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**United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation**

**Strategic framework 2026–2029**

*Summary*

The global development landscape is undergoing a radical transformation, marked by declining official development assistance (ODA), rising geopolitical fragmentation and interconnected crises that have severely threatened the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. With the deadline for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development rapidly approaching, the present strategic framework establishes a fundamental reset for the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).

South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation are increasingly indispensable elements of the new development paradigm, with the Global South driving economic growth and innovative solutions. The transformation of UNOSSC is required to align with the reform priorities of the UN80 Initiative regarding efficiency, coherence and financing reform. The strategic framework embraces an ambitious vision: to build an alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation as a multi-stakeholder partnership and operational collaboration platform responsible for leveraging resources, facilitating joint programming and driving implementation efforts on the ground. Within this context, the UNOSSC value proposition is streamlined with respect to four core capabilities that will enable the alliance: (a) mandated global focal point and convener; (b) facilitator and strategic manager; (c) thought leader and innovation catalyst; and (d) catalytic finance and resource innovator.

The new strategic framework outlines three main outcomes: (a) a transformed UNOSSC that facilitates enhanced strategic leadership; (b) a functional alliance that catalyses country-owned solutions; and, ultimately, (c) Member States that are better equipped to address critical Sustainable Development Goal gaps by leveraging relevant solutions and innovative finance. Implementation will require a comprehensive internal realignment, one that explicitly recognizes the new, specialized skill sets required for the UNOSSC catalytic mandate, including policy analysis, financing innovation, systems thinking and data science.

Finally, the proposed integrated results and resources framework for the strategic framework will adopt a simplified, impact-oriented approach, prioritizing and tracking the measurement of emerging impacts at the systems level. Programming resources (core and non-core) will be directed exclusively to catalytic purposes, including seed funding for innovative, scalable solutions. This effort, guided by the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and supported by a reinvigorated Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, will accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by unleashing the creativity and transformative energies of the Global South.



## I. Introduction

### *The imperative for a new paradigm in international development cooperation*

1. The global development landscape is undergoing a radical transformation, characterized by profound shifts that demand a fundamental reset of existing international development cooperation paradigms. The post-Second World War multilateral order, particularly the dynamics of globalization and traditional North-to-South development assistance, is under immense stress. Financial constraints, marked by declining official development assistance (ODA) and a shift from grants to investment-driven funding, are challenging long-standing donor dependencies.
2. Simultaneously, the world is grappling with unprecedented, interconnected crises, including escalating geopolitical tensions, economic instability, widening human development inequalities and the intensification of the climate emergency. With only six years remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the urgency for radical, innovative and impactful approaches has never been greater.
3. In today's rapidly evolving, diverse global landscape, countries of the Global South are assuming an increasingly prominent role in advancing sustainable development. Representing the majority of United Nations Member States, they offer a wealth of context-specific solutions and are strengthening their engagement through diverse forms of cooperation. At the same time, the ongoing shifts in global financing are encouraging the adoption of more innovative and resilient approaches.
4. A fundamental shift in the perspective of international development cooperation is required, from that of an aid transmission mechanism to an enabler of locally led efforts to build long-term economic strength independent of traditional donor support. This entails embracing a more focused role for the United Nations development system as a facilitator of true partnerships grounded in solidarity, equity, national sovereignty and mutual benefit.
5. In this context, South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation should be considered as ever-more-critical and indispensable development cooperation models by serving as key complementary components of any future aid architecture. This calls for moving beyond simply adding new South-South and triangular cooperation instruments to deeply reflecting on and redesigning the cooperation paradigm, positioning South-South cooperation as a core principle for all international development cooperation, with triangular cooperation also playing an increasingly prominent role. This push for integration, particularly in the context of the ongoing UN80 Initiative and the Secretary-General's call for a more simplified and efficient UN 2.0, must ensure that mainstreaming South-South and triangular cooperation principles actively reinforces system-wide coherence and simplification while averting the addition of new layers to the existing United Nations development architecture.
6. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) 2025 Global Report on South-South and Triangular Cooperation reinforces this vision of a future where South-South and triangular cooperation are no longer peripheral activities but rather mainstream pillars of the global development architecture and key elements of a renewed multilateralism. This will entail a strategic shift from reactive to more proactive, knowledge-rich and institutionally robust South-South and triangular cooperation approaches. To achieve this, the report highlights several key areas of action, including strengthening institutional frameworks and modalities, creating innovative financing mechanisms, promoting a more dynamic process of knowledge- and technology-sharing, and reforming global governance to better represent the voices of the Global South.
7. Recent independent evaluations have also brought into focus how South-South and triangular cooperation can generate more durable pathways to development.<sup>1</sup> Both modalities are predicated on a peer-to-peer approach to knowledge exchange, capacity-building and the fostering of self-reliance, leveraging the demographic dominance and shared experiences of Southern countries. The evaluation of the previous UNOSSC strategic framework notes that South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation may be inherently more sustainable because they are not dependent on the flow of resources from the Global North to the Global South. The evaluation also provides evidence that South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation foster interventions that are more relevant to local priorities, effectively leveraging local partners and domestic resources. In this context, UNOSSC and its United Nations partners need to perform a critical matchmaking role and enhance the receptiveness

<sup>1</sup> These include evaluations of the United Nations system for South-South and triangular cooperation, 2022–2025; UNOSSC support to the Group of 77 and China; and the final evaluation of the UNOSSC strategic framework, 2022–2025.

of programme participants by introducing relevant external knowledge, partnership-brokering, expertise and experiences from similar contexts.

