

Origin and Evolution of South-South Cooperation

By Gianmarco Vassalli, M.A, SSCC member

It seems natural in history that to address structural problems related to poverty, inequality and underdevelopment in general, the state and the other actors involved have opted for cooperation, that just until recent, had the only connotation of economic integration. New forms of cooperation have evolved in the international arena according to the growing needs and condition of developing countries. From a traditional cooperation, strictly based on economic integration, we have witnessed new modalities of guaranteeing a sustainable growth that have included technical, social and cultural aspects. We have to remember that International Cooperation was born affected by the bipolar system of the Cold War and as a political tool for the main global powers at the time (the West and the Soviet Union) to guarantee political loyalty in the old colonies and potential new allies in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia through financial, economic and humanitarian aid. The evolution of South-South Cooperation is being made possible thanks to the geo-political changes that have affected international relations since the second half of the twentieth century and particularly in the last decade.

South- South Cooperation history can be analyzed, on a chronological line-base, in five periods: The Bandung Conference of 1955, that forecasted a meeting of Asian and African states which celebrated their independence; The Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries in 1978; The Millennium Summit in 2000, where measurable and verifiable goals in a given time, the so-called eight Millennium Development Goals, were established to renew and further impulse the efforts for guaranteeing development; The Nairobi Conference on South-South Cooperation in 2009, organized to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in supporting South-South and triangular cooperation and finally the First Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Summit in 2013, following the summit of this region with the European Union, with a special focus in ensuring access to quality, safe, effective and affordable medicines in the region (Lopez, 2014) .

Relations between countries from the North and the South in recent years have evolved through fundamental changes on the global agenda of the international cooperation for development. The major themes of the international agenda were the Millennium Declaration of 2000, with the promulgation of eight basic development goals (MDGs), later converted into sustainable development goals (SDGs), to be achieved by 2015; the commitment of the international community to achieve the MDGs through adequate funding (Monterrey 2002, Paris 2005); discussions on improving the quality and effectiveness of public aid for development, ODA (Paris 2005, Accra 2008, Busan 2011).

However these major issues, on which the media attention of the international agenda has gravitated through various declarations, have proven quite inconsistent in the pursuit of the MDGs, implying a revision of this agenda, because of the profound changes occurring in the international system, which influenced greatly the relationship between the countries of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the South. These changes can be identified with the financial crisis of 2008, which affected mainly the OECD countries of the North, the donor of Official Development Assistance (ODA), and with the political and economic rise of some emerging countries from the South, which revolutionized the geo-political context (SEGIB, 2014). The first decade of the twenty-first century has been characterized by a consistent economic growth for both developed and developing countries; However, this situation began to change with the financial crisis of 2008, that has had serious

repercussions on international cooperation and, in practice, has meant a progressive reduction in the flow of ODA from donor countries, the hardest hit by the crisis.

Latin American countries have been progressively deprived of ODA in favor of Africa, particularly of its region with the most serious problems of poverty, sub-Saharan Africa, and also of the Middle East-Asia for the strategic war against terrorism. The other fundamental change in the international system coincides with the political and economic rise of some emerging countries. The UNDP (United Nations Development Program) uses the term 'Rise of the South' in its 2013 Human Development Report to indicate such trend confirmed by various statistics, internationally. From 1992 to 2012 more than 40 countries of the South have improved their human development index (UNDP, 2013), ranking as highly human developed ones (Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Algeria, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Mozambique, Malaysia are the countries that have shown the most remarkable improvement). Several realities of the South, with Latin America in the first place, have also innovated their social policies, such as the cases of Brazil with the education and food security programs for all, of Mexico (reducing poverty through remittances) and of India with the extension social rights (UNDP, 2013). As demonstrated by data from the OECD, more and more countries of the South are now classified as Middle Income Countries (MICs) and constitute, geographically speaking, 70% of the globe. In countries historically victims of extreme poverty, such as Brazil and China, statistics show a significant improvement with regard to this indicator that dropped respectively from a 17% to 6% in the former and from a 60% to 15% in the latter. It is expected that in the next decade the production of India, China and Brazil will overtake that of France, Italy, Germany, United Kingdom, Canada and the United States (UNDP, 2013).

