drives the most frequently cited environmental realities, such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, and generation of plastic waste and is therefore a crucial group to work with to address these negative trends.

- **Youth:** There are 1.3 billion young people aged 15 to 24, accounting for 16 per cent of the global population.<sup>10</sup> As pointed out in the 2018 “Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” report<sup>11</sup>, young people are of major importance in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Active engagement of youth in sustainable development efforts is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies by 2030, and to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development and environmental matters. SSTC will serve as a mechanism for engaging youth in developing countries.
- **Women:** Efforts will be made to ensure gender equality in UNEP’s partnerships and that the role of women in improving environmental sustainability in the Global South is emphasised. UNEP will work with organisations that empower women by building their capacity, providing knowledge and technology that supporting their innovations. To ensure that UNEP’s projects are gender-responsive, gender considerations have been incorporated into UNEP’s project concept documents. Gender and the role of women in SSTC activities will be monitored in a similar manner to all UNEP’s activities.
- **Civil society organisations:** Through the provision of valuable research, expertise and advocacy functions, civil society organisations are major allies of UNEP in advancing the international environmental priorities and for the delivery of UNEP’s programme of work. By taking early account of the views of civil society organisations, governments can strengthen the recognition and support for national and intergovernmental decisions on environmental matters, enabling greater impact and contributing to the objective of leaving no one behind. Engaging civil society is key to creating mutual benefits where civil society is empowered to voice its perspectives and share experience and expertise, strengthening South-South cooperation networks and the dissemination of international best-practice among developing countries. Grassroot organisations, networks/associations of NGOs and civic movements on the environment are important groups that UNEP will partner with.

It is important to note that **governments** (national and local) are a critical partner for all UNEP’s SSTC partnerships. In UNEP’s engagement with the above-mentioned target groups, government support and engagement will be critical to achieving positive change.

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<sup>10</sup> United Nations – [World Population Prospects](#).

<sup>11</sup> United Nations World Youth Report (2018) – [Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

### ***Guiding principles for the development of strategic and innovative partnerships***

Any partnerships developed for SSTC will be guided by UNEP's partnership policy (Programme Manual, partnership section) as well as the guiding principles for the development of strategic and innovative SSTC partnerships and initiatives outlined in the Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation, issued by the High-level Committee on South-South cooperation in 2016.

As mentioned in Section II, these principles include respect for national sovereignty and ownership; partnership among equals; non-conditionality; non-interference in domestic affairs; mutual benefit; mutual accountability and transparency; development effectiveness; coordination of evidence- and results-based initiatives; and a multi-stakeholder approach.

In addition to these principles, any partnership established shall:

- Be aligned to UNEP programme objectives and the SDGs. The SSTC partnerships should have a clear linkage to the Medium-Term Strategy and contribute to UNEP's Programme of Work;
  - Have clearly identified benefits/outcomes. The benefits of engaging the partnership should be clearly defined, such as resource accesses, technology transfer and capacity building;
  - Be demand-oriented. UNEP's engagement should respond to requests from Member States;
  - Be based on the availability of funds to support the planned activities;
  - Have a multi-stakeholder and inclusive approach.
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## SECTION V: Governance

UNEP will consult with Member States on key developments related to the implementation of South-South and triangular cooperation activities. Major groups will also be provided with the opportunity to share their views related to the implementation of UNEP's SSTC activities.

Within UNEP, governance responsibilities will be as follows:

**Project teams** are responsible for project design, implementation, monitoring and reporting of SSTC within projects.

**Sub-programme Coordinators** are responsible for ensuring cohesive SSTC in their respective sub-programmes and identifying opportunities within their subprogrammes for enhanced SSTC.

**Divisional and Office South-South cooperation focal points** are responsible for liaison between divisions, regional offices and the Policy Coordination Unit at various stages of programme of work cycle including facilitating and promoting sharing of South-South cooperation experiences and lessons learnt within their respective divisions. Focal points are responsible for creating awareness of the need for strategic SSTC planning and monitoring within their respective offices.

**SSTC Community of Practice (CoP)** members act as SSTC champions in their respective offices, contribute to knowledge management, outreach and communications on SSTC. CoP members may be called upon by the Policy Coordination Unit for consultations related to SSTC within UNEP.