8. Triangular cooperation has an especially important role to play in this new context, since it combines traditional donor support with robust development-country leadership. In a time of dwindling resources, it has the potential to bring together diverse technical and financial resources and foster a wider range of experiences. This increasing relevance is further reinforced by the commitment made by the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives, as noted in the outcome document of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development,<sup>2</sup> to "enhance triangular cooperation by fostering deeper collaboration and partnerships, ensuring knowledge exchange, aligning efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals, and leveraging innovative financing mechanisms to enhance its sustainability and impact" (para. 36 (g)).

*Catalysing a transformation in South-South and triangular cooperation*

9. At the heart of this necessary industry reset lies UNOSSC. Reaffirmed by the United Nations General Assembly as the focal point for promoting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation globally and system-wide, the role of UNOSSC is poised for a significant transformation to fulfil its mandate and meet future challenges. In an increasingly constrained resource environment, UNOSSC must decisively move beyond a gradualist approach and instead embrace a fundamental redefinition of its purpose as a nimble catalyst and facilitator of innovation and change, one that aligns with the UN80 reform priorities relating to efficiency, coherence and financing reform.

10. UNOSSC is uniquely positioned to transform itself into a thought leader, partnership broker and dynamic knowledge hub on South-South and triangular cooperation for Member States, United Nations entities and an alliance of strategic partners. By defining a more strategic and agile role and value proposition, UNOSSC will leverage its longstanding and unique convening power to enable collaborative, demand-driven and country-owned partnerships on the key development challenges faced by the Global South.

11. Realigning its functions will enable UNOSSC to focus more on expanding its role and influence as a knowledge broker and advocate for the South-South and triangular cooperation principles, setting standards for enhancing impact and providing a robust platform for continuous innovation. By leveraging the collective power of an alliance of stakeholders, streamlining its operations, and demonstrating impact through flagship initiatives and robust data, UNOSSC can drive smarter, more adaptive and future-proof development strategies and accelerate Sustainable Development Goal achievement by empowering the Global South to lead its own sustainable development journey.

12. Anchoring this strategic realignment is the long-standing UNOSSC mandate as the central focal point for promoting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation for development on a global and United Nations system-wide basis. This mandate, initially endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 33/134 (1978), has been consistently affirmed and further reinforced over the decades, including in the 2009 Nairobi outcome document (resolution 64/222) and the 2019 second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) outcome document (resolution 73/291). Most recently, General Assembly resolution 79/236 (2024) and decision 22/1 (2025) of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation explicitly reiterate the core role of UNOSSC and call for its continued strengthening as an effective facilitator of South-South cooperation through its support to programmes, policy dialogue, capacity-building and resource mobilization.

13. The General Assembly, in these same resolutions, has consistently called upon all actors in development cooperation to become meaningfully engaged in South-South and triangular cooperation, advocating for the identification and scaling up of innovative partnerships and financing mechanisms, involving established partners and new stakeholders such as local and regional authorities, civil society, the private sector, academia, research centres and non-governmental organizations. Amid today's interconnected global crises, the need for a broad and diverse alliance to champion and advance high-impact South-South and triangular cooperation solutions to address the most critical development gaps has never been more urgent.

<sup>2</sup> [https://financing.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-08/FFD4%20Outcome%20Booklet%20v4\\_EN%20-%20spread.pdf](https://financing.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-08/FFD4%20Outcome%20Booklet%20v4_EN%20-%20spread.pdf).

## II. Past cooperation, results and lessons learned

### *Past cooperation and results*

14. Recent evaluations confirm the strong alignment of UNOSSC with the United Nations mandate for South-South and triangular cooperation and with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with most outcome and output targets on track for achievement by 2025. UNOSSC has provided crucial secretariat and substantive support to key policymaking bodies, such as the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, successfully integrating South-South and triangular cooperation perspectives into numerous General Assembly resolutions and co-convening vital policy dialogues on emerging priorities such as the debt crisis, climate damage and digital disconnectivity.

15. This capacity for more strategic involvement is also evident in the increasing role of UNOSSC in leveraging the broader resources of the United Nations development system for South-South and triangular cooperation. Building on insights from recent evaluations, the broadening UNOSSC strategic partnership with the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO) has successfully led to the formulation of guidance for South-South and triangular cooperation integration into the work of the United Nations development system. This guidance is recognized by regional United Nations actors and United Nations country teams (UNCTs) as complementary to their own and presents a crucial opportunity to drive further integration and generate significant impact through its effective and scaled application across all United Nations development activities. Opportunities for integration will be further enhanced through the development of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2026–2029, in close alignment with the present strategic framework.

16. The evaluation of the previous strategic framework has confirmed that UNOSSC had made significant progress in strengthening policies to advance South-South and triangular cooperation through strategic partnerships and multi-stakeholder policy dialogue. Of particular note was the co-development of a handbook to assist Member States in incorporating South-South and triangular cooperation into voluntary national reviews, which has been integrated into the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs global Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews. This experience exemplifies the potential for UNOSSC to amplify its impact by elevating its engagement to a higher, more strategic level.

17. As a result, and as programme countries demonstrate increasing demand for South-South and triangular cooperation support, United Nations entities have been increasingly integrating South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation into their strategic plans by including them in common country analyses (CCAs) and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs). Recent evaluations undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP) concluded that many United Nations-supported South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives are better aligned to national government priorities, are successfully meeting their objectives in a range of thematic areas and are more likely to be sustainable.

