

Delhi Process VI: Exploring New Development Paradigms and Growth Strategies: Partnerships in Times of Transition and Contestations

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Over the years RIS has spearheaded the efforts of bringing all stakeholders together to deliberate on South-South Cooperation (SSC), instruments of Triangular Cooperation (TrC) as well as on theoretical and empirical frameworks of SSC and TrC for a better understanding of the global development architecture. As is well known, RIS initiated the Delhi Process of conferences to bring together the academic community, policymakers, practitioners, civil society and other stakeholders including various international development cooperation agencies.

The first conference, that took place in 2013 provided an international platform for such a deliberation and generated a balanced and a well-informed debate. Subsequent conferences (2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019), highlighted the plurality and diversity of SSC, nature of cooperation among the Global North and the Global South and its linkages with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Deliberations during these conferences helped in contributing significantly to the Second United Nations High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40). Over the years Delhi Process has become an important instrument for providing the theoretical and empirical grounding to assert the ‘uniqueness’ of SSC. The economic challenges in recent years have become formidable. Fragmented approaches on development, missing local connect and gradual weakening of the multilateral world order have not only resulted in inequities in access to resources but also in reversing the progress on SDGs.

The G20 has emerged as a foremost global initiative to respond to global crises in the short term and also suggest longer term pathways on development with strong focus on sustainability. India during the Presidency of the G20 for the

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year 2023 has set itself an action-oriented agenda on finance, SDGs, environment, sustainable consumption and production and digital transformation. Keeping this in view, the Delhi Process VI conference focused on the theme “Exploring New Development Paradigms and Growth Strategies: Partnerships in Times of Transition and Contestations” held on 27-28 August 2022 in preparation towards India’s impending G20 Presidency.

The key issues deliberated upon included new development paradigm, global development initiatives and scope for partnership and cooperation, macroeconomic challenges and weakening means of implementation, recalibration towards SDGs 2.0 and beyond GDP – measuring development and wellbeing, among other issues.

There was a strong focus that India’s G20 Presidency is an opportunity to catalyse commitments for equitable and inclusive global development trajectory and strengthen the means of implementation. The connect with IBSA countries taking forward the G20 Presidency in the coming years was also highlighted and discussions were held on the long-term initiatives that can be taken up by IBSA countries.

RIS organised the conference with the support of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India; Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST); Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC); Global Development Centre (GDC) and other partners.

Mr Jorge Chediek, Formerly Director, UN Office for South-South Cooperation and Envoy of the Secretary-General on South-South Cooperation, set the context of the ‘Delhi Process’. Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS made the welcome remarks and deliberated that the idea of bringing back development right at the core of the economic growth strategy is extremely important. It is also important to ascertain that money is not pumped for infrastructure without local participation; and that is what the SDGs (Agenda 2030) is all about. It is about localization of development, and bringing in local aspirations and local expectations in the wider global process.

Ambassador Anil Sooklal South Africa’s BRICS Sherpa in his special remarks emphasised to bring back development from the margins to the centre of the G20 agenda and to going beyond the verbal articulation of setting priorities and need to bring forward practical examples of the agenda.

Eminent experts deliberated that multilateralism was capable of creating an agenda, based on SDGs that could be adopted not only by the G20 but also by BRICS, OECD, World Bank, IMF and WTO. Further, there is an absolute need for localisation of development/SDGs in a framework that helps evolving an analytical frame and eventually place it back into the theoretical edifice.

Mr Dammu Ravi, Secretary (Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India highlighted that Delhi Process VI would provide an opportunity to bring collective thoughts together and pass it on to the Sherpas of India, Brazil, and South Africa to build a common agenda to bring the development into the Centre fold of the G20.

Mr Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa, India, in his inaugural speech presented the three key issues. Firstly, the world is in need of growth which has to be brought to centre stage. Elimination of poverty, achievement of goals laid down at COP 21 and Cop 26 and climate sustainability cannot be achieved without growth. Therefore, growth alone would enable the South to lift itself and vast segments of the population above the poverty line. Secondly, growth has to take place in the context of sustainability, climate change, climate adaptation, climate mitigation, and driving sustainability. This is not a challenge but a huge opportunity. The Prime Minister of India committed to a particular strategy at COP 21. None of the G20 countries achieved it. India was the only country which achieved its NDC targets nine years ahead of schedule. There is also a need to accelerate the pace of towards achieving the development agenda. India has done a lot of work in terms of localisation of SDG, ranking its own states, and its own districts on performance. The country has also done a huge amount of work on SDGs through cooperative and competitive federalism. In addition to these three broad perspectives, it is very important to understand that there has to be an Indian narrative during the G20. India must leave behind its legacy because it is really celebrating 75th year of democracy through the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

The deliberations also focussed on the Indian innovations in the digital space where India has created an alternative to the big tech model of the United States of America. India has created consent-based identity, payment base, the COWIN model of vaccination, which is totally paperless and cashless. This has to be India's unique legacy of digital public infrastructure.

Delhi Process VI was represented by speakers from institutions like German Institute of Development and Sustainability of Germany, Asia Foundation; Malaysia Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Indonesia; Center for International Knowledge on Development (CIKD), China; Institute for Applied Economic Research, Brazil; OECD Development Centre, France; Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh; Institute for Integrated Development Studies, Nepal; Tata Institute for Social Sciences; World Resources Institute; University of Duisburg-Essen; Jadavpur University; Symbiosis School of International Studies; Centre for Social Research; National Scientific and Technical Research Council, Argentina; Embassy of Zambia, Embassy of Angola; Embassy of South Korea; etc.

The session on New Development and Paradigm and Principles of Cooperation brought together experts from various renowned institutions of the world and recognized the importance of changing the development paradigm by going beyond aid, thereby recognising the emergence of new players. The agenda is much broader and cannot be tackled by aid and development is not only development cooperation. It also highlighted that working with Africa is important because this is a continent which is the youngest and is going to play the same role that Asia played in terms of adding to the pool of world labour. Moreover, G20 during the Indian Presidency

could be an important point for reengaging and reviewing the way debt is to be restructured.

In South Asia, three of the four LDCs – Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan – would be graduating over the next two to four years. There would be formidable challenges that these countries will be facing to address the implications of graduation and in making graduation sustainable. They would also need more meaningful cooperation and debt waiver initiative to deal with debt repayment, debt servicing and likely debt distress. India's G20 presidency can make a difference in this context.

The Delhi Process VI aimed to influence practitioners of North-South cooperation, and the policy makers, especially during upcoming chairmanship of India's presidency. The conference was a positive beginning towards G20 troika for next year of India, Brazil and South Africa, by sharing ideas for development.

The conference facilitated exchange of ideas on the three issues, viz. New Development Paradigm and Principles of Cooperation, Global Governance and Agenda 2030 and Development Pathways and New Measurement Approaches. The speakers emphasized on the issues of bringing local strategies, local data collection and localization of statistics, focusing more on gender equality, and revisiting the concept of measurement. There is a need to re-emphasize on ecological crises, the link between consumption and production and to see how development, rooted at the local level, would be extremely important. The process of development would be incomplete without domestic resource mobilization. Further, there is a need to focus on governance issues and new institutions that embrace the principles and voices from the demand side. The detailed agenda and key takeaways of the Conference are available at the RIS website.