





# CHAPTER

# I

# TOWARDS 40 YEARS OF THE BUENOS AIRES PLAN OF ACTION: FRESH PROSPECTS FOR SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION IN IBERO-AMERICA<sup>1</sup>

## I.1. CONTEXT AND CURRENT TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: REFLECTIONS 40 YEARS ON FROM THE BAPA

Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) was identified in the 1960s and 1970s as a pioneering effort to build partnerships between countries of the South in the quest for equitable international relations and a New International Economic Order (NIEO). In the context of the Cold War, these countries tried to find alternative forms of partnership to promote their own development and strengthen their international bargaining power through coordination and political dialogue. This ambition translated into the *Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries* (BAPA), a major cornerstone of the so-called South-South Cooperation (SSC), adopted at the United Nations Conference on TCDC held in Buenos Aires in 1978.

The BAPA, which was signed by 138 States, was primarily intended to promote TCDC, in recognition of the growing importance of South-South relations and the increasing demand for equitable and sovereign participation in international relations. The Conference held in Buenos Aires established, for the first time, a framework for TCDC, and included in its practice the basic principles of international relations between sovereign states: *respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and equal rights*, among others. It also contains a number of innovative and specific recommendations aimed at building legal frameworks, institutional foundations and financing mechanisms at the national, regional, interregional and international levels.

In an international scenario in which developing countries sought a greater voice and alternative

solutions to the prevailing economic and political order, the BAPA aimed to foster interest in technical cooperation, defined as *an instrument capable of fostering the exchange of successful experiences between countries that share close historical realities and similar challenges*. Since then, TCDC has become part and parcel of SSC, together with political dialogue, economic cooperation and financial cooperation, shaping a wide range of exchanges through programs, projects and initiatives that have contributed to solving specific problems of the countries of the South. Indeed, it has even supported the articulation of Triangular Cooperation (TC) schemes, thus increasing the impact of initiatives and encouraging synergies with other international cooperation actors through the participation of three different partners.

As this report makes clear, SSC and TC increasingly have a greater level of specificity and a rich variety of working modalities that contribute significantly to regional integration and strengthening of national public development policies. These developments are reflected in the integration of these forms of cooperation into the foreign policy agendas of the countries involved, and in the recognition granted by many major global and regional development fora. Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia have shown a renewed and growing interest in the potential of SSC and TC through a wide variety of approaches, sectors, institutional mechanisms and regional and interregional platforms. These forms of cooperation have also attracted the interest of various countries and traditional cooperation actors involved in South-South initiatives.

<sup>1</sup> A consensus-based chapter prepared by the Heads of Cooperation of the Ibero-American countries members of the Ibero-American Program to Strengthen South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS), based on the first draft prepared by Argentina, and enhanced by Colombia, Spain, Mexico and the Dominican Republic.

In this context, the Ibero-American space is a scenario in which significant advances have been made in terms of exchange of experiences, project management methodologies, registration and systematization tools, document production and conceptual debates around SSC. Hence, since 2007, the *Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America* has documented more than 1,000 SSC and TC initiatives per year in the region. Furthermore, Ibero-American Cooperation has become an international role model for SSC, lauded for its dynamism, horizontality and innovation.

Forty years on from the adoption of the BAPA, the process that is bringing profound changes to the distribution of international power is still underway. The increasing role of developing countries has translated into an increasingly multi-polar, international scenario. Indeed, the traditional paradigm, based on the unidirectional North-South flow of cooperation, can no longer explain this more complex, heterogeneous and interdependent reality.

The agendas, methodologies and actors involved in the international development cooperation system are currently being redefined. The current scenario is characterized, inter alia, by the growing influence of developing countries and actors, including local governments, parliaments, academia, private sector, civil society organizations and philanthropic foundations; the relevance acquired by SSC and TC; the reorientation of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the detriment of the so-called Middle Income Countries (MIC); and the significant role of security and complex crises (environmental, health, demographic, etc.) in international cooperation policies. These and other dynamics have led to a broad debate on how to expand and democratize international cooperation structures and mechanisms in order to integrate all forms of cooperation, recognize the value of increasingly dynamic actors and achieve effective interventions in the field.

The adoption in 2015 of the Agenda 2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction reaffirms an ambitious global commitment to promoting sustainable and inclusive social, economic

## The BAPA was primarily intended to promote TCDC, in recognition of the growing importance of South-South relations and the increasing demand for equitable and sovereign participation in international relations

and environmental development, which has a high impact on international cooperation.

The new Development Agenda is the result of an open and democratic negotiation process that brought together representatives of States, civil society, private sector and international organizations. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and 169 associated targets and means of implementation, provide a road map for development programs at the global, regional and national levels until 2030.

Though Latin America and the Caribbean, a diverse and heterogeneous region with high levels of inequality, face the challenges set out in the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and the SDGs, the region has consolidated its democratic institutions, advanced in integration and made significant progress in reducing extreme poverty, hunger and child mortality. Given the current background of economic downturn and volatility at the international level, the first challenge is to prevent the erosion of progress made and overcome a wide variety of continuing issues that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) refers to as “structural gaps”, which hamper sustainable development.<sup>2</sup>

In order for the new Agenda to be comprehensively implemented and not be merely an expression of ambitions, there is a need to further develop institutional capacities and mechanisms, and make inroads in coordinating policies at all levels. In this context, it is still necessary to develop an analytical framework that articulates and coordinates different forms of international cooperation initiatives, and consolidates the resources needed for implementing

<sup>2</sup> CEPAL. Middle-income countries: A new approach based on structural gaps: A new approach based on Structural Gaps. United Nations publication. 2012.

## In keeping with the commitment to “leave no one behind”, the Ibero-American countries are working to integrate SSC into the general framework of international cooperation

the new Development Agenda. Collective responses that integrate the vision and joint effort of all actors, without exclusions, will be needed to meet this challenge.

In keeping with the commitment to “leave no one behind”, the Ibero-American countries are working to integrate SSC into the general framework of international cooperation. It is about furthering dialogue with other development actors, pointing out the common ground and highlighting the significant contribution they can make to address the persistent development challenges. This form of cooperation, based on mutual advantage, capacity building and exchange of knowledge and best practices, becomes a valuable tool for identifying common challenges and seeking common solutions. It is important for SSC and TC to be incorporated into this new framework as a key element of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (GPSD).

Four decades ago, the joint effort that led to the BAPA supported the idea of a common and consolidated strategy among developing countries, which offered ample possibilities for reversing the asymmetries of the international system. However, successive national and global crises resulted in

notable disparities between developing countries, due to varying degrees of capacities and vulnerabilities to the onset of globalization. In contrast to the differences between these countries, the global governance structures and processes of developed countries were based on a highly articulated praxis. However, the group of developed countries are now going through a less cohesive stage in which strategies are being redefined. It is characterized by a return to geopolitical calculus, a shift towards more protectionist policies and questioning of multilateralism as the forum for defining policies.

This change of scenario opens new horizons for developing countries. Ibero-American countries believe that, as proposed in Agenda 2030, there is a need for reinforcing the commitment to international cooperation and to regional and interregional integration to strengthen GPSD. The spirit of the BAPA must be rekindled as a source of inspiration, pushing for new spaces of solidarity and cooperation, partnerships and common frameworks, and commitment to peace and development.

The United Nations High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation, to be held Buenos Aires in 2019, is a historic opportunity for Ibero-American countries to reflect on the progress made and the results achieved in the past decades and to analyze the importance of current BAPA approaches in light of recent developments. The key now is to identify the challenges and opportunities of this new stage, achieve the SDGs and build an architecture of international cooperation in which all countries participate based on their potential and competitive advantages, and benefit according to their needs in accordance with the “leave no one behind” principle of Agenda 2030.

## I.2. BUENOS AIRES PLAN OF ACTION: FUNDAMENTALS, TERM AND HORIZON

The BAPA summarizes many of the policies and conceptual approaches implemented by different developing countries since the 1950s related to the need to establish a new balanced, international relations model in which the interests of the international community as a whole are represented without a dividing line between “donors” and “recipients”. Until then, assistance projects generally

followed a unidirectional approach, in which geostrategic convenience, arising from the East-West conflict, prevailed over the capacities and needs of local communities.