18. Furthermore, UNOSSC is recognized as a credible source of knowledge and experiences, with the South-South Galaxy platform housing a vast repository of solutions. The recent evaluation of the UNOSSC strategic framework highlights the user-friendly interface of the South-South Galaxy platform, which simplifies query and analysis, and notes its explicit design to avoid duplicating efforts by other United Nations entities by serving as a portal linking to their knowledge platforms.

19. Trust funds managed by UNOSSC have also facilitated technical and knowledge exchanges, introduced innovations and contributed to capacity-building and the advancement of Sustainable Development Goals in developing countries. Despite many challenges, and in light of the decrease in traditional North-South resource flows, the inherent sustainability of South-South and triangular cooperation, including through a more strategic and catalytic use of trust funds, offers a robust foundation for future cooperation.

### *Lessons learned*

20. Recent evaluations provide a valuable opportunity to refine the approach of UNOSSC and maximize its impact. The findings highlight the potential to develop a more robust evidence-based approach to better demonstrate the added value of South-South and triangular cooperation interventions, which is essential for showcasing their impact on countries and on people's lives.

Furthermore, by building a broader platform for collaboration and clarifying its value proposition, UNOSSC can move beyond perceived duplication and amplify its contributions within the United Nations development system.

21. Opportunities for enhancing operational efficiency are also evident. The growth of the trust-fund portfolio,<sup>3</sup> while a success, presents a chance to evolve from fragmented project management with relatively high transaction costs to a more strategic, agile and catalytic model that drives transformative change and aligns with broader South-South and triangular cooperation priorities. Transforming and outsourcing platforms such as South-South Galaxy into a more dynamic, real-time knowledge hub for capturing and attributing results can strengthen learning across both the United Nations development system as well as the wider array of partners working for South-South and triangular cooperation outcomes.

22. The absence of a clear theory of change in the previous strategic framework can also now be addressed, providing a clearer foundation for programmatic synergies and the identification of meaningful outputs and indicators, which will strengthen the evaluability of results.

23. There is also a significant opportunity to achieve deeper coherence within the United Nations development system by moving beyond reliance on champions of individual agencies towards a more systematic integration of South-South and triangular cooperation through a reinvigorated Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

24. Finally, the increasingly significant substantive and financial relationship with the countries of the Global South presents the potential for higher-impact collaboration, offering a path for UNOSSC to engage more proactively and strategically with Member States to shape agendas and advance South-South and triangular cooperation priorities.

25. The insights from recent evaluations underscore the urgent need for UNOSSC to reimagine its purpose, streamline its operations, fulfil its mandate and enhance its strategic impact. By working with the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and a reinvigorated Inter-Agency Mechanism to build a stronger and broader alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation, UNOSSC and its partners can spark a new era of collaboration for development that more fully integrates South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as engines for profound change, accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda and beyond amid a rapidly evolving and increasingly challenging global landscape.<sup>4</sup>

### III. Situation analysis

#### *Navigating a new global development frontier*

26. The current international landscape is marked by unprecedented shifts. As the United Nations Secretary-General described it in his 19 September 2023 address to the United Nations General Assembly:

*“Geopolitical tensions are rising. Global challenges are mounting. And we seem incapable of coming together to respond.”*

27. The impact of these shifts on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals has been devastating. “Of the 169 SDGs targets, 139 could be assessed using global trend data from the 2015 baseline to the most recent year, supplemented by custodian agency analyses. Among these, only 35 per cent show adequate progress – 18 per cent are on track and 17 per cent are making moderate progress. In contrast, 48 per cent of targets show insufficient progress, including 31 per cent with only marginal gains and 17 per cent with no progress at all. Most concerning, 18 per cent of targets have regressed below 2015 baseline levels.”<sup>5</sup>

28. The world is also witnessing a profound evolution of global power dynamics, characterized by the rise of influential regional bodies and the increasing voice of the Global South in forums such as the Group of 20. This new reality presents significant opportunities for enhanced leadership by the Global South in international development cooperation, including through the use of South-South and

<sup>3</sup> UNOSSC-managed trust-fund projects have been implemented through United Nations system entities.

<sup>4</sup> Further details on the proposed alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation are provided in annex 3.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025, p. 4.

triangular cooperation approaches to address increasing geopolitical fragmentation and enhance consensus-building on solutions to some of the most pressing Sustainable Development Goal roadblocks. The ongoing review of United Nations mandates under the United Nations 80 reform process reinforces the imperative for more consolidated and integrated South-South and triangular cooperation support in order for these efforts to lead to greater collective ownership by the Global South over its development trajectory and enhance collaboration on the shared Sustainable Development Goal challenges.

29. Economic and financial trends are further reshaping the context. Traditional North-to-South aid flows are in decline, with significant ODA cuts and a shift towards investment-driven funding, while many Southern countries face escalating debt distress. This financial reality compels a robust focus on alternative mechanisms for development finance, including domestic resource mobilization, innovative financing, engagement of diversified actors such as multilateral development banks and private sectors as well as leveraging the increasing opportunities for government cost-sharing and Southern funding for shared challenges.