Such rise of the South is evident in Latin America and Africa, where high income countries such as Chile, Uruguay, and several in the Caribbean, plus countries like Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina, defined of high middle income, along with other emerging global powers such as China, India and South Africa, are actively participating in all major decisions of the world economy, such as the G20, which has broadened the spectrum of participating countries from only eight, all within the North, to twenty thanks to this new geo-political world order. In fact, it is quite controversial that some high middle-income countries in Latin America nowadays exceed the per capita annual GDP of many countries of the EU (FLACSO, 2012). Even Africa is registering a high economic growth rate, and many countries, apart from the usual belonging to the Indian Ocean, the Maghreb region and the southern part, among which Nigeria, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Angola, Tanzania, have recently achieved the middle income status and are among the most active in the world for economic growth (Business Insider, 2015).

The classification of countries according to their level of income per capita (low, medium or high) is the most utilized method by institutions to allocate cooperation's resources to receptor countries; middle income countries (MICs) make up 70% of the countries in the world, and rightly so for the Development Assistance commission (DAC) are a priority on the international agenda, considering that they have a high purchasing power per capita. However, these considerations can reveal a double edged sword in international cooperation; Despite that in the last decade all countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, except Haiti, have become MICs, some even of high income, we must not forget that the middle income countries, with greater emphasis in Latin America and Africa, are the ones with greater inequality index and major political-economic instability, because dependent on their raw materials; the socio-political history of these two regions, confirms it. Latin America and Africa are the most socially unequal regions in the world, with social inequality represented as inequality in income distribution. Leading countries in the continents with substantial economies, such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, South Africa, Namibia and Nigeria always figure

among the most unequal countries in the world, according to Gini Coefficient (World Bank, 2016).

The biggest problem with these countries is that their economic position does not imply that all of them have the same capabilities and needs, and according to the ECLAC (2013) the case of Latin America and the Caribbean is a perfect example: 90% of countries of this region are defined as middle income, but different socio-economic factors show concretely that this classification does not represent the reality of its population, nevertheless its level of development. The biggest challenges faced by the two southern continents relate to structural problems such as corruption, high inequality, social fragmentation and integration into the international economy, and the international cooperation, through the DAC, where most of the constituent countries belong to the EU, must ensure the sustainability and the correct use of resources for development of this region (SEGIB, 2014). It is not a mystery that Latin America and the Caribbean hold the record for highest concentration of social inequality world-wide (four African countries lead the world ranking, but in totality they show a much weaker purchasing power than their counterparts in Latin America) and that countries considered examples of successful economic development in the continent, such as Mexico, Chile, Brazil and Colombia, figure in the top fifteen worst income unequal in the world, according to Gini coefficient (World Bank, 2016);

International Cooperation is a process that affects economic, social, legal and political aspects and can lead to competition in the international system. The State is always the nucleus of the world policies and it cooperates with international institutions, through regional integration agreements, to overcome the anarchy of the international system. Globalization has turned international society ever more interdependent, but has also fueled a progressive inequality among different societies, in terms of technological development, trade exploitation, and access to the resources. In the past years the world has witnessed a strong reduction of the ODA towards regions in need, mainly Latin America plus the Caribbean and parts of Africa, because of the donor countries fiscal deficit and their doubts over the efficacy of these aids (Alonso, 2015); The Bretton Wood system signified a new economic world order through which international organizations can generate a new global form of sovereignty. In the International system there are clear asymmetries between the North and the South, and a common identity of interests, to be defended in common spaces, is necessary as the new engine for International Cooperation.

Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean necessitate a multilateral defense through International Cooperation for Development to fight against the wealthier countries' internalization of their fortunes, against the trade restrictions imposed by a free market that is not willing to open for the South (ECLAC, 2015). ***And South-South Cooperation is the answer.*** The poor results of the structural adjustment plans, the unclear integral achievement of the Millennium Development goals coupled with the new tendencies of the promotion of unsuccessful strategies of insertion in the international market, the political conditionality, the debt crisis with the consequent donors' fatigue in supplying aid and the geopolitical changes with the constant rise of South in economic and political terms, can be the trigger for new solutions in relation to development problems. In this context South-South Cooperation between Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and MENA Region emerges as a viable and beneficial alternative to foment cash flow, the access to technologies at lower cost, and the strengthening of diplomatic coordination spaces before issues of common interest. ***South-South cooperation is an important complement to international development in order to establish an equitable economic world order, where the purpose of cooperation amongst regions of the South is not the creation of a new category of donors and recipient, but the assuredness that countries participating in this cooperation modality are equal partners, that have something to give and something to receive*** (Carreño, 2013).

Despite the fact that the concept of South-South cooperation has appeared and spread relatively recently and that its initiatives have more than triplicated in the past ten years, this type of cooperation in practice has been considered an expression of solidarity among developing countries since the formation of the Arab League in 1945 (Lopez, 2014). After all during the Cold War, it already existed a successful example of cooperation between countries not belonging to the world economic bipolar system at the time; in 1961, always from the initiatives of some of today's more vibrant Southern realities in economic and demographic terms, the Non-aligned movement was created as a group of developing countries not formally aligned with or against any bloc guided by the following principles: Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; Mutual non-aggression; Mutual non-interference in domestic affairs; Equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence (Lopez, 2014). ***The same principles, with some other which are more relevant to the actual changes in world system, guide today's South-South cooperation: Respect for national sovereignty; National ownership and independence; Equality; Non-conditionality; Non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit (Ayllon, 2010).***

South-South Cooperation is intended as a collaborative structure among developing countries in technical, social, cultural, economic, environmental and political sectors. It can involve two or more countries at bilateral, multilateral, regional, sub regional or interregional level. Developing countries share experiences, expertise, knowledge, skills and resources to jointly accomplish their development targets. Usually this sharing occurs through South-South flow of foreign investment, technology transfer, monetary contributions and South-South trade. There is also another quite recent modality of collaboration, known as triangular cooperation, where traditional donor countries from the North and multilateral organizations smoothen South-South practices through the promotion of training, funding, technology and management. What is essential about South-South Cooperation is that is coordinated by developing countries themselves, through their governments and the help of private and public sector and non-governmental establishments. Its objectives are mutually supportive and interdependent in the bigger frame of international cooperation intentions. These objectives include the fostering of communication to become aware of common problems and how to solve them; the promotion of self-reliance in order to find solutions that respect their own values, needs and aspirations; the acknowledging and responsiveness to the problems of the least developed countries; the use of experiences and knowledge to achieve scientific, economic and technical self reliance; promoting alternative and complementary channels of development in the realm of international cooperation and obtaining a stronger bargaining power before multilateral negotiations (UNDP, 2016).

It is important to consider that even though the continued efforts of international community confirm the insistence to promote a fair and sustainable development, it is inevitable to reflect on the ambiguous results of the consecution of the MDGs, with poverty and inequality persisting widely in different regions of the Southern Hemisphere, especially sub-Saharan Africa, where the large majority of development aid is concentrated (Alonso, 2015). The latest UN reports indicate that most of the MDGs will be achieved in the coming years to a total global figure as a percentage (50% improvement compared to the 1990s) but not in all regions of the world (SEGIB, 2014); Although at the end of 2015 will see a reduction of 50% of extreme poverty, there will be countries like Niger and Chad where extreme poverty may even increase compared to 1990. Africa is the only region in the world in which the number of poor individuals has risen steadily and dramatically between 1981 and 2015, more than doubling from 205 to 414 million people (World Bank- PREM, 2015). And the concept of predatory growth suggests that even in Latin America and the Caribbean the situation will not be much different. In fact, although between 2000 and 2012 extreme poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean has halved, from a 25% to a 12.3%, in 2015 one out of five Latin Americans still lives in chronic poverty. In Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and the Dominican Republic the number of urban chronic poor even surpasses the number of rural chronic poor

(Vakis, Rigolini & Lucchetti, 2014). The wealth has been distributed unequally. One EU diplomat recently described one such country as “very wealthy with a lot of poor people”.

A mitigating factor for the failure to achieve the MDGs, is undoubtedly represented by the pressure of the international system, through cooperation, to achieve greater security, after the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 and the current complicated situation of the Islamic State in the Middle East and Africa, which redirected most of the aid, as part of the so-called "Global War on Terrorism", to countries considered most strategically important for such war (Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Eritrea, Syria, Iran) and to those fragile states threatened by transnational terrorism, as stated in the Monterrey Consensus (UN, 2014).

Tezanos stated (SEGIB, 2012) that *significant advances have been registered only in some of the MDGs indicators, mainly in the eradication of extreme poverty and child mortality, while for the rest, especially in relation to gender inequality and income, as well as environmental sustainability, there has been a constant and unequal distribution of progress in different developing regions. The main criticism towards the achievement of the MDGs points the finger of accusation against the overly focused approach on poverty eradication and the unrealistic, in terms of time, date of achievements of the goals (2015). To make these goals more concrete and effective, the agenda of international cooperation post-2015 decided to expand the range of goals, from MDGs to Sustainable Development Goals, to incorporate other dimensions of development (human and sustainable) neglected by the central struggle to eradicate poverty, and is planning to extend the time of consecution for the 2020-2025 period, as the 2015 results so far, at integral level, have been ambiguous (SEGIB, 2014).*

However the formulation of the new Sustainable Development Goals has come with changes that bode well for the future of cooperation. While the process of formulation of the MDGs foresaw states as central actors for the achievement of objectives, thanks to the 2011 Declaration of Busan, the role of different actors in defining strategies for a more effective cooperation is starting to be emphasized more vividly (Effective Cooperation, 2014). Such declaration, following the Accra Agenda efforts, has the merit of establishing for the first time, after several decades of research and experience, agreed parameters for development cooperation that include new actors in the international cooperation scene such as South-South cooperators, emerging economies, civil society organizations beyond the traditional DAC donors and private lenders (OECD, 2014). The Declaration of Busan, in recognizing the importance of new actors and modalities of cooperation until now ignored in the development world, and in accepting only a slight improvement in the universal realization of the MDGs since the Paris Declaration, aims at imposing a substantial change in the promotion of strategies of world development in regards to previous documents on the subject, implying a mandatory maintenance of the commitments made to ensure sustainable development worldwide as quick as possible, through the principles of responsibility and ownership of development priorities by developing countries, focusing on concrete results and inclusive development unions between the various actors. Hence the process of formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals began with a call, the High-level panel of eminent persons on the post-2015 development agenda, composed of presidents, prime ministers, leaders of civil society, the private sector and representatives of various governments, accompanied by open consultation strategies in order to ensure a more heterogeneous view and strengthen the global partnership for development (Sustainable Development, 2016).

Other changes in the formulation of sustainable development goals concern the key theme of horizontal cooperation and environmental sustainability. In the paradigm of the MDGs, the OECD countries, the donors, were formulating objectives, indicators and strategies in a vertical manner, through the conditioning of development assistance towards the recipients. In the context of the sustainable development goals is clear the need to include receptor countries, now called partners, as active members in the process of designing strategies and

developing politics, empowering them and at the same time respecting their development priorities, on a symmetrical fashion, horizontally, as South-South Cooperation remarks (Sustainable Development, 2016). ***The failure of donor countries to target the 0.7% of their GNI, as agreed in various declarations, to the assistance for the development, with only 5 of the 29 countries that respect this agreement, and the influence in recipient countries' policies to use assistance as a lobby mechanism has made possible and necessary the urge of more equitable and new practices of cooperation.*** Under the excuse of the principle of political conditionality, developed countries use their economic and military institutions and official aid programs of international cooperation as a political tool to influence internal affairs of underdeveloped countries, creating asymmetrical relationships and a situation of growth without development, as Bhaduri (2008) states; the practice of intrusive regionalism, relies on the concept of coercion: through humanitarian/military intervention and political/economic pressure, member states of a regional block are 'forced' to give up their sovereignty. Latin America and Africa, as any other developing region in the nineteenth century, have constantly witnessed this behavior, from peace operations to overthrow of legitimately elected political parties (Kinzer, 2006).