**The Policy Coordination Unit**, housed in the Policy and Programme Division, is responsible for the overall coordination of SSTC activities within UNEP including<sup>12</sup>:

- Developing, disseminating and continuously updating guidance material to help project managers understand the role that SSTC can play in their existing or upcoming projects, and help project managers reach out to the Unit for possible funding to execute SSTC features;
- Coordination of corporate level initiatives;
- Establishing impact criteria for SSTC projects;
- Monitoring and reporting of corporate developments;
- Coordinating CoP activities;
- Developing and disseminating knowledge products, communication and outreach material;
- Digital management of SSTC knowledge through a hosted platform and contribution to UN system-wide platform;
- Working with the Project Review Committee secretariat, Corporate Services, Evaluation Office and other relevant units in the organisation to implement changes to internal documents and resources, as required by the actions set out in this Strategy);
- Overall corporate reporting on SSTC and the progress of implementation of this Strategy to Member States (Programme Performance Review, Quarterly Reports, Annual Reports) and Secretary General reports;

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<sup>12</sup> The Framework guidance on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation (2016) recommends UN agencies to have dedicate SSTC focal points within their organisations.

- Serving as the focal point for engagement with UN SSC interagency mechanism and the UNOSSC, and guiding regional, sub-regional and country offices in their engagement with regional fora and UNCTs in this regard.
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## SECTION VI: Funding for South-South and Triangular Cooperation

Dedicated financial resources for SSTC are required for the effective implementation and coordination of SSTC activities. A Partnership Development and South-South Cooperation Fund was established in 2014 to support projects that were exclusively focused on development of new partnerships or South-South cooperation as the primary mechanism for implementation. The cycle of funding under this Fund was completed in December 2017. Dedicated funds for South-South cooperation support have been received from Brazil, the UNEP-China Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation and the China South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund over the past five years.

Projects which include SSTC components currently receive funding from various sources, and this mostly takes place on an ad-hoc and uncoordinated basis. In order to ensure coordinated and sufficient funding is available for the implementation and coordination of SSTC activities, UNEP will take the following action:

- Work towards complying with the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendation to allocate 0.5% of core funding to South-South cooperation.
  - Recommendation 9 of The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report (JIU/REP/2011/3) calls for each UN agency "to apportion a specific percentage – not less than 0.5 per cent – of core budget resources for the promotion of South-South cooperation (SSC) in their respective areas of competence [...] and to agree with donor countries to use a specific portion of extrabudgetary resources to finance SSC and triangular cooperation initiatives".<sup>13</sup>
  - Since many SSTC activities are embedded in projects as actions or components, UNEP is currently unable to determine the percentage of the core budget utilised for South-South and triangular cooperation activities. UNEP will consider ways to better measure resource allocation to specific SSTC activities in projects and programmes in order measure this aspect and ensure compliance with the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendation.
- Ensure adequate funding for SSTC activities is provided through UNEP's regular budget (Environment Fund). This will ensure continuity and sustained funding for SSTC activities beyond the limited period of dedicated funds and other ad-hoc funding mechanisms.
- Allocate appropriate funding support to facilitate the implementation of other aspects the Strategy (e.g. support key centres of excellence and Southern partners to attend UNEP dialogues and share good examples on SSTC, production of knowledge products).
- Support UN Country Teams and regional groups on SSTC.
- Intensify resource mobilisation efforts.

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<sup>13</sup> Joint Inspection Unit (2011) – [South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the United Nations System](#)