30. As called for by successive resolutions on South-South and triangular cooperation, new and increasingly creative financial instruments will be needed, such as regional platforms, blended finance, debt swaps for Sustainable Development Goals, bonds and impact investments. Furthermore, the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), the Sevilla Commitment and the Doha Political Declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development (2025) also emphasize the critical need for innovative approaches to development funding to address the unique development challenges faced by these vulnerable country groups.

31. The growing prevalence of economic protectionism, alongside the emergence of new financial instruments such as cryptocurrencies and the strategic importance of critical minerals, introduces risks of market volatility and exploitation as well as opportunities for stronger collective actions and responsible resource management.

32. The accelerating pace of digital transformation and the rapid advent of artificial intelligence (AI) present immense promise and considerable risk. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report 2025*, approximately two-thirds of global survey respondents in low, medium and high Human Development Index (HDI) countries anticipate using AI in education, health and work within a year. This expectation is significantly higher than in very high HDI countries. More broadly, and as described in the UNCTAD *Digital Economy Report 2024*:

“Digital divides remain a significant barrier to socioeconomic development. While there is great potential for most developing countries to benefit from digital transformation, many countries have seen relatively limited benefits to date” (para. xxvi).

Findings from the International Telecommunication Union reinforce this picture: its 2025 *Facts and Figures* notes that “2.2 billion individuals – remain offline, most of them in low-and middle-income countries”<sup>6</sup> and persistent disparities remain, especially in affordability and usage.

33. The widening digital and AI divides between "haves" and "have-nots" within the Global South demand concerted efforts for investing in research and development, fostering impactful partnerships and supporting the implementation of global frameworks such as the Pact for the Future and the Global Digital Compact.

34. At the same time, the potential for technology transfer, particularly by leveraging diaspora networks, underscores the need for UNOSSC to support responsible innovation and the scaling of digital platforms in South-South and triangular cooperation. Social dynamics, including rising concerns about the impacts of migration and immigration, add further complexity, highlighting a role for triangular cooperation in fostering common understanding and leveraging diaspora expertise for development.

<sup>6</sup> International Telecommunication Union, *Measuring digital development: Facts and Figures*, 2025, p. ii.

35. Within this complex environment, a discernible shift is occurring from merely replicating best practices in South-South and triangular cooperation to engaging in more substantive, context-specific programming, indicating a maturation of the modalities. The scope of South-South and triangular cooperation is broadening to encompass diverse themes such as digital transformation, trade, public-sector reform and climate action, demanding a commensurate recalibration of UNOSSC capacities and tools as well as ways of working more strategically, efficiently and effectively on these critical issues through the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and the broader United Nations development system.

36. This evolving landscape demands that UNOSSC sharpen its strategic vision, redefine its programmatic approach and embrace a new wave of operational excellence. It must strategically position itself better to foster a broader and reinvigorated alliance that can unleash the full transformative potential of South-South and triangular cooperation in a radically different global development landscape.

#### IV. Vision and strategy

##### *Rationale for change*

37. The global development landscape is undergoing a radical transformation, compelling a fundamental rethinking of traditional international development cooperation. Marked by declining ODA and escalating geopolitical fragmentation, the world faces unprecedented, interconnected crises, from mounting debt to the climate emergency and digital divides. With the 2030 Agenda deadline approaching, innovative, impactful approaches are paramount.

38. Today, South-South cooperation is more than a framework; it is a growing force behind sustainable development. The Global South now drives over half of the economic growth of the world, fuels expanding trade and investment, and leads countless innovative initiatives, driving its own solutions and demanding genuine partnerships rooted in solidarity and national ownership. South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation are increasingly indispensable elements of development cooperation. UNOSSC must be made fit for purpose to better support this shift and unleash the full transformative power of South-South and triangular cooperation in the decades to come.

##### *Change vision*

39. The vision is an ambitious one: to reimagine the purpose and reach of South-South and triangular cooperation guided by the High-level Committee on South-Cooperation and working closely with a reinvigorated United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation<sup>7</sup> in order for UNOSSC to build a new and stronger alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation. This broader alliance will continue to benefit from the overall guidance of a fully engaged and supportive High-level Committee and will include United Nations development system agencies as well as other critical multilateral, bilateral, regional, academic and private-sector partners.

40. Together, this alliance will work jointly to define a new way of working that moves beyond the traditional models for development assistance and that envisions South-South and triangular cooperation as increasingly central to the international development paradigm. The operationalization of this alliance will follow a phased approach, prioritizing strategic thematic clusters such as digital transformation, climate resilience and innovative financing and ensuring clear governance and results frameworks.

41. Triangular cooperation will be an increasingly important element of this new, transformational approach, since it has the potential to bring together a more diverse combination of technical and financial resources, including traditional and emerging development partners, as well as a diversified pool of actors that can provide new and innovative ways to maintain the engagement and support of traditional donor countries.

<sup>7</sup> See annex 2. Institutional arrangements.

42. To ensure clarity and avoid the blurring of mandates, the roles of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and the proposed alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation are explicitly differentiated:

- (a) **High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation:** Continues to serve as a high-level intergovernmental oversight and policy review mechanism, providing overall policy guidance and direction as per recommendation 37 of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (1978);<sup>8</sup>
- (b) **alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation:** Would function as a multi-stakeholder partnership and operational collaboration platform, responsible for leveraging technical and financial resources and facilitating joint programming for accelerated Sustainable Development Goal achievement through South-South and triangular cooperation.