This practice was based on the belief that successful models from developed countries could be extrapolated to developing countries, without taking

into account the deep economic and, above all, socio-cultural differences that existed between countries. This was when a development cooperation system was spawned and institutions for transferring the necessary financial and technical resources were created to help developing countries overcome their “traditional stage” and reach the “stage of maturity”.

The different decolonization processes and renewed partnership of the so-called “developing world” changed this reality. The countries of the South began to work towards the goals of world peace and closing gaps with industrialized countries.<sup>3</sup> These demands were addressed in the Bandung Conference of 1955, in which several leaders of developing countries called for structural changes in the world economic order and expressed their willingness to partner to gain more bargaining power on the global stage. Bandung saw the adoption of a number of measures aimed at increasing economic and technical cooperation among developing countries. Indeed, this latter form of cooperation was viewed as a solidarity mechanism capable of achieving independent economic and social progress.

The United Nations established the Working Group on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries in 1972, and the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation two years later. In 1978, an important step was taken with the adoption of the “Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing TCDC”. A group of experts, civil servants and authorities came together in preparatory intergovernmental meetings over five years to outline the needs and possibilities of this form of cooperation and its implications for developing countries. A key milestone of SSC was forged at the Buenos Aires Conference, attended by 138 countries, 45 ministers, 41 deputy ministers and 81 heads of cooperation and planning departments.

To this day, the BAPA is a major cornerstone for TCDC. It defines TCDC as a vital force for pooling knowledge and experience for mutual benefit and for achieving national and collective self-reliance (par. 5, Introduction), which serves as a key tool to increase these countries’ confidence in each other’s technical capabilities and harmonize their interests at the regional and interregional levels (par. 16, Objectives).

For the first time, the Plan proposes a strategic and operational framework for TCDC. From a multidimensional perspective, it recognizes the different forms of cooperation (bilateral, regional, subregional, interregional and multilateral), and envisages the participation and support of diverse actors (developed countries and regional institutions, private sector and individuals) under the leadership of the States. The BAPA identifies eight strategic objectives, and outlines in detail a number of measures, recommendations and actions to be taken to implement and promote TCDC as a key component of any future strategy seeking to accelerate development

TCDC is identified as an increasingly important dimension of international cooperation for promoting development among countries facing comparable challenges, while, at the same time, facilitating equitable exchange, adoption of similar approaches to problems, and development of common perspectives. However, it cannot be regarded as a substitute, but rather, as a complement for cooperation between developed countries. As clearly stated in the Plan, the furtherance of TCDC does not detract in any way from the responsibility of the developed countries to take the necessary measures, particularly with regard to increasing ODA, to contribute to the growth of developing countries (par. 8, Introduction).

A thorough analysis of the BAPA shows that, given the growing interdependence of countries, there is a need to work together in an integrated manner to deal with development challenges. The document mentions how the progress of developed countries is increasingly affected by the policies and actions implemented by developing countries, and vice versa. The concepts of “interdependence,” “common interests,” “joint work,” and “shared efforts” are central to the Plan’s forward planning.

The measures that need to be taken to promote and strengthen SSC are outlined, inter alia, in the following recommendations:

- a) build knowledge and capabilities of countries to identify their TCDC potential, based on an analysis of national needs and capabilities to share with other developing countries;

<sup>3</sup> In the ensuing years, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM, 1961), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 1964) and the Group of 77 (G-77, 1964) were created based on these demands.

- b) foster the adoption of policies, legal and administrative frameworks and institutional arrangements conducive to their development;
- c) strengthen national information systems and encourage training of human resources;
- d) establish and strengthen national mechanisms for promoting cooperation between public sector, private sector and individuals;
- e) expand bilateral arrangements and intensify SSC through long-term agreements, programs and projects;
- f) strengthen the capacities of regional, subregional and interregional organizations to implement TCDC activities and projects;
- g) permeate the United Nations system (UNS) with the spirit of TCDC so all its organizations play a prominent role as promoters;
- h) increase support from developed countries to this form of cooperation.

In short, the BAPA charted a course that was followed by the countries in ensuing decades. Indeed, it can be argued that this is the most comprehensive, practical and multifaceted document of its kind. To date, governments, regional agencies and the United Nations use the objectives and recommendations of the BAPA to build some of their strategies, guide their actions and measure progress on SSC.

Despite this remarkable legacy, it should be noted that there have been no breakthroughs in negotiations on allocation of funds to promote TCDC

**To date, governments, regional agencies and the United Nations use the objectives and recommendations of the BAPA to build some of their strategies, guide their actions and measure progress on SSC**

in the UNS, or in the creation of a specialized agency for this purpose. Instead, the responsibility for guiding TCDC-related activities was entrusted to the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the regular high-level meetings of the countries participating in the Program. This procedure considerably reduced the scope of action of developing countries, given that the decision-making power for planning and managing TCDC was largely determined by the financial contribution of countries to the UNDP budget.

Beyond these and other issues that still require the attention of the countries of the South, there is no doubt that the Buenos Aires Conference succeeded in introducing a proposal for change and triggering an epistemological rupture in the paradigm whereby developed countries played the role of “donors” and developing countries acted as “recipients”, and development was regarded as a linear, automatic and exportable phenomenon achieved through a single formula. In contrast to this view, the BAPA revealed the developing countries’ potential to create their own solutions and provide cooperation relying on their national and collective capabilities, based on the principles of equality, solidarity, respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. The recognition of the existence of different development models and visions meant that the process had to take into account values, history, local specificities, special needs, and national policies and priorities.

Since then, the developing countries’ will to cooperate with each other and rely on their own capacities to meet common goals and needs has been strengthened. This constitutes a major shift in the landscape of international cooperation. Four decades after its signing, many approaches and strategic objectives set out in the BAPA remain highly relevant and meaningful in the cooperation policies of developing countries (see Annex 1).

As a forerunner, the BAPA was ahead of several analyses, principles and strategies that are now part of the Agenda 2030. Indeed, it is possible to find common grounds and produce a productive dialogue between both processes. Though it is difficult to see the world as it was in those days, we believe that the BAPA continues to reflect the realities of today, and new questions and alternative approaches to ever-changing scenarios can still be articulated from its pages.

### I.3. SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND MULTILATERAL LEVELS

#### I.3.1. NATIONAL LEVEL

Much has been achieved in terms of the BAPA recommendations in the decades since its first steps, as sporadic technical assistance between developing countries, until today, when the countries of the South have amassed a significant corpus of experience and consolidated SSC, with its unique characteristics and history. From its origins until today, SSC has been shaped by the needs, potentials, objectives and varied viewpoints of developing countries.

Nonetheless, there is a common understanding among these countries about the principles guiding SSC, its importance as an integral element of international cooperation and its potential to bolster economic growth and sustainable development. They also agree that SSC must be implemented through different political approaches, institutional arrangements, regulations, financial resources, capabilities, intensity and breadth. However, SSC still takes second place in some developing countries. Others are moving towards a more proactive role. Finally, some countries have firmly incorporated SSC into their agendas, strengthening their institutional structures and management tools with meaningful contributions to economic and social development, among others.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, Latin American and Caribbean countries have developed some of the most dynamic experiences in this field, and made significant progress in the lines of action outlined in the BAPA. South-South Cooperation in the region has primarily a technical objective, oriented to capacity building, exchange of experiences and institutional strengthening. According to the Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America 2017, Ibero-American countries have executed 1,136 SSC and TC initiatives in the region. Many of these countries have also extended their cooperation horizons to other geographic regions such as Africa, Asia and the

non-Ibero-American Caribbean, thus deepening bilateral exchanges. This Report on South-South Cooperation looks beyond the 350 initiatives executed with these regions.

This dynamism is due to multiple internal and external factors. At the domestic level, this is justified, inter alia, by the political and institutional maturity attained by countries in the region, leaving the era of authoritarian States behind, productive growth and diversification, implementation of policies to combat “development gaps”, and the political will of governments to include SSC in their agendas and take the necessary actions. At the external level, the causes include strengthening of bilateral and regional dynamics, recognition and commitment to SSC to promote partnerships and reduce asymmetries, and progressive shift of the region as ODA recipient.

The mainstreaming of SSC in the agenda of the region’s countries translated into the creation and strengthening of institutions for designing and managing SSC initiatives, as recommended by the BAPA. Indeed, there are diverse institutional cooperation models in Ibero-America. Each one is tailored to the needs and interests of each country. Worthy of note are the agencies running SSC and providing technical, administrative and/or financial management with a varying degree of autonomy, Vice-ministries, Secretariats or Directorates-General attached to Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and Ministries of Planning and/or Economics. Different structures and models have emerged within the framework of these institutions to manage SSC and/or interact and coordinate with other national institutions active in this area.<sup>5</sup>

Forty years after BAPA, Ibero-American countries have adopted – to a greater or lesser extent – SSC-friendly policies, achieving a level of institutionalization conducive to developing national policy and programming frameworks (laws, regulations, decrees, road maps); articulating working

<sup>4</sup> Chapter II of the Report on South-South Cooperation 2016 states that, in the case of Horizontal South-South Bilateral Cooperation, the bulk of the 552 projects (70%) promoted by the Ibero-American countries responded to Economic and Social objectives “

<sup>5</sup> A more complex and comprehensive approach to different regulatory and institutional frameworks in Ibero-America can be found in the publication “Diagnostic of regulatory and institutional frameworks for managing South-South Cooperation in Ibero-American countries”, PIFCSS, Working Paper No. 6 (2014).

## The mainstreaming of SSC in the agenda of the region's countries translated into the creation and strengthening of institutions for designing and managing SSC initiatives, as recommended by the BAPA

programs (through technical, scientific and technological bilateral cooperation arrangements and relevant Joint Committees); increasingly engaging national and international players; promoting multi-actor partnerships, bringing together civil society, local governments, academia and private sector;<sup>6</sup> developing planning, monitoring and evaluation systems; and implementing SSC actions in different geographical areas. It has also focused on promoting training and capacity building of civil servants in this area, development of conceptual frameworks, development of data systems and creation of catalogs to raise international awareness of national capacities and strengths.

Notwithstanding the above, inter-institutional coordination is still a major issue in most Ibero-American countries in developing public policies and national cooperation strategies. It is therefore essential that action be taken to build flexible, coherent and integrated national systems for international cooperation in which the functions, responsibilities and roles of the actors involved are clearly spelled. In the same vein, registration systems and regulatory frameworks should be enhanced to improve SSC implementation and align actions at the national level.

Beyond the obvious achievements, Ibero-American countries face political, institutional and regulatory challenges to build a comprehensive SSC policy. There is still a need to optimize SSC results, strengthen its planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, create programs that are sustainable over time, achieve verifiable impacts through valorization exercises, and promote efficient use of

resources. South-South Cooperation funding mechanisms and sources are also a cross-cutting challenge in all the areas mentioned above. Faced with these and other issues, regional spaces are conducive to the exchange of management experiences and development of working programs on issues of common concern for cooperation institutions, as well as for coordinating joint political and technical actions.

### I.3.2. REGIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL LEVEL

The relevance of regional integration processes in Latin America and the Caribbean reveals a new approach in developing countries towards their presence in the international arena. In this context, SSC is a privileged and strategic tool for regional and interregional integration that has helped strengthen relations between developing countries and meet their needs through recognition of complementarities.

Though integration processes in Latin America and the Caribbean go back to the 1950s, it was not until the beginning of this century that SSC became an overarching principle for regional areas. This form of cooperation has recently attained greater significance, making possible the integration of specific interaction and exchange experiences.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the region with the most regional and subregional coordination and integration mechanisms and spaces in the world: ALBA, Pacific Alliance, CAN, CELAC, ECLAC, Mercosur, Mesoamerica, OAS, Unasur, SEGIB, SELA, SICA, ACS, among others. These spaces have different characteristics: some focus primarily on integration and development, others on political agreement and coordination, and still others on greater economic and trade power. The diversity of areas of integration reflects the plurality of views of the region and the different strategies for the countries' incorporation into the regional and international arena.

SSC is part of these arrangements, albeit under different formulas and with varying degrees of intensity according to the nature, composition and objectives of each regional space. In this vein, the countries have created specialized international

<sup>6</sup> Nairobi Outcome Document (A/RES/64/222), Paragraph 19.

cooperation bodies within the different regional spaces and mechanisms. These include the CELAC International Cooperation Working Group (GTCL), the UNASUR Group of High-level South-South Cooperation Authorities (GT-CSS), the Mercosur International Cooperation Group (GCI), the Pacific Alliance Cooperation Working Group (GTC), SICA's specialized international cooperation area, the Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project (PM), ECLAC's South-South Cooperation Committee and the Meeting of Ibero-American Heads of Cooperation.

These spaces, which bring together member countries' cooperation authorities, promote, coordinate, articulate and monitor the cooperation actions implemented in different thematic areas at the regional level, and design the guidelines for cooperation with third countries. Its objectives include supporting the development of integration processes and deeper relations through SSC. Furthermore, some have created specific regional funding mechanisms to support SSC projects.<sup>7</sup>

For its part, CELAC, which is a forum for political dialogue and agreement between Latin America and the Caribbean, has developed joint positions on key issues of the international cooperation agenda that have been voiced through the International Cooperation Working Group at different specialized international fora. This group, which brings together 33 regional Heads of Cooperation, was set up in 2013, and is now developing, with the support of ECLAC, a regional cooperation policy that outlines SSC and TC development and projection priorities. This policy will enable the identification of cooperation areas and activities conducive to promoting regional, subregional, bilateral and triangular cooperation programs that will help reduce asymmetries among developing countries, while deepening the political dialogue on joint actions to achieve the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) through cooperation.

Furthermore, the Ibero-American space has a long and successful history in South-South Cooperation. Ibero-American cooperation brings together

countries with different cooperation traditions and levels of development, who share their experiences and capacities and participate in collective reflection processes. This form of cooperation, which owing to its development, horizontality and dynamism is unique in the world, has contributed to strengthening SSC in the region and, arguably, has better understood and carried forward the BAPA recommendations.

The Ibero-American Program to Strengthen South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS) is particular noteworthy within this space. Created in 2008 on the mandate of the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, the Program has supported the strengthening of SSC through political and technical efforts. At the political level, the Heads of cooperation have made progress in building common views and understanding on international cooperation, in particular SSC and TC, and their role in the development cooperation system. Significant progress has also been made at the conceptual level. At the technical level, the PIFCSS has provided training and capacity building to staff of the member countries' cooperation units, and encouraged exchange of experiences and development of management methodologies.

The PIFCSS has developed myriad strands of work and themes in recent years. Through workshops and seminars, the countries have worked on numerous topics including gender, systematization of SDG experiences, triangular cooperation, decentralized cooperation, public-private partnerships, valorization of SSC, development of indicators, knowledge management, civil servant training, development of information systems, visibility and communication.

The Program also supports SEGIB in the drafting of the *Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America*. This document is a consolidated tool for information systematization. Indeed, it is the only pioneering SSC record in the world. Its strategic importance lies in its ability to raise awareness and make visible the cooperation carried out by each Ibero-American country. It also helps promote SSC from the regional perspective within a global context in which this modality has an increasing role.

<sup>7</sup> Initiatives to reduce asymmetries in the blocks are financed through national contributions made to these funds. Noteworthy among these are the program for student and academic mobility (Pacific Alliance); financing of infrastructure, habitability and basic sanitation projects (Mercosur); and the Common Initiatives Fund (Unasur), which is geared towards projects aimed at achieving the objectives for this space, and the Unasur-Haiti Fund, which focuses on different lines of cooperation with that country. As for the ACS, the member countries established a Special Fund for supporting technical cooperation programs and projects with resources other than from the Association's regular budget.

In recent times, strong emphasis has been placed in promoting interregional cooperation fora that bring together countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East: the Africa-South America Cooperation Forum (ASACOF), the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZPCAS), the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC) and the South American-Arab Summit (ASPA). These fora have enabled dialogue on cooperation between regions, experience sharing and peer-based project development, albeit incipiently and with some difficulties.

As stated in the BAPA, regional SSC has a role to play as a strategic link between regions. The challenge ahead is to intensify, extend and boost the institutionalization of the work carried out within this biregional framework as specialized bodies for cooperation and integration of countries of the South. These spaces for agreement and cooperation have not yet reached their full potential. The coordinated work between regions should be part of future strategies that seek to consolidate the visibility of SSC as a development tool, and increase the representativeness and recognition of challenges shared by our countries.

The countries of the region have identified integration as a joint search for progress towards development, and SSC as a way to achieve these goals. SSC has become a tool to strengthen capacities, reduce asymmetries, foster inclusive

**The Ibero-American space has a long and successful history in South-South Cooperation. Ibero-American cooperation brings together countries with different cooperation traditions and levels of development, who share their experiences and capacities and participate in collective reflection processes**

development, build public policies, manage interdependencies and promote the region in the international political and economic system on a sovereign basis. SSC initiatives in regional agendas are increasingly diversified, including exchanges in science and technology, health, infrastructure, energy, food security, natural disaster prevention and student mobility.

The proliferation of regional projects in Latin America and the Caribbean means that the countries of the region face the challenge of enhancing mechanisms to coordinate and articulate different areas, in order to avoid duplication of efforts, build synergies for a more coherent and comprehensive cooperation policy, and foster a results-based approach to attain maximum impact. The framework provided by Agenda 2030 and the challenge of its implementation at regional level is an opportunity to define joint strategies aimed at strengthening complementarities and avoiding overlaps.<sup>8</sup>

### I.3.3. MULTILATERAL LEVEL

Six of the 38 recommendations set out in the BAPA call on the United Nations system (UNS) organizations to establish policies, procedures and structures to support, promote, coordinate and finance SSC activities. Despite this initial impetus, the first two decades of implementation of the Plan were characterized by the low priority given to this form of cooperation. The resurfacing of SSC in UNS-sponsored global fora reflected the changes brought on the international economic geography and the consolidation of the sustainable human development paradigm, which encouraged a more participatory and less assistance-oriented notion of cooperation. In this context, SSC has attained greater integration with the System, and its importance has been reasserted in major United Nations summits and conferences.<sup>9</sup>

In 2009, a High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation took place in Nairobi, Kenya to mark the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the BAPA. The outcome document of the conference reaffirmed the principles and various forms (technical, financial and monetary) of SSC. It

<sup>8</sup> Some examples of procedures that may be adopted to meet the new challenges include the work carried out within the framework of ECLAC's Forum of Latin American and Caribbean Countries for Sustainable Development and CELAC's Agenda 2020 to promote the SDGs.

<sup>9</sup> Worthy of note is its inclusion in the Conferences on Financing for Development in Monterrey (2002) and Doha (2008) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002).

also recognized that developing countries must set their own agenda and highlighted the key role played by the UNS in supporting and promoting such cooperation. However, it was not possible to reach an operational definition of SSC in Nairobi, or decide how to include it into the development strategy set out at the Millennium Summit.

The reaffirmation of the importance of SSC for the global development agenda was primarily occurred at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development or “Rio+20” (2012) and, more recently, at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2015). The outcome documents explicitly refer to SSC as a resource for the achievement of the SDGs, and underline its role in capacity building.

Beyond the cyclical nature of SSC within the United Nations, developing countries have achieved significant progress towards programmatic and institutional developments. In this context, the Group of 77 (G-77) played a significant role. The platform focused on articulating the needs and interests of developing countries, and fostering their cooperation at different fora, including the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This mobilization of developing countries led to various pronouncements, revisions and evaluations of trends and progress in SSC, and fostered its integration into the agendas of various global and regional bodies and agencies.

This included the High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation, which ensures coherence, coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the BAPA and the Nairobi outcome document. For

its part, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) is mandated to coordinate the promotion and facilitation of SSC and TC at the global and UNS levels. In its capacity as Secretariat of the High Level Committee, UNOSSC has promoted studies, fairs, events, and political mandates. Though the Office has made significant contributions, there is room for improvement in its operational guidance and financial commitments to the national technical coordination units.<sup>10</sup>

For its part, ECOSOC has worked on SSC and TC within the Forum on Financing for Development (FFD)<sup>11</sup> and the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). The DCF, a space for inclusive dialogue on international development cooperation trends created in 2008, is open to all interested countries, as well as regional and multilateral organizations, international financial and trading institutions, civil society and private sector. In this sense, the 4th Preparatory High-level DCF Symposium held in Argentina in 2017, which focused primarily on SSC and TC, was undoubtedly a window of opportunity to promote regional priorities at a highly visible global forum, and reaffirm the importance of Latin American and Caribbean countries’ experiences and capacities as key inputs for designing public policies conducive to achieving the SDGs.<sup>12</sup>

In recent years, specialized agencies, funds and programs have introduced strategies and instruments to promote SSC, including FAO, IFAD, WFP, UNDP, UNCTAD, ILO, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UN-WOMEN and WHO. In addition to these Agencies, UN-based regional organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, including ECLAC and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), have also played a prominent role. It is important to

**The coordinated work between regions should be part of future strategies that seek to consolidate the visibility of SSC as a development tool, and increase the representativeness and recognition of challenges shared by our countries**

<sup>10</sup> A key objective of the “United Nations Strategy Framework for South-South Cooperation 2014-2017” is to enable the Office to provide enhanced support to national institutions to push forward SSC by building the capacity of its regional representation.

<sup>11</sup> The FFD, which meets annually in New York since 2016, was a major outcome of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The “Friends of Monterrey Group”, which is regularly convened by Mexico, has also gathered since 2016 to prepare the positive results of the FFD, identifying challenges and possible solutions.

<sup>12</sup> This takes on greater relevance as it is the first of its kind in Latin America.

## More and better fora for political dialogue between developed and developing countries will be needed to reach commitments consistent with the need to reduce structural gaps and achieve the SDGs

identify the catalyzing role that these bodies can play in implementing SSC and TC actions based on their comparative advantages, i.e. global and regional scale, fund management, capacity for multilateral agreements, expert services and support for impact assessments.

Based on this institutional and programmatic architecture, the UNS is the multilateral forum par excellence to address issues on SSC, a forum where the interests of all countries are represented and addressed. However, in order to strengthen its role as a promoter of this form of cooperation, the System must address a number of structural and operational challenges. Indeed, these challenges will be eventually addressed during the preparatory process and high-level dialogue that will take place at the BAPA+40 Conference in 2019.

In terms of governance, coordinated and coherent efforts should be made to integrate SSC into the strategies and programs of different bodies and organizations. In particular, there is a need for greater harmonization of the mandates of the different UNS regional agencies and organizations with the agendas and priorities of the countries of the South, with a view to enhancing programmatic and operational support in implementing Agenda 2030.

Meanwhile, the debates on the concept of SSC have not yet led to a concrete, systematized definition. This makes it, inter alia, difficult to draw a distinction between regular UNS-sponsored technical cooperation programs and those specifically focusing on SSC. Furthermore, the absence of an operational

conceptualization hampers the development of specific mechanisms to scale, measure and evaluate how shared knowledge, expertise, technologies or techniques contribute to the development of countries.

The UNS must also encourage the creation of knowledge networks to provide the countries of the South greater access to international cooperation capacities and experiences and contribute to building regional and interregional SSC partnerships. The System must become an active channel to promote TC, and a catalyst for developed countries to contribute resources and expertise in this area, as an innovative means to fulfill their historical commitments and the mandate set out in SDG 17, which calls on the international community to build partnerships for development.

Similarly, the lack of financial resources is a major obstacle for promoting SSC within the United Nations. Hence, the need to mobilize and make available resources efficiently, enabling the UNS organizations to support bilateral, regional and interregional initiatives in this area, under the terms of the BAPA and the Nairobi outcome document. For this latter purpose, more and better fora for political dialogue between developed and developing countries will be needed to reach commitments consistent with the need to reduce structural gaps and achieve the SDGs.

Other relevant multilateral platforms that incorporated SSC into their working agendas include the summits<sup>13</sup> and sessions of the G-77 Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (IFCC), the G-20 Development Working Group meetings,<sup>14</sup> and the events and fora organized in the context of negotiations on the "Effectiveness Agenda" promoted by the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC).

SSC has been progressively introduced into the debate on the Effectiveness Agenda, which was last discussed at the Second High-level Meeting of the GPEDC held in Nairobi in 2016.<sup>15</sup> This forum

<sup>13</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> South Summit (Havana, 2000) and 2<sup>nd</sup> South Summit (Doha, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> The "Development Consensus for Shared Growth" adopted at the Seoul Summit (2010) integrated SSC and TC into the G20 development principles, and called on international organizations, the World Bank and regional development banks to deepen their work in this area.

<sup>15</sup> This process was structured through the "Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness" (2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and the 4<sup>th</sup> Busan High-Level Forum (2011), where the GPEDC was created. Its first High-Level Meeting was held in Mexico (2014).

brings together a wide variety of development actors and seeks to organize international cooperation based on a set of principles: national ownership; focus on results; inclusive partnerships; and transparency and mutual accountability. In this Agenda, SSC is viewed as an increasingly important form of cooperation, rather than a substitute for traditional cooperation, capable of meeting the commitments outlined in Agenda 2030.<sup>16</sup>

The countries of the region that participated in this Forum had different views on the architecture of international cooperation, and particularly SSC. For some, it is important that SSC progress towards this Agenda, opening channels of dialogue with traditional donors. By contrast, another group argues that SSC should have its own forum for discussion, and should not conform to the principles defined by the GPEDC. Beyond these differences of opinion, there is a shared will to open channels of dialogue with traditional donors, though what their role will be remains unclear.

#### I.4. IBERO-AMERICAN COOPERATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 2030

As the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (2015) expired, the 193 United Nations Member States agreed on 17 new Sustainable Development Goals, a road map to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and protect the environment, based on a holistic approach guided by rights, gender and sustainable development. The SDGs are the result of a wide-ranging deliberative process that engaged States, civil society, private sector and academia. Unlike the MDGs, SDGs are universal and multidimensional in nature, acknowledge the existence of multiple development actors, and recognize the need for resources to implement and achieve the goals.

The goals and targets set out in Agenda 2030 bring together the three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – of sustainable development. While providing a cross-cutting narrative on sustainability, inclusion and equality, the Agenda also sets out the guiding principles for actions to achieve the SDGs.

These principles are built around people, the “leave no one behind” agenda, common but differentiated responsibilities between developed and developing countries, interdependence and indivisibility of goals, and universality of commitments. The latter principle means that all countries, regardless of their relative development levels, must be included, and the different realities, available resources and capacities of each State, as well as the national development policies and priorities are taken into account, rather than the “one size fits all” approach.

A key contribution of the new Agenda is redefining development from a multidimensional and global perspective to encompass all countries and transcend the North-South agenda based on unidirectional assistance policies. The SDGs are integrated in a broad frame of reference, in which two elements appear as key tools: the building of a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development and the support of specific policies contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.<sup>17</sup> Both elements mutually strengthen the commitments under SDG 17, which calls for “Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.”

Moreover, the means of implementation set out in Agenda 2030 state that national efforts to achieve SDGs should be complemented by supportive global programs, measures and policies aimed at making them sustainable over time. In this sense, the international cooperation system, as a vital component of the GPSD, must comply with the new Agenda and provide comprehensive and inclusive approaches to bridge “development gaps”, based on greater interaction between different actors, territorial and government levels.

It is necessary to strengthen all forms of cooperation and increase their impact and scope to achieve the SDGs. Each modality plays a specific role. However, the different actors must design appropriate arrangements for working in an articulated, coherent and complementary manner

<sup>16</sup> Outcome Document of the 2<sup>nd</sup> High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership (Nairobi, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which is as an integral part of Agenda 2030, establishes a new global funding framework for mobilizing resources, technology and partnerships needed to achieve the SDGs. It contains more than a hundred concrete measures that provide the foundation for implementing the new internationally agreed agenda through global partnership.

to respond effectively to the priority needs of countries and, above all, their populations, bearing in mind that the majority of people under the line of poverty live in Middle Income Countries (MIC), and promote the participation of different development actors. In this new scenario, the countries of the region consider that SSC and TC are no doubt effective means for implementing the SDGs, an exemplary model for sustainable development partnership, provided the responsibilities of different development actors are tailored to their respective potential.

On the one hand, in engaging partners with comparable challenges and fostering capacity building with local specificities in mind, SSC brings a differential value that contributes to the success of the national frameworks set up to achieve the SDGs. In this regard, Latin America and the Caribbean have generated a wealth of experiences, a corpus of public policies and a cooperation record that provide a differential input for the implementation of Agenda 2030. The countries of the South have the advantage of having already worked for decades on the areas proposed in SDG 17, including food security, health, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, energy, decent work, industrialization and innovation, fight against climate change and access to justice.

On the other hand, as a sustainable development partnership model, SSC is envisaged as a space that is complementary to – not a substitute for – traditional cooperation, and geared toward promoting peer-to-peer dialogue within the GPSD, mutual understanding, integration, and partnerships between different countries and development actors around common goals. The international community is committed to implementing a new development paradigm, and it is here that SSC and TC can play a prominent role.

In this new scenario, Ibero-American countries are not starting from scratch. They already have a tradition of regional integration, cooperation culture and shared institutionalism. Owing to its potential and distinctive characteristics, the Ibero-American community is called on to play a decisive role in influencing the configuration of the new development agenda, disseminating a culture of peace, coexistence and respect for human rights, values that Ibero-America has successfully promoted.

The Ibero-American System, which comprises SEGIB, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI), the Ibero-American Youth Organization (OIJ), the Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS) and the Conference of Ministers of Justice of Ibero-American Countries (COMJIB), embodies the region's potential to find solutions to development challenges through coordinated efforts that are more than the sum of national efforts. This regional network has put forward public policies with a transnational dimension aimed, inter alia, at reducing inequalities and fostering social inclusion.

Of particular note is the cooperation developed within the framework of SEGIB. The Ibero-American Cooperation Programs, Initiatives and Affiliated Projects (PIPA) implemented by the countries are an important contribution of Ibero-America to the SDGs. Currently, SEGIB is working with countries to ensure full alignment of these instruments with the SDGs. Ibero-American countries work through the PIPA on three priority areas: culture, knowledge and social cohesion. Significant results have been achieved in recent years in different areas, including creation of human milk banks, education, SMEs, science and technology, gender, bridging the digital divide, access to cultural property, academic mobility, literacy plans, strengthening of national South-South Cooperation institutions, access to justice and older adults.

The lessons learned and the capacities and strengths built in these areas should be enhanced and transferred to other regions to identify practices and management schemes that help revitalize GPSD. The experience gained within the framework of the Ibero-American System, in particular the work carried out by SEGIB and its Programs, Initiatives and Affiliated Projects, including PIFCSS, is in itself an international

**The countries of the region consider that SSC and TC are no doubt effective means for implementing the SDGs, an exemplary model for sustainable development partnership**

cooperation experience that the region has to offer. Ibero-American cooperation has become a model that is perfectly in tune with the new development narrative. In its own way, the

Ibero-American avant la lettre space has brought into play issues and forms of interaction, which now constitute the hallmark of the new Development Agenda.

## I.5. PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FROM IBERO-AMERICA 40 YEARS AFTER THE BUENOS AIRES PLAN OF ACTION

### FOSTERING AN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION SYSTEM THAT ENSURES SUSTAINED INCENTIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

International cooperation should gear their efforts towards the overall framework of the Agenda 2030, which reflects the challenges faced by all countries in achieving sustainable development. However, the current logic behind much of the international cooperation system, based on per capita income levels as a proxy for development, limits access to official non-reimbursable and/or concessional development assistance flows for so-called Middle Income Countries (MIC) and countries in transition that have recently exceeded the average income threshold, despite existing structural gaps to achieve sustainable development.

Ibero-America emphasizes the need to establish a new kind of relationship with these countries, and encourages the adoption of a holistic approach that goes beyond the use of per capita income to define the development level and determine ODA eligibility. There is a need to revisit the current “rating” criteria applied by the OECD/DAC and other international financial institutions, which corresponds to the prevailing development paradigm based exclusively on economic growth, and move towards a broader, comprehensive approach that covers all aspects of development, as has been stated by the international community in paragraph 129 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.<sup>18</sup>

There are still a number of development gaps in the so-called MIC countries, and those that have recently exceeded this threshold, that are not covered by the

per capita income criterion. This indicator does not reveal the levels of structural poverty and enormous inequality that exists between and within the countries in this group. According to the World Bank,<sup>19</sup> more than 70% of people under the line of poverty currently live in Middle Income Countries (the majority in Latin America and the Caribbean), which shows the pivotal role of ODA. The introduction of multidimensional criteria for allocation of international cooperation resources will help the international community to be better prepared to respond to each country’s challenges and, therefore, to achieve the SDGs and related targets.

There is a need to promote an inclusive international cooperation system that not only focuses on the countries most in need, but also delivers differentiated cooperation schemes for all people in developing countries, based on their needs and priorities. Global distribution of ODA per capita GDP is a zero-sum game that penalizes development and generates false competition, instead of promoting virtuous cycles and sustained incentives for development and collaboration.

In this context, Latin America and the Caribbean, which is mostly made up of countries classified as MIC by multilateral credit agencies, still face challenges to achieve sustainable development and have specific international cooperation needs, yet, at the same time, play a prominent role in promoting and achieving the SDGs through SSC and TC. Thus, non-reimbursable and/or concessional financial resources for development continue to play a strategic role for our countries, both in terms of their contribution in reducing structural gaps and in

<sup>18</sup> “We further call on the United Nations system, in consultation with international financial institutions to develop transparent measurements of progress on sustainable development that go beyond per capita income, building on existing initiatives, as appropriate. Such measures should recognize poverty in all its forms and dimensions, and the social, economic and environmental dimensions of domestic output and structural gaps at all levels. We will seek to develop and implement tools to mainstream sustainable development, as well as to monitor sustainable development impacts for different economic activities, including for sustainable tourism” (Paragraph 129).

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mic/overview>

## It will be impossible to reduce vulnerabilities across and within our countries without strengthening endogenous capacities and encouraging the transfer of new technologies and knowledge required for their effective implementation

widening our avenues of cooperation with other developing countries.

The adoption of a multidimensional approach, like the one proposed by ECLAC, that enables the identification of structural gaps in sustainable development and recognizes the priorities of the SDG approach could be a key step towards identifying the main strengths and weaknesses in the region. This instrument could be useful for reaching cooperation agreements with developed countries and traditional donors, organizing support and improved targeting of international cooperation, and promoting a new agenda for inclusive development cooperation in which all countries' challenges are addressed. It would enable the identification of specific spaces for developing SSC and TC in tune with the new Development Agenda.

The universal nature of Agenda 2030, its people-centered approach and commitment to "leave no one behind" calls for a comprehensive cooperation plan, geared towards the achievement of the SDGs, which includes MIC and countries in transition that have recently exceeded this threshold. A revitalized GPSP can only be achieved by promoting a "win-win cooperation". The Agenda will only be a mere expression of good will, or partially realized, if our countries' needs remain unfulfilled or their capacity to contribute to sustainable development are not enhanced.

### ESTABLISHING A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROMOTING SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

A major challenge currently facing Latin American and Caribbean countries is reducing technological gaps to transition towards more knowledge-intensive

sectors that foster productive diversification, quality job creation, sustainable production and international competitiveness. As the BAPA emphatically states, it will be impossible to reduce vulnerabilities across and within our countries without strengthening endogenous capacities and encouraging the transfer of new technologies and knowledge required for their effective implementation. In the same vein, the SDGs that address environmental (SDGs 6, 7 and 14) and productive (SDGs 8, 9 and 12) issues cannot be achieved without promoting the development and transfer of technologies that help to protect the environment vis-à-vis productive development. Agenda 2030 goes further and warns that such resources are needed to ensure access to high quality education for all and achieve higher levels of social equity in education and gender (SDGs 4 and 5).

The aforementioned Agenda 2030 goals and targets need to be operationalized through new international cooperation instruments. In pursuing this goal, SDG 17 contains one of the commitments made in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. On the one hand, it encourages the development, dissemination, outreach and transfer of technologies to developing countries on concessional terms and, on the other, greater international cooperation based on common interest and mutual benefit, focusing on the needs of developing countries. In this sense, SSC and TC have an important role to play, as expressed by SDG 17.

Science, technology and innovation (STI) offer a great potential for tackling the multiple dimensions of poverty, which, beyond income, also encompass access to quality education, health, housing and employment. Indeed, its contribution to capacity building, inequality reduction and respect for local specificities makes SSC a key means to ensure ownership of scientific knowledge to solve the challenges facing the most vulnerable groups. It provides people with the tools and knowledge needed to be more competitive in the job market, and to articulate the incorporation, adaptation and development of technologies for the environment and social inclusion.

Strengthening SSC in STI requires, first and foremost, a mapping of the joint work between research institutions and universities in developing countries, in order to foster the creation of South-South networks for exchange of programs and

mobility of students, academics and researchers. It is also necessary to create appropriate legal frameworks for the implementation of SSC and TC actions, such as joint research projects, seminars and workshops for human resources training, and articulation of knowledge generating centers and disseminators (e.g., Binational Research Centers).

In order to foster and ensure the sustainability of these actions, it is necessary to encourage partnerships between States, universities, R&D centers and institutions, enterprises and local governments. It is also crucial to ensure support of regional and multilateral STI schemes, such as the Ibero-American Program of Science and Technology for Development (CYTED)<sup>20</sup> and the newly established “United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Science, Technology and Innovation”.<sup>21</sup>

### PROMOTING DIALOGUE BETWEEN SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AND TRADITIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

The growth of SSC and the transformation of the international cooperation system have highlighted the increasingly prominent role of Triangular Cooperation. TC has become a mechanism for expanding development partnerships, and an instrument for building bridges and establishing dialogue between SSC and traditional cooperation.

Latin America and the Caribbean are emerging as one of the regions with the greatest potential to develop this type of formulas, not least because of their acknowledged expertise and status in SSC. The path traveled in the last decades enables the region to position itself as a strategic partner for developing TC initiatives with another developing country, a developed country or a multilateral organization, without betraying the principles, criteria and values that made the region choose its own path.

This form of cooperation provides an opportunity to boost SSC cooperation further, while allowing developed countries to meet their historic responsibilities and commitments. Furthermore, in

recognizing their contribution to development, it may be useful for redesigning working arrangements with so-called “middle income” countries. TC allows the impact, scale and effectiveness of cooperation actions to be maximized by pooling experiences and human and financial resources inherent to traditional cooperation, while enabling the design of inclusive partnerships among different actors to achieve common development goals.

Many traditional actors and multilateral organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean are participating in TC schemes, albeit not yet in a programmatic fashion. Indeed, it is necessary to draw attention on the importance of TC in this new international context in different fora, and highlight the added value of this form of partnership for both developed and developing countries, in terms of mutual benefit, ownership, knowledge of the situation on the ground, effectiveness, impact, cost reduction and innovation.

Ibero-American countries have great potential for developing triangular arrangements. To that end, there is a need to create and strengthen institutional frameworks and systematization and valorization tools tailored to this form of cooperation. In the same vein, the Guidelines on the Management of Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America, jointly produced by the PIFCSS Member countries, is an excellent example of what can be done at the regional level to promote this form of cooperation, establish relationship guidelines and disseminate SSC principles among traditional partners with a view to their possible adaptation to TC arrangements.

Triangular cooperation should be guided by the principles of horizontality, mutual benefit and co-responsibility between partners, with “seed projects” becoming more ambitious over time, gradually building a cumulative corpus of practices. Creating far-reaching TC strategies is a major challenge for our countries and region. TC must become an effective means for implementing the SDGs and a comprehensive expression of the “Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”, which SDG 17 seeks to achieve.

<sup>20</sup> Since its creation in 1984, Ibero-American Development Program for Science and Technology (CYTED) has encouraged the creation of research networks and regional research projects through an agenda of shared priorities.

<sup>21</sup> It was created in response to a call by Member States to develop such a mechanism in Agenda 2030 and in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. It now comprises more than 23 United Nations bodies.

## FOSTERING REGIONAL ARTICULATION AND COORDINATION FOR PROMOTING SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION IN IMPLEMENTING AGENDA 2030

Latin America and the Caribbean face a multiplicity of development challenges in implementing Agenda 2030. In this context, it will be essential to transcend national efforts, in order to build synergies among the countries of the region. Indeed, regional and subregional fora are excellent platforms for exchange of experiences, and play a prominent role as a link between the national and global levels.

The strengthening of SSC at the regional level is key to this process as it fosters regional integration processes by reducing asymmetries and contributing to managing interdependencies. However, its full potential has not been developed yet at this level. Indeed, the current scenario calls for more coherent and integrated regional guidelines for international cooperation. This will require working on two levels.

On the one hand, the regionalization of SSC initiatives should be promoted by targeting coordinated action that encourages far-reaching, large-scale projects addressing common issues. While there is a growing number of regional programs and projects implemented, their potential has not yet been fully realized. If collective work is promoted, common solutions to common challenges can be found, and sustainable, large-scale interventions can be carried out. To fulfil this task, the existing structures will need institutional mechanisms and financial resources to deploy comprehensive actions.

On the other hand, common positions on strategic regional priorities, conceptions and issues must be consolidated in the different fora in which international cooperation is discussed. Better coordination on these issues will help to strengthen the influence of the countries of the region in shaping and implementing the global agenda, and building a voice in the debate on sustainable

development, without denying the heterogeneity of Latin American and Caribbean countries.

In turn, SSC generates opportunities to build bridges between regions. Platforms such as ASA, ASPA, FEALAC and ZOPACAS allow the countries of the South to establish common positions and consolidate SSC's profile as a development tool. Meanwhile, different fora, including CELAC-EU and MERCOSUR-EU, are privileged platforms for identifying cooperation opportunities with developed countries. Efforts should be made to make regional spaces a benchmark for the dialogue that ought to be promoted by the revitalized Global Partnership.

## PROMOTING DECENTRALIZED SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION FOR TRACKING AGENDA 2030

Agenda 2030 recognizes the transformative power of cities and local governments as key players for sustainable development. In this new stage, it is necessary to regard territorial development and the potential of local economies as a means to ensure concrete implementation of the SDGs. In this sense, local governments should strengthen their role as managers of basic services of general interest, public policy promoters and articulators of the region and the actors operating therein.

From this perspective, Decentralized Cooperation, which is a recognized form of international cooperation that encourages horizontal links between sub-national governments, has much to contribute. This form of cooperation, based on mutual interest and mutual benefit of the governments involved, can help strengthen local development processes through the exchange of knowledge and experiences under an integrated approach. Hence, Decentralized Cooperation is an opportunity to build strategic partnerships, and an instrument capable of providing differentiated solutions based on specific competences.

After more than 20 years in existence, Decentralized Cooperation was primarily developed within the framework of North-South partnerships between

**Local governments should strengthen their role as managers of basic services of general interest, public policy promoters and articulators of the region and the actors operating therein**

local governments in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. In Ibero-America, it evolved towards South-South Cooperation arrangements, fostering direct relations between sub-national governments, based on horizontal linkages.

Ibero-America is a region with high potential for the development of decentralized South-South Cooperation. The strong social, economic and cultural ties that bind the countries of the region, and the need to manage interdependencies in border areas facilitate mutual understanding and create a favorable scenario for these types of partnerships. Indeed, this form of cooperation can be an ally for local governments facing similar development challenges, enabling exchange of experiences and knowledge which, when tailored to their specific contexts, policies and priorities, can contribute to improving their local development schemes.

National governments can play a prominent role in creating strategies to support and strengthen this form of cooperation. In this sense, it is essential to consider the different spaces available to strengthen partnerships between local governments through Decentralized Cooperation actions, including municipal associations, city networks and integration committees. Likewise, the incorporation of subnational actors in mixed or binational commissions should be encouraged to support the development of Decentralized Cooperation through involving more stakeholders.

Regional spaces also have a significant role to play in promoting and supporting Decentralized Cooperation in its South-South dimension. In this sense, Mercociudades, the main city network in Latin America and the Caribbean, stands out as a platform for the development of SSC among local governments of the region, enabling exchange of experiences and knowledge transfer. Meanwhile, PIFCSS has created a space for exchange of Decentralized South-South Cooperation, in which the role that national entities can play in guiding international cooperation is discussed.

Ibero-American countries should promote decentralized cooperation as a medium to support local and regional governments on their path to sustainable development. This form of cooperation is not only a valuable tool for local development, but also an opportunity to foster South-South linkages,

work on regional integration arrangements, and contribute to the achievement of the Agenda 2030 targets and goals.

### **PROMOTING MULTI-ACTOR PARTNERSHIPS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIONS**

Development challenges call for new forms of multi-actor partnership, capable of mobilizing and promoting the exchange of knowledge, technical capacities and a variety of resources to achieve common goals. These types of initiatives have been promoted within the framework of Agenda 2030, which emphasizes the need to extend the ownership of its goals to all sectors of society – both state (national governments, parliaments and local governments) and non-state (academia, civil society, private sector and philanthropic foundations) – and calls for the building of multi-actor partnerships to strengthen the means of implementation.

Partnerships play an increasing role, particularly in international cooperation agendas, acting as an instrument for promoting strategic objectives and generating high impact results and dynamics to ensure the sustainability of actions. Meanwhile, there are different cooperation units in the region that promote multi-actor strategies and work programs within the framework of SSC and TC projects. Such experiences reveal a broad range of potential multi-actor partnership models to achieve beneficial complementarities.

However, while the involvement of civil society organizations and universities appears to occur more readily in the region, the same cannot be said of the private sector, where conceptual and regulatory frameworks are still insufficient to encourage participation. While the ambition to promote private sector participation was prompted by the adoption of Agenda 2030, there does not appear to be a common vision in terms of real expectations linked to this participation. Hence, it is essential to promote dialogue on the private sector's potential contribution to development projects and the need to identify the sector's motivation to participate in these initiatives. Only then will it be possible to project the potential of international cooperation partnerships, and build realistic expectations of their outcome within the SSC framework.

It is also important to note that the private sector is not homogeneous. Indeed, the sector has different motivations and purposes for partnering with the State. These and other complexities must be addressed in designing conceptual and regulatory models for public-private partnerships. In principle, experience suggests that successful partnerships with the private sector hinge on a case-by-case analysis, development of management protocols that take into account these particularities, and adequate coordination of different interests in supporting national development goals.

Consequently, the Ibero-American space should be a natural scenario to achieve on this matter, especially in light of SSC's guiding principles and values. A mandatory starting point will be the identification and systematization of experiences and knowledge generated, in particular, in the countries of the region. This input will be essential to nurture discussions on realistic associativity models.

