

High Level Committee
South-South Cooperation
19th Session
UNHQ, New York
17 May 2016

INDIA STATEMENT
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Madam President,

We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 plus China.

The context of this High Level Committee meeting this year is particularly opportune. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a global vision is a major milestone in multilateralism and international cooperation for a number of reasons.

The concept of sustainable development has been acknowledged as being important for all of us whether living in developed or developing countries. This recognition of the interconnectedness of well-being across the development divide is a significant one and was long overdue.

Secondly, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs seek a *transformation* across the entire development landscape unlike the earlier limited objectives seeking *improvement* of only some indicators.

This transformation explicitly requires inclusive economic growth, infrastructure and jobs, access to modern energy and industrial development and innovation. These constitute the development priorities of the so-called South. The 2030 Agenda sees the developing countries as active agents of change and not merely as passive recipients of assistance.

The 2030 Agenda applies equally to the North, enjoining it to also take concrete and measurable actions to attain sustainable development.

Procedurally too, it marks a distinct break from the past since it is not the result of a prescriptive approach towards developing countries. This inclusiveness and wide political consensus should be the key strength of the 2030 Agenda.

Madam President,

It is for these reasons that the 2030 Agenda signals genuine hope that there is a common recognition of the scale of challenges before us and that there will be a collective political will to jointly address these in our common interest. Alongwith the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, it gives hope that the countries of the world may work more closely in a spirit of collaboration rather than relentless competition for common good.

The scale of challenge ahead of us is clear. Nearly six decades after the completion of decolonization and the emergence of the so-called South, glaring global inequalities continue to confront us. Chronic poverty, proliferation of conflicts from geopolitical struggle for power, humanitarian crises – many of them man made – are resulting in large scale movements of people fleeing across borders. All this is a reflection that there has not been enough of cooperation among nations.

While wise pragmatic large scale assistance flowed to revive Europe in the aftermath of the WorldWar II, stake in improving the plight of nations emerging from a colonial past fell far short.

The North-South cooperation symbolising the Donor-Recipient relationship often proceeded hand in hand with preservation and promotion of geopolitical and commercial interests during the Cold War, gradually becoming ever more prescriptive and conditional. Moreover, the volume of assistance reached nowhere near even the modest goals committed by the North.

Madam President,

The so-called South-South cooperation too commenced right in the 1950s and 60s even as the former colonies were fighting for independence. From the start this was based on solidarity, common experience and circumstance and a spirit to share. This was a partnership among friends and equals.

This cooperation took myriad forms – lobbying for decolonization, forming common negotiating groups, creating regional Economic Integration blocs, Regional Banks, Education Exchange through Scholarships and training and technical assistance. Project Assistance, Concessional Loans, Humanitarian Relief, Trade concession and investment also became important aspects of this collaboration. This multiplicity of forms is a reflection of the great diversity in the capacities, core strengths and resources available to those in a position to extend cooperation as also the greater empathy and understanding of the task at hand because of shared objectives.

The global shift in economic power and the declining share of ODA during the last decade or so has seen attempts to subsume South-South cooperation in the international aid architecture and subject it to the norms and standards devised for the north-south context. This appears to be driven more from competitive urges and has not been helpful.

Madam President,

India is proud of its longstanding partnership with fellow developing countries. Prime Minister Modi spoke to the core ideals of South-South Cooperation while inaugurating the Third India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi in October 2015. He said *"It is a partnership beyond strategic concerns and economic benefits. It is formed from the emotional bonds we share and the solidarity we feel for each other"*.

South-South cooperation, by definition, is among partners sharing similar challenges and traversing broadly similar paths towards development. Its evolution has proven that the diversity of forms and flows is its greatest strength. It defies easy categorization and temptations to straitjacket it should be resisted. This is vastly different from the North-South aid that has a distinct context of historical obligations and where one set of partners is far better placed to assist.

Excessive emphasis on South-South Cooperation as the principal new component of a redefined Global Partnership is misplaced. In fact, it is the North-South cooperation that needs scaling up to serve the new Agenda. Overemphasizing the necessity of harmonizing standards between South-South and North-South cooperation is equally misplaced, running the risk of diluting the richness and diversity of South-South Cooperation.

The Addis Ababa Conference on Financing for Development has recently provided a comprehensive mandate on South-South Cooperation, which needs to be fully respected.

Madam President,

It is, perhaps, ironical that while South-South Cooperation is being discussed in the UN, discussions on North-South aid continue to be a monopoly of the OECD. This defies the spirit of universality of the new development Agenda.

We would like to welcome Mr. Jorge Chediek as SG's Envoy and the Head of the Office of South-South Cooperation and are confident that his stewardship of this important office will be strengthened and will contribute to more tangible and meaningful support to South-South Cooperation. It is important that the Office maintains close consultations with the Member States and enable more system-wide coordination in the United Nations. We would also like to appreciate UNDP Administrator Helen Clark and Mr. Chediek for their Reports to the Committee.

Apart from the normative aspects, this Committee is also tasked with considering the operational aspects of South-South Cooperation. In this context, India has long held that UN should provide more substantive support to South-South Cooperation. The reports of the Secretary General provide some useful recommendations in this regard.

Madam President,

In conclusion, we have no doubt that South-South Cooperation will expand further in the years to come. We remain hopeful that through this Committee and the UN Office for South-South Cooperation, the institutional support of the United Nations will also increase commensurate with the importance and scale of South-South Cooperation.

Thank you.