### Annex I: List of Key Resolutions that Call for/Endorse SSTC

<b>Year</b>	<b>Resolution Number</b>	<b>Resolution Name</b>
1972	2997 (XXVII) General Assembly	Resolution 2997 (XXVII) adopted by the General Assembly
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to provide, at the request of all parties concerned, advisory services for the promotion of international co-operation in the field of the environment. This includes providing guidance and advice on how investment and business practices can be made more sustainable.</li> </ul>
2002	A/RES/56/202 General Assembly	Adopted by General Assembly 'Economic and Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries'
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calls upon all relevant United Nations organizations and multilateral institutions to consider increasing allocations of human, technical and financial resources for South-South cooperation, and in this context takes note of decision 2001/2 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund,11 in which the Board requested the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme to consider reviewing, in the context of the successor programming arrangements, the allocation of additional resources for activities involving technical cooperation among developing countries, taking into account the overall financial situation and the need for appropriate resources for other activities;</li> <li>Requests the Secretary-General, through coordination of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries of the United Nations Development Programme and in consultation with relevant organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and other relevant institutions in the South, to include in the report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session concrete measures for promoting and facilitating South-South cooperation, taking into account all relevant initiatives and proposals in this regard;</li> <li>Stressing that South-South cooperation, as an important element of international cooperation for development, offers viable opportunities for developing countries in their individual and collective pursuit of sustained economic growth and sustainable development, in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions and recent United Nations conferences, and for ensuring their effective and meaningful participation in the newly emerging global economic system;</li> <li>Recognizing that developing countries have the primary responsibility for promoting and implementing economic and technical cooperation among themselves, and reiterating the need for the international community to support the efforts of the developing countries to expand South-South cooperation through the modality of economic and technical cooperation among developing countries.</li> </ul>
2005	UNEP/GC.23/6/Add.1 Bali Strategic Plan	Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides an effective strategy for strengthening technology support and cooperation by supporting the creation of an enabling environment for innovation and transfer through the enhancement of international cooperation conducive to innovation and the development, transfer and dissemination of technologies, with the protection of intellectual property rights, involving all relevant partners, including the private sector. Emphasis should be given to identifying and disseminating best practices and fostering entrepreneurship and partnerships;</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum will regularly review and provide policy guidance for the plan, acting pursuant to its mandate to review the global environment and to promote international cooperation.</li> <li>• The plan underscores the importance of South-South cooperation and stresses the need to intensify efforts directed towards institutional capacity-building, including through the exchange of expertise, experiences, information and documentation between the institutions of the South in order to develop human resources and strengthen the institutions of the South, and places emphasis on the important role for economic and social development played by scientific knowledge and technology, which have a major influence on the way in which the earth's resources are used and shared among its inhabitants.</li> </ul>
2005	A/RES/60/212 General Assembly	60/212 South-South cooperation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urges all relevant United Nations organizations and multilateral institutions to intensify their efforts to effectively mainstream the use of South-South cooperation in the design, formulation and implementation of their regular programmes and to consider increasing allocations of human, technical and financial resources for supporting South-South cooperation initiatives, and in this regard takes note of the initiatives contained in the Havana Programme of Action adopted by the first South Summit,<sup>5</sup> the Marrakesh Framework for the Implementation of South-South Cooperation and the Doha Plan of Action;</li> <li>• Recalling further its resolution 59/250 of 22 December 2004, which, inter alia, called on organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to mainstream, in their programmes and through their country-level activities and country offices, modalities to support South-South cooperation,</li> <li>• Invites the United Nations Development Programme to rename the Voluntary Trust Fund for the Promotion of South-South Cooperation, which was established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/119 of 20 December 1995, as the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, while maintaining its mandate and voluntary nature, and to designate it as the main United Nations trust fund for promoting and supporting South-South and triangular initiatives;</li> <li>• Stresses that South-South cooperation, as an important element of international cooperation for development, offers viable opportunities for developing countries in their individual and collective pursuit of sustained economic growth and sustainable development;</li> <li>• Recognizes that regional integration initiatives between developing countries constitute an important and valuable form of South-South cooperation and that regional integration is a step towards beneficial integration into the world economy.</li> </ul>
2006	A/RES/61/215 General Assembly	61/215 Industrial Development Cooperation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes the importance of South-South cooperation in the area of industrial development, and in this regard encourages the international community, including the international financial institutions, to support the efforts of developing countries, inter alia, through triangular cooperation;</li> <li>• Recognizes the importance of information in the replication of best practices in processing, design and marketing, and also recognizes the importance of and encourages South-South cooperation in this respect.</li> </ul>
2007	A/RES/62/209 General Assembly	62/209. South-South cooperation

- Reaffirming its resolution 33/134 of 19 December 1978, in which it endorsed the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries;
- Highlights the fact that, in spite of progress achieved in this area, further efforts are required to better understand the approaches and potential of South-South cooperation to enhance development effectiveness, including through national capacity development;
- Encourages the initiatives and arrangements, including public-private mechanisms, undertaken in the efforts to enhance cooperation between developing countries, including, inter alia, in the areas of the fight against poverty and hunger, access to information and communications technologies, science and technology, environment, culture, health, education and human development.

2009

Report of the Governing Council  
Decision 25/9  
(UNEP Governing Council)

Decision 25/9: South-South cooperation in achieving sustainable development

- Recalling also decision SS.X/3 on the United Nations Environment Programme medium-term strategy 2010–2013, and welcoming the medium-term strategy, in particular to enhance delivery of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building,
- Stressing the particular importance of South-North cooperation and the complementary role of South-South cooperation in the field of sustainable development,
- Stressing the need to continue to develop innovative mechanisms to mobilize resources for South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives,
- Requests the Executive Director to build on the current work and follow-up activities on South-South cooperation and to broaden external consultations to develop strategic partnerships and alliances in support of capacity-building and technology support activities using South-South cooperation arrangements;
- 2. Also requests the Executive Director to develop further and refine the existing strategic and operational guidelines and also to develop a policy guidance for the coherent and coordinated implementation of South-South cooperation approaches across the programme of work of the United Nations Environment Programme;
- 3. Further requests the Executive Director to deepen the cooperation of the United Nations Environment Programme with related United Nations agencies, regions, subregions and existing South-South cooperation initiatives to develop joint activities and synergies of capacity in advancing South-South cooperation in support of capacity-building and technology support in the context of the Bali Strategic Plan and as reflected in the medium-term strategy 2010–2013;
- 4. Requests the Executive Director to initiate efforts towards establishing formal cooperation arrangements with existing mechanisms and centres of excellence active in South-South cooperation, such as the Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation, to foster cooperation in the field of the environment;
- 5. Urges the Executive Director to strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme coordination mechanism and structure for South-South cooperation, including its regional presence, with a view to enhancing its role and function;
- 6. Invites Governments and other relevant organizations to provide the necessary adequate resources for the work of the United Nations Environment Programme in South-South cooperation and encourages the Executive Director to develop further and implement high-profile demonstrable projects in South-South cooperation in the field of the environment;