Evidence suggests that until now traditional forms of multilateral cooperation have partly failed in achieving the basic targets of sustainable development goals, firstly introduced by the Millennium Development Goals declaration of 2000. Unconventional forms of cooperation are needed to solve asymmetrical and development problems; key events such as the economic and political rise of the South and the ambiguous results of the various declarations on development issues have united the developing South perhaps as never before in history, especially Africa and LAC for their common history and the mutual understanding of development needs, and the international cooperation must acknowledge these changing trends. After all these considerations, it appears clear that South-South cooperation may be the best option to guarantee a growth with development for these southern continents.

The role of South-South cooperation, a cooperation, between emerging economies that is based on the interchange of cultural experiences and technical resources in a symmetrical, horizontal manner, without constraints of compliance, is consolidating itself to reduce regional and international asymmetries at political, economic and commercial level. The rise of the South and the continuous increase in the number of high and middle-income countries in developing continents, must not lead to a significant reduction of international cooperation towards this vast part of the world, above all, because in this part it is concentrated about half of the world's poorest persons and the highest index of inequality. Suspending cooperation towards these regions threatens to ruin their current growth and not capitalize it in terms of human development. The MICs are the most vulnerable countries to a possible economic downturn. Hence an alternative is to provide new strategies of cooperation with the MICs less reliant upon official development aid and more oriented to technical, political and cultural cooperation.

If nothing else, we can state that the rise of the South and the crisis of the North have drawn closer, perhaps as never before in history, the different continents and this fact cannot be ignored by International cooperation. Only the cooperation relationship between the EU and LAC involves 61 countries: 28 from the EU and 33 from Latin America and the Caribbean, representing a total of one billion people, in other words one-seventh of the world population. This relationship can be considered the highest negotiating instance in the world trading since 1999, in Rio de Janeiro, when the trading system of bi regional biennial summits of Heads of State and Government was adopted (Sanahuja, 2011). To the same degree, the surge of emerging economies, coupled with the ambiguous results of the various declarations on development issues, had the effect of uniting the developing South. Especially Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa because of their racial ties and a common historical background marked by the struggle for freedom and self-determination. Only the Africa – South America (ASA) summits reunite 66 countries from the two continents, 12 from South America and 54

from Africa, encompassing a total population of more than 1.4 billion people (Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Brazil, 2016). If we consider the role of the United States as the largest donor of ODA in the world and the ascendant rise of South-South cooperation, we can assert that International Cooperation is the only practice of development common to all world, a world that shares history, culture and objectives of democracy, particularly in the most unequal regions of the world, Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. International cooperation must acknowledge the recent changing trends in international relations, and consequently recognize South-South cooperation as the most viable option to guarantee a growth with development for these continents.