43. Drawing from existing UNOSSC partners, the initial members of this alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation would encompass diverse types of organizations that are already applying South-South and triangular cooperation approaches. They include United Nations development system actors working together through a reinvigorated United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation; national development agencies; global and regional multilateral development banks and intergovernmental bodies; and global and regional think tanks and research institutions. A brief but more detailed outline of the key elements of the proposed alliance is provided as annex 3 to this document.

44. As part of its strategic realignment, UNOSSC would amplify its catalytic impact by shifting from direct implementation of activities while expanding its current role as secretariat to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation to serve as a coordinator for this broader alliance. This alliance, as a multi-stakeholder platform hosted by UNOSSC, would be a shared resource, co-owned and financed in part through the strategic use of the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation (UNFSSC).<sup>9</sup> The new United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development would align with this strategic approach and ensure that the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism workplan prioritizes the mainstreaming and implementation of South-South and triangular cooperation activities on the ground.

45. The increased focus on catalytic impact will also require fostering deeper engagement by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the promotion of South-South and triangular cooperation as an indispensable development approach. UNOSSC will also strengthen linkages with the Development Coordination Office, amplifying its presence and voice in relevant United Nations decision-making groups.

46. Central to this facilitation role for UNOSSC is the drive for a more coherent and integrated United Nations system-wide engagement, including through the active promotion of innovative South-South and triangular cooperation solutions and innovative financing approaches to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. To deliver on this enhanced role, UNOSSC will strengthen existing linkages with UNDP, ensuring close alignment and complementarity with the new UNDP Strategic Plan, 2026–2029, and its strategic objectives of prosperity for all, effective governance, crisis resilience and a healthy planet.

47. Working through the concerted efforts of United Nations entities and other strategic partners, the new strategic framework will help to elevate the use of South-South and triangular cooperation at the country level, ensuring that these cooperation modalities effectively respond to national priorities and drive local development outcomes.

48. The UNOSSC value proposition should therefore be redefined and clarified in relation to the provision of strategic leadership and essential services that enable an alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation. This new focus also acknowledges the significant potential of triangular cooperation, since it combines traditional donor support with robust developing-country leadership. It builds directly on, and is deeply aligned with, the note by the Secretary-General on the framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation (2016),<sup>10</sup> particularly in its emphasis on the UNOSSC-mandated role as a convener, knowledge broker and partnership builder to catalyse demand-driven, country-owned solutions.

<sup>8</sup> [Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries \(1978\)](#).

<sup>9</sup> Voluntary trust fund established through General Assembly [resolution 50/119](#) for the promotion of South-South cooperation.

<sup>10</sup> <https://unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Framework-of-Operational-Guidelines-on-UN-Support-to-SSTC-2016.pdf>.

49. This revised value proposition will be derived from four distinctive but interrelated capabilities:

- (a) **mandated global focal point and impartial convener.** As the only United Nations entity mandated by the General Assembly as the focal point for promoting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation on a global and United Nations system-wide basis, the reimagined UNOSSC will more effectively leverage the United Nations neutrality and convening power to create vital platforms for Member States and their partners to engage in dialogue, build consensus, and integrate and launch new collaborative efforts, bridging gaps between different ongoing and new initiatives.

UNOSSC will continue to serve as the secretariat to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and to support the Second Committee of the General Assembly. It will enhance the quality and relevance of mandated reports prepared by the Office through improved data systems, evidence-based knowledge and research. These reports include the annual report of the Secretary-General on the state of South-South cooperation, the biennial report of the Secretary-General to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, and the biennial report of the Administrator of UNDP to the High-level Committee. It will promote the use of these mandated reports. UNOSSC will also lead the substantive preparations for the biennial sessions of the High-level Committee in response to relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and decisions of the High-level Committee. It will prepare thematic policy briefings and convene thematic policy dialogues at the global, regional and interregional levels to support dialogues in the context of the High-level Committee and other intergovernmental processes on South-South and triangular cooperation;

- (b) **facilitator and strategic manager.** UNOSSC will serve as the central hub for this broader alliance, engaging, through a reinvigorated Inter-Agency Mechanism and with the policy guidance of an active and committed High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, to catalyse the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and continuous adaptation of joint strategies and initiatives. This includes engaging strategically to foster greater coherence and alignment across the entire United Nations development system towards shared South-South and triangular cooperation goals and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, leveraging its critical role in the facilitation of United Nations system-wide support for the implementation of the BAPA+40 recommendations;
- (c) **thought leader, innovation catalyst and knowledge hub.** A transformed UNOSSC will be a thought leader, innovation catalyst and the go-to knowledge hub for South-South and triangular cooperation expertise. This implies a shift from collecting and sharing information to providing high-quality, well-curated ideas and facilitating new learning relationships for countries of the Global South. It also entails leveraging the latest AI technologies but, more importantly, having the capacity to stimulate new ideas and solutions, conduct horizon scanning and trends analysis, and engage in intelligence gathering on cutting-edge topics, thereby serving as a central repository and disseminator of expertise for the Global South. It also supports the voluntary exchange of experiences and expertise according to national policies and priorities for development;<sup>11</sup>
- (d) **catalytic finance and resource innovator.** Moving beyond traditional trust-fund management, a fully recalibrated UNOSSC will shift its attention to expanding the use of South-South and triangular cooperation in providing developing countries with strategic guidance and support on innovative financing in close partnership with relevant partners in the United Nations development system and the broader alliance. This enhanced role will position UNOSSC as a catalyst for Southern-led financing models (e.g. blended finance, debt swaps and domestic resource mobilization), leveraging its access to comprehensive technical expertise and know-how to unlock and promote the replication of innovative South-South cooperation financing opportunities at scale across the Global South.

50. To fulfil this redefined value proposition, especially amid decreasing resources, UNOSSC must streamline its capacities to work more strategically through UNDP as host agency and via the broader United Nations development system as the primary driver of South-South and triangular cooperation support to Member States. Against this backdrop, it is imperative that UNOSSC ensure that it is fit for purpose to serve effectively as a nimble catalyst of transformative change.

<sup>11</sup> Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (A/RES/73/291, para. 24 (g)).

*Theory of change*

51. Based on the above-mentioned analysis and rationale for change, the following elements of a new theory of change for UNOSSC can be identified:

- (a) IF an expanded and well-established global alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation – guided by the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, supported at the highest levels of the United Nations and driven by a more focused and agile UNOSSC – unleashes a new wave of groundbreaking demand-driven, country-owned and collaborative development solutions...
- (b) THEN the developing countries will benefit from increased access to relevant expertise, innovative solutions and diversified funding streams, leading to significant enhancement of capacities, accelerated progress in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, and resilient responses to interconnected crises such as climate change, economic instability and human displacement...
- (c) BECAUSE this integrated, peer-to-peer approach transcends the limitations of a fragmented, traditional ODA paradigm by valuing mutual learning, respecting national sovereignty, and leveraging diverse Southern ingenuity to unlock systemic solutions, forge new partnerships, build collective resilience, and drive a truly transformative, more equitable global development agenda.

52. Working alongside the broader United Nations-wide reform efforts envisioned in the ongoing UN80 Initiative, the ultimate impact of these efforts should be a more equitable and resilient international development cooperation system where the Global South, driving its own self-reliant and sustainable development, accelerates the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, effectively addresses complex global challenges and secures improved well-being for all populations.

*Proposed outcomes from the transformational results framework<sup>12</sup>*

53. **A transformed UNOSSC** effectively provides strategic leadership and essential services to Member States, driving a coherent, system-wide approach to collaboratively unleash the full transformative potential of South-South and triangular cooperation.

54. **A functional alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation** effectively engages Member States, United Nations development system agencies and other partners to catalyse country-owned solutions and accelerate progress on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

55. **Member States are better equipped** to address critical Sustainable Development Goal gaps by leveraging relevant solutions, expertise and innovative finance through an increasingly diverse and dynamic alliance of South-South and triangular cooperation partners.

*Potential thematic priorities for the coming programming cycle*

56. Central to a more strategic and catalytic approach by a reinvigorated UNOSSC is the idea of strategic prioritization, based on the most urgent needs for South-South and triangular cooperation, to address the most critical Sustainable Development Goal challenges as defined by the Member States. By shifting its focus and realigning its capacities regarding the goal of integration, UNOSSC will play a more effective role in (a) facilitating policy dialogues on these priority needs of the Global South, and (b) ensuring that these needs are more fully represented in United Nations strategic frameworks and respective national development plans.

57. This transformative strategic framework recalibrates the UNOSSC role towards building a broader alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation, serving the highest-priority needs of the Global South for Sustainable Development Goal achievement by working through existing national, regional and United Nations development frameworks, as advocated in the 2016

<sup>12</sup> Full details regarding the proposed transformational UNOSSC integrated results and resources framework, 2026–2029, including outcomes, outputs and indicators, are provided in annex 1.

framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation.

58. Working through this broader alliance, UNOSSC will assist members in identifying critical thematic priorities for further policy dialogue, strategic planning and partnership-building. Based on previous consultations and recent resolutions on South-South and triangular cooperation priorities, these could include but not be limited to:

- (a) **digital transformation, connectivity and AI governance:** addressing the digital and AI divides, fostering collaboration on research and development, and supporting responsible technology development and transfer for sustainable development, including through leveraging diaspora expertise;
- (b) **climate action and green transitions:** facilitating Southern-led solutions for climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience, including sustainable energy and responsible management of critical minerals;
- (c) **innovative finance:** supporting peer learning and knowledge-sharing regarding innovative and catalytic financing mechanisms, including blended finance and engagement with the private sector and Southern financial institutions to address critical Sustainable Development Goal roadblocks;
- (d) **inclusive development:** mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment, and youth considerations across all initiatives, levelling the playing field through capacity development, and ensuring that the benefits from South-South and triangular cooperation reach those furthest behind, especially in situations of prolonged crisis.

59. The transformational integrated results and resources framework provided as annex 1 serves as a potential road map for the further articulation of these priorities through the establishment of thematic strategies that are fully reflective of national, regional and global development priorities and that can help to harness, analyse and learn from the collective efforts of all interested stakeholders within an expanded and unified coalition of supporters and practitioners of South-South and triangular cooperation.

## V. Implementation arrangements

### *Realignment of UNOSSC functions and capacities*

60. To effectively operationalize this new vision, UNOSSC will require a comprehensive review of its internal functions and capacities. The current challenging global context presents an opportunity for a complete refocusing, restructuring and repositioning of the Office and for embracing new ways of working in line with broader UN 2.0 reforms.

61. The review must explicitly recognize and map the specialized skill sets required for the UNOSSC catalytic and thought-leadership mandate, including expertise in policy analysis, financing innovation, systems thinking and data science, moving beyond basic functional mapping.

