We have now come to the concluding Session. Even as we await the important Valedictory Address of the Foreign Secretary, I would like to say that RIS as a Think Tank, which has been involved in promoting cooperation and research among developing countries, is very pleased to see the huge response from the various partner countries in the successful holding of this Conference. We could do this, thanks to the collaboration and encouragement we have received from the Ministry of External Affairs and the cooperation we have received from the United Nations and The Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC). We are also glad that this meeting we could launch the Network of Southern Think Tanks (Nest). RIS is happy to be part of the Secretariat.

You will all agree that during the last two days, we have had a very rich and lively discussion on South-South Cooperation and its various dimensions with participation
from so many stakeholder constituencies not only the governments and think tanks but also UN bodies, regional organizations, academics, private sector, civil society organizations and young scholars. We also heard very good presentations from practitioners in number of countries who shared details about their Development Cooperation Programmes, be it of the South-South variety or Triangular Cooperation or South-South-South Cooperation or sub-regional or regional cooperation.

The main thrust of South-South Cooperation is a sense of partnership, a sense of solidarity to help fellow developing countries and to share developmental experiences or provide assistance for creation of development capacities or infrastructure all of which are demand driven. These experiences have been diverse and delegates has termed them as ‘unique’. It came out clearly that SSC can be only complementary now and not a substitute for North-South ODA, and that it is driven also by certain values that are somewhat different.

On the question of whether there should be any institutionalization of South-South Cooperation or whether it can be put into some framework or a monitoring and evaluation methodology, several experiences and exploratory approaches were shared and discussed. But with such diversity it may be that a generic approach may be more appropriate at this stage and it may be too early to categorise and systematize. Plurality is important when we discuss methodology and theoretical framework. This is, even as more data, if it can become available, should be welcome. Of course, there is the issue of quantification. But here a legitimate perception appeared to be that while some parameters may be quantifiable, certain others may simply not be amenable to be put in the form of numbers.
We also heard from delegates several successful examples of South-South Cooperation. Some examples have also been illustrated in the display outside the Conference room in as wide areas as, remote sensing, solar energy, telecommunications, IT, and so on apart from training and capacity building.

The other aspect, which received considerable focus during the Conference was on Cooperation amongst countries in the South regarding global policy development. The need for greater solidarity among developing countries found resonance in the presentations of several speakers, be it in the context of climate change or international trade issues or in meeting the various social or sustainable development goals. What I would like to particularly highlight here, being somewhat more familiar with international trade issues, the immediate need for greater South-South Cooperation in this area.

We are aware what happened at the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Nairobi with some developed countries not willing to affirm the Doha agenda that they had agreed upon 15 years ago and called for inclusion of new issues. Also, initiatives on the plurilateral and mega FTA fronts are gathering momentum. Many new issues, not directly to trade are coming within the framework of some of these trade rules in the name of the ‘21st century rules’ and ‘high standards’.

What is of concern is that the development space needed for developing countries will get reduced and the rungs of the ladder which the industrial countries used for their own development are being sought to be taken away. Requirements such as remanufactured goods to be treated as new goods or the further restrictions on performance requirements beyond the TRIMS Agreement of WTO or the resetting of the minimum standards of intellectual property rights, to mention just a few
examples, could have significant implications for industrialisation aspirations of developing countries. Professor Thomas Pogge told us yesterday about the lobbying power in the developed countries that can shape the design of supranational or global institutional arrangements.

It is important that developing countries, agencies like South Center and the Southern Think-Tanks intensify their research and cooperation to come up with viable alternatives which can be more development friendly. There are also several suggestions that have come up in the Conference, which I am sure will be actively considered and followed up by concerned agencies including RIS.

Thank you.