- 7. Requests the Executive Director to contribute to the Secretary-General's report to the forthcoming high-level United Nations conference on South-South cooperation and to participate in that Conference;
- 8. Also requests the Executive Director to present a report on the progress in implementing the present decision to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its twenty-sixth session.

2009	A/RES/64/1 General Assembly	64/1 High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report, consistent with the overarching theme of the Conference, reviewing the trends in South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation, reviewing also the progress made by the international community, in particular the United Nations, in supporting and promoting such cooperation and identifying new opportunities, as well as challenges and constraints and measures to overcome them;</li> <li>• Invites United Nations organizations, including the specialized agencies, regional commissions and funds and programmes, to provide input to the preparations for the Conference;</li> <li>• Invites international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and business sector entities to participate in the Conference, in accordance with the rules and procedures of the General Assembly;</li> <li>• Invites intergovernmental organizations and entities that have observer status with the General Assembly to participate in the Conference;</li> <li>• Taking note of the growing importance of South-South cooperation, and recognizing the increased role undertaken by the United Nations to support economic cooperation activities among developing countries,</li> <li>• Taking note of the growing importance of South-South cooperation, and recognizing the increased role undertaken by the United Nations to support economic cooperation activities among developing countries,</li> <li>• Invites United Nations organizations, including the specialized agencies, regional commissions and funds and programmes, to provide input to the preparations for the Conference;</li> <li>• Encourages Member States and their partners, including non-governmental organizations, to consider preparing reports on South-South and triangular cooperation for the purpose of the Conference, on a voluntary basis, taking into account the themes of the Conference and the outcomes of regional, subregional or sectoral United Nations meetings prior to the Conference;</li> </ul>		
2017	A/RES/72/237 General Assembly	Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2017 (72/237) South-South Cooperation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6. Welcomes the increased contributions of South-South cooperation to poverty eradication and sustainable development, encourages developing countries to voluntarily step up their efforts to strengthen South-South cooperation and to further improve its development effectiveness, in accordance with the provisions of the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation,<sup>10</sup> and welcomes commitments to strengthen triangular cooperation as a means of bringing relevant experience and expertise to bear in development cooperation;</li> <li>• 8. Acknowledges the progress made and encourages the continued integration of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation into the policies and strategic frameworks of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, and requests those funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system that have not yet integrated South-South and triangular cooperation into their</li> </ul>		

policies to do so, taking into account the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>11</sup> and the complementary nature of South-South to North-South cooperation;

- 21. Requests the United Nations system to enhance its support in the areas where South-South cooperation has proved effective, namely capacity-building, regional integration, interregional linkages, infrastructure interconnectivity and the development of national productive capacities through exchanges of knowledge, technological innovations and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, and in several areas of sustainable development such as poverty eradication and gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
- 22. Welcomes the support provided by developing countries to South-South and triangular initiatives aimed at improving nutrition and food security, and invites the replication of this approach in other relevant areas, drawing on the technical expertise of various United Nations organizations;
- 26. Urges the United Nations system to continue its support to regional and subregional organizations, enabling their member countries to build more partnerships and cross-border frameworks, with a view to promoting and scaling up best practices with the potential to benefit a large number of developing countries;
- 27. Welcomes the growing number of forums convened for Governments and other policymakers to discuss, in a participatory and inclusive manner, South-South cooperation initiatives and their contribution towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including addressing challenges, lessons learned and good practices in key areas;
- 29. Recognizes the need to mobilize adequate resources for enhancing South-South and triangular cooperation, and in this context invites all countries in a position to do so to contribute, in support of such cooperation, to the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation and to the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation, in accordance with its resolution 57/263 of 20 December 2002, and to support other initiatives for all developing countries, including technology transfer among developing countries on mutually agreed terms.

2019	UNEA 4/Decision 4/1	Programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 28. Requests the Executive Director to ensure that South-South, South-North and triangular cooperation initiatives are effectively implemented in the spirit of accountability and transparency.</li> </ul>
2019	A/73/L.80 General Assembly	Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation