

UN2020 participation at the Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation



The Second United Nations High Level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) took place 20 years after the first such UN conference in Nairobi and 40 years after the 1978 United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, which adopted the “Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.”

Co-sponsored by the Governments of Uruguay and Uganda, UN2020, FES Argentina, Together First, WFM-IGP, the Stimson Center, the Workable World Trust, CIVICUS and Instituto Igarape, the side event [“The Power of South-South Cooperation to Strengthen Multilateralism”](#) was held in Buenos Aires on March 21st during BAPA+40.

Amb. Ayebare, President of the High-Level Committee for South South Cooperation, Permanent Representative of Uganda to the UN and co-facilitator for the Conference Outcome Document, highlighted the importance of having this side event in Buenos Aires building momentum towards the 75th anniversary commemorations.

There was agreement (in the panel and in the BAPA+40 conference) on the need to strengthen the institutional framework for South South and triangular cooperation within the UN system and provide more financial and human resources to prevent hindering the expansion of SSC.

As pointed out by Amb. Pacheco (Director of International Cooperation at the Uruguayan MFA), South South cooperation is about common sense. We need to allow its flexibility, but we also need to provide more support.

Pacheco also stressed SSC’s contribution to development through a comprehensive approach that involves social inclusion and environmental sustainability. This and the power to enhance political dialogue are key dimensions of SSC that need to be more valued, especially as we work towards the Agenda 2030.

Dr. Abdenur Coordinator of Igarapé Institute's Peace & Security Division) outlined some key moments and developments in the interaction between SSC, multilateralism and Official Development Assistance (ODA). There are some major shortcomings to the institutional structure of SSC at the UN that need to be addressed in order to keep up with its scope and fully implement its development capacities.

SSC needs to be acknowledged for its potential in many fields, not just economic development and technical cooperation. There are many important initiatives on climate change, humanitarian action, peace and security that go unnoticed. This requires a deeper UN reform and more strategic thinking at the national, regional and global levels.

Further formalization of civil society participation, possibly under the UNOSSC framework, was recognized among the priorities. Speakers and participants also touched upon the challenges for regional integration in Latin America. We need to strengthen regional organizations as multilateral forums that can sometimes accomplish more due to the shared values and commonalities of a given region.

Florencia Gor (WFM-IGP Congress Chair) highlighted some key aspects of the Global Call to Action for the 75th anniversary and the next steps both in the intergovernmental process for its commemoration and in the campaign carried by civil society. 2020 is an opportunity to find synergies between all the ongoing review and +5 processes, overcome the work in silos and other overlaps at the UN, address the lack of funding and other resources and look at the best ways to strengthen the institutional structure for SS and triangular cooperation. 2020 is a launching pad for improving the system of global governance. [By recommitting to multilateralism, member states would guarantee a continuity for forms of cooperation that have proved not only efficient but indispensable in the road to achieving the SDGs.](#)

Prof. Hirst (International Studies, Univ. Torcuato Di Tella and Univ. Nac. de Quilmes) concluded that historically we would have tended to look at multilateralism opening the path for SSC but today the impulse and possibilities opened by SSC could become an instrument to strengthen multilateralism. We run the risk of these two processes crossing in the worst of territories: that of paralysis and bureaucratic inertias. This is the challenge inherent in 2020. If this paralysis is confirmed, then the crisis of multilateralism would deepen, dragging SSC along.

She made a call to civil society to be cautious to differentiate themselves from those NGOs that can utilize and subordinate smaller CSOs to their own political agenda in relation with ODA and North-South cooperation.

UN2020 outreach to national capitals

National, regional and international consultations of multiple stakeholders should feed into a process for improving the UN system in the run up to a 75th anniversary Leaders' Summit in 2020.

As part of UN2020's program of outreach to Foreign Ministries, it's worth noting a productive meeting with the Director of International Organizations of the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Min. Mateo Estreme expressed support from Argentina to a 2020 Summit and commended the work of UN2020. Less than 4 years separate us from the consensus achieved on the 17 SDGs. We would not be able to achieve that ambitious agenda today or reach the agreements on migration and climate change that we currently have. There is a need to move cautiously so as not to put these achievements at risk. Argentina will continue to work with like-minded member states for a recommitment to multilateralism and to protect and enhance the participation of civil society.

BAPA+40 takeaways:

Active engagement of civil society from the South

Organizations and think tanks attending BAPA acknowledged that an environment of strong multilateralism is key to foster south south and triangular cooperation, as reflected in the civil society [opening statement](#) at the Conference Plenary on Wednesday afternoon:

“We recognize that South-South and triangular cooperation require a robust and well-functioning United Nations system. We see the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations in 2020 as an opportunity for stocktaking, a recommitment to multilateralism and consideration of measures to strengthen the organization. In this regard, we encourage all Member States to engage with the appointed co-facilitators and General Assembly preparations for the 75th anniversary summit.”

On the closing plenary, Luara Lopes from Articulao SUL pointed out the integral role of civil society in SSC advancements and made a call to be more ambitious: “South-South and triangular cooperation should be considered effective in as much as it provides public goods, and not just private gains. It is effective if it promotes a rights-based development for the most vulnerable, for the ones that have been left behind: girls, indigenous people, people in the Brazilian favelas and in the villas miserias (slums) here in Argentina. We must have them in mind as we gather here today. So I urge you, member countries, not to disappoint us, in this critical juncture for humankind.”

UN2020 observations on the Outcome Document from the Second United Nations High Level Conference on South-South Cooperation

1) An effort to strengthen the UN's processes for South-South Cooperation was reflected in the "zero draft" of the Outcome Document for the 2019 conference. It called for strengthening the capacity of the UN Office on South-South Cooperation, more regular reporting from the UN Secretary-General on implementation of member states' commitments and a more frequent schedule of meetings. The zero draft included a decision "to convene a United Nations High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation every four years." Unfortunately these elements were not included in the final Outcome Document that was adopted on 22 March 2019 in Buenos Aires.

2) Some notable commitments from the [2019 Outcome Document](#)

PP21

We reaffirm the key role of the United Nations funds, programs, specialized agencies, nonresident agencies, UN Regional Commissions, including UN country teams in supporting and promoting South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation while reiterating that every country has the primary responsibility for its own development.

OP27

Stressing the need to reinvigorate the United Nations development system in supporting and promoting South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, aiming at implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

a) [...] we encourage the United Nations development system to continue incorporating South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation into policies, programmes, strategic frameworks and other planning instruments, including appropriate indicators and methodologies, as agreed by the governing bodies, [...]

(c) call upon the United Nations Development System to assist developing countries, upon request, in building the human and institutional capacity needed to formulate and implement national development policies, strategies and programmes for South-South and triangular cooperation, [...]

(f) call upon all United Nations entities to improve the effectiveness, the coherence and coordination and complementarity of their operational activities in support of South-South and triangular cooperation, in accordance with national development plans, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and their respective mandates [...]

(g) [...] we call upon UNDP to continue hosting UNOSSC under the oversight of the UNDP Executive Board and call upon the General Assembly to continue providing guidance, and request the Secretary-General to remain engaged on this matter;

(h) reaffirm the mandate and the central role of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation as the focal point for promoting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation for development on a global and United Nations system-wide basis [...]

(j) urge the United Nations system to continue its support to regional and subregional organizations for the continued promotion of transparent, sustainable and accountable

development practices, and to enable more partnerships, with a view to promoting and scaling up best practices to benefit developing countries.

Key quotes from UN leaders at BAPA+40

- UN Secretary General António Guterres, at the [Opening Plenary](#):

"[...] 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. I am grateful to Member States for recognizing the role of the United Nations in the outcome document for this Conference. We will take up the mandates you are entrusting to us, and you can count on my personal commitment to make sure the ongoing reforms of the United Nations reinvigorate our support for South-South cooperation."

- The President of the UN General Assembly, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés

[Opening Plenary](#):

"It has been proven that south-south and triangular cooperation have generated these responses that allow us to connect with people and have a positive transformation in the lives of millions of people and entire communities. Clearly, we are contributing to restore faith in the effectiveness of international cooperation and multilateral action."

[Closing Plenary](#):

"This meeting is proof that, with multilateralism, we can obtain extraordinary results."

"A vibrant, effective and solidary multilateral system will be the engine of a brighter and more sustainable future."

In her address to the [Argentine Council for International Relations](#):

"We must transmit convincingly that effective multilateralism is not an option but a necessity towards a more fair international order"

When asked about the 75th anniversary, Ms. Espinosa stated that she sees this as much more than an anniversary for flowers. It's a golden opportunity to present a narrative of the UN that can capture and convince everyone of its values and dissuade sceptics and those trying to retreat from multilateral commitments. It's a chance "to develop a new narrative on multilateralism".