It is also necessary to produce linkage strategies to collaborate with the private sector, academia, civil society and philanthropic foundations to strive towards greater inclusion of these actors in SSC and TC. If these forms of cooperation are to become more meaningful in the context of the new Development Agenda and international cooperation architecture, it is necessary to develop the capacities and conditions to articulate comprehensive solutions. This means that the involvement of different sectors is a creative commitment stemming from SSC's historic evolution.

### CREATING DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE SYSTEMATIZATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

Given the growth and consolidation of SSC and TC, the region faces the need to strengthen its data and information systems to ensure systematization and valorization. Limited access to quantitative and

qualitative data is a constraint for promoting and making these cooperation arrangements visible. Improving the quality of SCC and TC information will contribute to assessing its potential for the achievement of the SDGs, while strengthening management, planning and resource orientation processes.

Despite the significant progress made by Latin America and the Caribbean in this area<sup>22</sup> and their efforts to reduce gaps in information systems, there are still substantial shortfalls in access to and availability of national data to feed into these systems for better registration, documentation, systematization, monitoring and evaluation of SSC. Efforts should be made to build indicators to measure the economic and social impact of SSC, systematize good practices and identify concrete opportunities for experience sharing.

SSC enhancement is a core area of interest for the region. Ibero-American countries recognize the need for appropriate methodologies to allocate monetary value to this cooperation, taking into account direct costs (airfare, per diems and materials), indirect costs (hourly expert pay and cooperation management hours) and intangibles (knowledge, networks, experiences, etc.). However, in order to avoid economic reductionisms and comparisons with ODA that underestimate SSC's contributions, it is necessary to complement these exercises with qualitative studies that build a comprehensive view on SSC's added value.

Though some countries have developed their own valorization methodologies, progress across the region has been slow due to the diversity of SSC approaches and different political and technical motivations that coexist in Ibero-American space. The challenge is finding commonalities that are representative of all countries and that enable the valorization of cooperation activities using similar parameters in order to systematize and obtain comparable information on initiatives.

In order to overcome these challenges within SSC's own specificity, efforts should be made to ensure that the countries of the South have the

<sup>22</sup> For the past 10 years, the "Report on South-South Cooperation" has been a valuable tool for Ibero-America to measure and assess the SSC executed by the countries, record the number of initiatives, identify partners, regions and areas where it is implemented and the different modalities, among other information. The Report is built on the information available in the regional online database "Ibero-American Integrated Data System on South-South and Triangular Cooperation" (SIDICSS).

institutional capacity and appropriate regulatory frameworks conducive to developing of common methodologies. Meanwhile, the various regional platforms addressing these issues should make

efforts to achieve greater level of programmatic coordination to generate meaningful results, avoiding duplication of efforts and pooling capacities.<sup>23</sup>

## I.6. TOWARDS THE BAPA+40 CONFERENCE

Forty years after the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, it is a fact that Ibero-American countries engage in more and better South-South Cooperation than at that time. Not only have SSC-friendly policies been adopted over the last decades, but the level of institutionalization achieved has also enabled the articulation of quality working programs, involvement of new sectors, incorporation of different actors, and implementation of actions in different geographical areas. In turn, integration has been assumed as a joint search to move forward towards development, and SSC is regarded as a tool to strengthen capacities, reduce asymmetries and promote regional interests in the international system.

Beyond the obvious achievements, Latin American and Caribbean countries face various challenges at the political, institutional and regulatory levels. Efforts should be made to strengthen national cooperation governing bodies and build legal frameworks and financial mechanisms for developing a comprehensive SCC policy.

The United Nations High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation to be held in Buenos Aires in 2019 is a window of opportunity for Ibero-American countries to assess the progress made and analyze BAPA in light of recent developments. This new stage calls for the identification of opportunities and challenges in the region and the building of common positions to bolster SSC's profile in the new Sustainable Development Agenda and in discussions on international cooperation.

Agenda 2030's new framework for action provides a reinvigorated vision of SSC, and creates challenges for Ibero-American countries. These range from the need to promote a comprehensive international cooperation system (that includes MIC), encourage

the building of Multisectoral Partnerships, promote Triangular Cooperation, and contribute to the development of decentralized cooperation, to deepening SSC's regional dimension and enhancing the coordination and coherence of the United Nations system support to regional initiatives.

Efforts must be made to promote an inclusive international cooperation system that creates sustained incentives for sustainable development, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. To that end, regional spaces should become benchmarks for consolidating common positions that reflect the priorities, conceptions and strategic issues of the countries of the region in the various fora where international cooperation is discussed. Better coordination at these fora will contribute to strengthen the countries' ability to shape and implement the global agenda and build a voice in the debate on sustainable development, without denying our heterogeneities.

The Nairobi Conference on South-South Cooperation (2009) took place almost a decade after the adoption of the MDG. While reaffirming the principles and creating new commitments to promote SSC, it has been unfeasible for various reasons to redefine and promote their inclusion in the global development strategy established at the Millennium Summit. In contrast, the BAPA+40 Conference in 2019 is an opportunity to revalue our countries' contribution to development through SSC actions, and set up global support programs, measures and policies that increase their impact, scope and sustainability over time. We believe this form of cooperation is no doubt an effective means of implementation to achieve the SDGs and an exemplary partnership model for sustainable development.

<sup>23</sup> Efforts are being made to develop regional data processing methodologies and tools within the framework of SEGIB and PIFCSS. Furthermore, ECLAC has been working on developing methodologies for enhancing cooperation.

We believe that an intertextuality exercise between BAPA, Agenda 2030 and BAPA+40 should be carried out to raise awareness about the affinities between these processes and emphasize the importance of cooperation between developing countries in achieving sustainable development. To that end, Ibero-America must promote spaces for dialogue with other regions to identify commonalities and enrich our practice through exchanges and knowledge of other cooperation experiences.

Less than two years after the adoption of Agenda 2030, the current situation clearly demonstrates that global development is no stranger to the interests, values and policies of the stakeholders that make up the international system. The weakening of the multilateral cooperation agenda has generated dynamics that undermine the chances of fulfilling

internationally agreed commitments. The solution to these difficulties must necessarily arise from more multilateralism, more regional integration and more solidarity among countries. We must return to the spirit of the BAPA, advocating for shared frameworks articulated around the commitment to peace and development.

Just as the BAPA outlined at that time a horizon on which the countries worked in the ensuing decades, the Conference in Buenos Aires provides a unique opportunity to identify regional, interregional, national and global lines of action that should form part of the strategies of governments, regional agencies and the United Nations system. We must be able to understand the place that South-South Cooperation holds in the current framework of international relations. Indeed, our region can and should contribute to this process.

**We must be able to understand the place that South-South Cooperation holds in the current framework of international relations. Indeed, our region can and should contribute to this process**

---

## ANNEX I

### BAPA PRINCIPLES RESTATED IN THE IBERO-AMERICAN SPACE:

- 1) South-South Cooperation is based on solidarity and voluntary commitment among countries to build capacity through technical cooperation.
- 2) Horizontal partnership between actors is the basic principle of action
- 3) South-South Cooperation seeks to coordinate, where possible, with North-South Cooperation plans and programs. This coordination will focus on the areas demanded by the developing countries in their national plans and priorities. South-South Cooperation advocates for a relationship in which partners offer and seek mutual benefits.
- 4) South-South Cooperation makes it easier to tailor actions to shared needs and outlooks, enabling the sharing of management models already implemented by countries of the South.
- 5) Technical cooperation and capacity building are the main strengths of South-South Cooperation. South-South Cooperation experts imply a cost that other cooperation actors must recognize.
- 6) Developing countries share common experiences as well as cultural links that facilitate mutual understanding, and may enhance the effectiveness of cooperation projects and programs.
- 7) Countries make effective use of technologies within South-South Cooperation, as their adaptability makes their easy to use, maintain and service.
- 8) South-South Cooperation is committed to efficient and effective use of any kind of resources.
- 9) South-South Cooperation encourages integration and good neighborly relations, as well as engagement with partner countries in other regions with whom partnership may be possible.