62. Key elements of this realignment include:

- (a) further definition of the new UNOSSC business model and strategic priorities, and analysis of the functional implications of the changes to the UNOSSC strategic role and unique comparative advantage within this evolving context;
- (b) a shift in emphasis away from primarily administrative functions to a more streamlined, substantive and strategic set of functions, breaking down internal silos, outsourcing knowledge functions and country-level work, and freeing UNOSSC to more effectively enable and advocate for South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as core development approaches and mechanisms;
- (c) exploration of options for strengthening outreach and partnership-building capacities, including for facilitating a more integrated and effective United Nations system-wide approach to South-

South and triangular cooperation through the new United Nations system-wide strategy 2026-2029;

- (d) enhanced operational agility and use of state-of-the-art digital infrastructure by rethinking, integrating and constantly upgrading existing digital platforms such as South-South Galaxy and the Solutions Lab to make them more interactive, dynamic and user-friendly;
- (e) integration of strategic communications functions as a cross-cutting enabler, highlighting the UNOSSC role and expanding its visibility globally, especially with the Global South and United Nations development system entities; and
- (f) optimization of the use of UNOSSC financial resources through streamlining the use of trust funds and improving their administration, ensuring cost recovery as per corporate policy and quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) resolution<sup>13</sup> options, and shifting towards a more strategic advisory role in facilitating access to innovative and diversified financing. In terms of UNOSSC functions, this implies the consolidated management trust funds, ensuring a robust technical secretariat, promoting the use of these resources to catalyse innovation and mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation throughout the programming cycle.

*A simplified and impact-oriented approach to managing for results*

63. To ensure accountability, learning and adaptability in this transformed landscape, and to more fully leverage the capacities of the United Nations development system and other partners to address the most critical Sustainable Development Goal gaps, further simplification and recalibration of the UNOSSC approach to results management will be required. This new approach will allow for a move away from traditional output-focused reporting to emphasize emerging impacts at a systems level.

64. Key aspects of this new approach, as further detailed in the integrated results and resources framework, 2026–2029 (annex 1) will include:

- (a) focusing on a sharply defined and limited set of realistic and transformative outcomes and outputs, closely aligned with the vision outlined in this strategic framework, and ensuring that success indicators are highly relevant and based on readily available data;
- (b) a tiered approach to results achievement that is rooted in a reimagined and more visible UNOSSC that can fully meet the challenge of elevating South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as key complementary components of any future aid architecture;
- (c) inclusion of qualitative methods for measuring and reporting on progress that prioritize the identification of emerging impacts as perceived by beneficiaries, implementing agencies and strategic partners. This qualitative focus will encourage exploration of the interconnected factors driving change and impact;
- (d) establishment and maintenance of processes for continuous reflection, learning and agile adaptation, prioritizing clarity over quantity. By meticulously tracking a much more limited and highly relevant set of key indicators and outcomes, UNOSSC and its clients and partners will gain richer insights, enabling quicker learning and more agile adjustments; and
- (e) development of a more strategic and coherent approach to the definition of strategic priorities at the alliance level. Member States, through the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, will play a proactive role in defining, leveraging and overseeing collaborative efforts to channel strategic South-South and triangular cooperation interventions that contribute to fundamental shifts in people's lives and/or systemic conditions. To drive this strategic prioritization, each priority theme could be closely aligned with specific flagship and catalytic South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, supported by partnership structures designed for impact at scale.

<sup>13</sup> [A/RES/79/226](#), para. 71.

### *Funding*

65. In its Strategic Plan for 2026–2029, UNDP has allocated \$16.6 million to UNOSSC, with \$7.4 million for its institutional budget and \$9.2 million for core programming.<sup>14, 15</sup> This decrease in funding provides a strong incentive for UNOSSC to adopt a more streamlined and strategic role. To maximize its impact given these evolving resource realities, all programming resources, including core and non-core funds, will be exclusively directed towards catalytic purposes, including seed funding for innovative, scalable South-South solutions and support to strategic policy dialogues to unlock broader financial flows.

66. Internally, the strategic deployment of financial resources will drive the strategic realignment of UNOSSC, optimally positioning it to perform its new, more focused role and functions. In line with both UNDP policy and the principle of full and proportional cost recovery as reaffirmed in the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review resolution (A/RES/79/226), UNOSSC will also explore options for adjusting its cost-recovery policies. This is a crucial step towards ensuring the sustainability of its operations throughout the forthcoming programming cycle.

### *Management implications*

67. The proposed management arrangements for the new strategic framework are designed to foster a broader and more impactful alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation. A cornerstone of this architecture is the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, which would maintain its existing role but with a broadened outreach. This will involve providing overall guidance and proactive support for effective South-South and triangular cooperation action in critical priority areas, extending across a wider alliance of actors. These collective efforts will be captured and guided by a comprehensive multi-year action plan.

68. Within this broader alliance, the framework also seeks to improve and enhance the level of United Nations engagement by reinvigorating the Inter-Agency Mechanism. This reinvigoration will build on recent experience with the United Nations Advisory Group established to oversee the evaluation of the previous United Nations system-wide strategy, shifting towards a more focused strategy that is fully aligned with this strategic framework. This renewed focus will also ensure closer and more systematic interaction with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group at the highest levels, strengthening the integration of South-South and triangular cooperation into the daily work of United Nations resident coordinators and UNCTs to better respond to national development priorities and community needs.

69. Furthermore, its enduring relationship with UNDP ensures that UNOSSC benefits from the wide range of support provided by UNDP as its host agency, fostering stability and leveraging existing institutional strengths. Additional details regarding proposed roles and responsibilities, along with the detailed breakdown for the various stakeholders involved in South-South and triangular cooperation, can be found in the institutional arrangements, which are provided as annex 2.

### *Integration and synergies with the second United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation, 2026–2029*

70. A reinvigorated United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation will play a crucial role in achieving the transformative results envisioned in this strategic framework. The Mechanism will operate at the director level for strategic direction and governance and at the expert level for technical support and follow-up, ensuring the effective operationalization of the United Nations system-wide strategy at the global, regional and country levels. Its specific functions in this context will be further detailed in the upcoming United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation, 2026–2029, which will be fully aligned and integrated with this framework.

<sup>14</sup> UNDP allocations depend on core resources recognized during the Strategic Plan period of 2026–2029.

<sup>15</sup> UNOSSC received \$22.3 million in institutional and core programming resources from UNDP during the UNOSSC 2022–2025 strategic framework cycle.

71. The new United Nations system-wide strategy will also further explain how United Nations agencies will integrate South-South and triangular cooperation into their work. UNSDCF's will be the primary tool for applying these activities to achieve concrete results at the country level. To ensure coherence, annual action plans from the Inter-Agency Mechanism will promote synergies among United Nations entities and with partners from a broader South-South and triangular cooperation alliance, improving the coordination of policies, operations and programmatic support.

## VI. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

72. Effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting are critical for ensuring accountability, fostering continuous learning and demonstrating the impact of the strategic framework. As further elaborated in the integrated results and resources framework (annex 1), the proposed approach emphasizes a simplified, impact-oriented results management system, leveraging existing mechanisms and promoting systemic shifts.

73. A robust approach to monitoring and evaluation will guide the assessment of collective efforts by UNOSSC, United Nations agencies and other members of an alliance for South-South and triangular cooperation to achieve the transformational results outlined in this strategic framework:

- (a) **design and coordination.** UNOSSC will execute the strategic framework in coordination with a reinvigorated Inter-Agency Mechanism, in line with the policy guidance from the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and in collaboration with other partners;
- (b) **focus on impact and systemic change.** Moving beyond traditional output-oriented reporting, monitoring efforts will focus on the measurement and analysis of emerging impacts at a systems level. This implies prioritizing and tracking the impact of efforts within a more limited set of high-priority development themes, including through a much more strategic and catalytic leveraging of South-South and triangular cooperation trust funds;
- (c) **data enhancement.** The United Nations system will enhance the availability of its data to measure the results and impact of South-South and triangular cooperation programmes and policies. A web platform, based on successful models such as the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, will be developed by UNOSSC to capture reporting data;
- (d) **evaluations.** A mid-term review and a final independent evaluation of the strategic framework will be conducted. These evaluations will assess key results against expected results and targets, identify lessons learned, and inform decision-making to further enhance United Nations support. UNOSSC will be responsible for developing the terms of reference and coordinating oversight of the final independent evaluation. UNOSSC will develop and implement an evaluation plan covering the strategic framework cycle that includes all the decentralized evaluations. As an observer at the United Nations Evaluation Group, UNOSSC will support Group members in developing and rolling out guidance to integrate South-South and triangular cooperation perspectives into evaluations across the United Nations development system.

74. It is proposed that a midterm review be conducted of the BAPA+40 outcome document,<sup>16</sup> which would provide an additional opportunity to further reflect on the impact of the outcomes of this fundamental shift in the approach taken by UNOSSC and its partners to establishing South-South and triangular cooperation at the centre of a new development paradigm.

75. Monitoring and reporting on the implementation progress of this framework and the United Nations system-wide strategy will be streamlined and integrated into existing mechanisms to avoid creating additional administrative burdens:

- (a) **annual reporting to the Executive Board** of UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). UNOSSC will continue to provide an annual report to the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS as an annex to the UNDP Administrator's annual report;

<sup>16</sup> A/80/39, para. 11.

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- (b) **results aggregation and dissemination.** UNOSSC, through the Inter-Agency Mechanism, is responsible for consolidating inputs, documenting and reporting on the contribution of the United Nations system to the 2030 Agenda through South-South and triangular cooperation, which will also feed into the mandated intergovernmental reports prepared by the Office for the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and the Second Committee of the General Assembly. Enhanced guidance and follow-up will strengthen system-wide reporting, focusing on aggregating South-South and triangular cooperation results. There will be active and targeted dissemination of lessons learned at Headquarters, regional and country levels.

76. Accountability is fundamental to the successful implementation of this strategy and is rooted in clear responsibilities and robust oversight. The institutional arrangements provided as annex 2 represent an initial effort to clarify the suggested roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders involved in South-South and triangular cooperation.

77. Other proposals to strengthen accountability emerging from the recent evaluation of the current United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation include a United Nations agency scorecard. To further strengthen the alignment of South-South and triangular cooperation programming with agency mandates and strategic plans and foster shared ownership and accountability for the implementation of the new system-wide strategy, a simple scorecard will be considered, allowing for annual reporting and review by members of the Inter-Agency Mechanism.

78. These and other proposals to strengthen United Nations system-wide accountability for South-South and triangular cooperation results will be considered in more detail in the second United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation, 2026–2029, which is being designed in full alignment with this strategic framework.

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