Bibliography

- Alonso, J. (2015) ‘Más allá de la ayuda: redefiniendo el sistema de cooperación para el desarrollo’ in Ocampo, J. (ed.). *Gobernanza Global y Desarrollo: Nuevos desafíos y prioridades de la cooperación internacional*. ECLAC- United Nations: Siglo 21 Editores, pp. 161-206. Available at: <http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/38855/GobernanzaGlobalyDesarrollo.pdf?sequence=1>
- Ayllon, B. (2010) *La Cooperación Sur-Sur en Latino América. Utopía y Realidad*. Madrid: La Catarata
- Bhaduri, A. (2008) *Predatory Growth*. Vol - XLIII No. 16, April 19, 2008. Available at: <http://sanhati.com/articles/739/>
- Business Insider (2015) The 13 fastest-growing economies in the world, Markets. Available at: <http://www.businessinsider.com/world-bank-fast-growing-global-economies-2015-6>
- Carreño, E. (2013) *África y América Latina: Una Apuesta por la Cooperación Sur-Sur*. Instituto de Estudios Internacionales - Universidad de Chile. Available at: <http://www.iei.uchile.cl/noticias/90000/afrika-y-america-latina-una-apuesta-por-la-cooperacion-sur-sur>
- ECLAC (2015) *Desarrollo social inclusivo: una nueva generación de políticas para superar la pobreza y reducir la desigualdad en América Latina y el Caribe*. United Nations: Santiago de Chile, Available at: http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/39100/S1600099_es.pdf?sequence=4
- FLACSO (2012) *Escenarios Globales Inciertos: los Desafíos de la CELAC en Secretaría General de la FLACSO*, pp. 1-146. Available at: <http://www10.iadb.org/intal/intalcdi/PE/2012/12129.pdf>
- Kinzer, S. (2006) *Overthrow: America’s Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*. New York: Henry Holt
- Lopez, S. (2014) *Cronología e Historia de la Cooperación Sur-Sur: Un aporte desde Iberoamérica*. Programa Iberoamericano para el fortalecimiento de la Cooperación Sur-Sur- SEGIB. Available at: <http://www10.iadb.org/intal/intalcdi/PE/2014/14230.pdf>
- Missaglia, M. (2014) *La Cooperazione e la crisi del Nord in Agudelo, J. (2014) Dossier: Quale Cooperazione dopo il 2015? Missione Oggi*: Brescia
- OECD (2014) *The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation*. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/busanpartnership.htm>
- Sanahuja, J. (2011). *La política de desarrollo de la UE y América Latina: Estrategias e instrumentos de cooperación para la asociación birregional*. Instituto Complutense de Estudios Internacionales: Madrid

- SEGIB (2012) IberoAmérica en la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo Mundial en Informe de la Cooperación Sur-Sur en Iberoamérica, pp. 135-146. Available at: http://www.cooperacionsursur.org/images/informes/informe_sur_sur_2012.pdf
- SEGIB (2014) Informe de la Cooperación Sur-Sur en Iberoamérica 2013-2014. Available at: <http://www10.iadb.org/intal/intalcdi/PE/2014/14150.pdf>
- [Sustainable Development \(2016\) High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, United Nations. Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf](http://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf)
- UN (2014) Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution Condemning Violent Extremism, Underscoring Need to Prevent Travel, Support for Foreign Terrorist Fighters. MEETINGS COVERAGE AND PRESS RELEASES-Security Council. Available at: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11580.doc.htm>
- [UN \(2014\) United Nations Peacebuilding Commission. Available at: http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/)
- UNDP (2013) *The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*. Human Development Report 2013. Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/14/hdr2013_en_complete.pdf
- UNDP (2016) South-South Cooperation: Sustainable Development. Available at: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/development-impact/south-south-cooperation/>
- UNESCO (2005) Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Available at: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31038&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
- Vakis, R., Rigolini, J. & Lucchetti, L. (2015) Left Behind- Chronic Poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, Washington. Available at: http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/LAC/chronic_poverty_overview.pdf
- World Bank- PREM (2015) Poverty Reduction and Economy Management- Poverty Reduction and Equity. Available at: (http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/State_of_the_poor_per_April17.pdf)
- World Bank (2016) E-atlas of Global development - GINI index. Available at: <http://www.app.collinsindicate.com/worldbankatlas-global/en-us>
- UNESCO (2005) Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Available at: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31038&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

The Role of South-South Cooperation Council for Sustainable Development (SSCC)

Justification

Since the inception of International Relations, it seemed logical and semantically accepted to divide the world between North and South. South and North are primarily geo-economic definitions, and express concepts that have been subject of rhetorical open discussions since colonialism and the formulation of Prebisch dependency theory. Generally, the North defines itself as Christian, democratic, capitalist and includes geographically Western Europe, North America and economically also Australia and Japan. The South includes the rest of the world, Africa, Asia, Middle East, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific regions. However nowadays it could be argued that South and North are more metaphorical than geographical expressions. The BRICS countries, for example, are economies that for size, links with the rest of the world and the rate of development can be easily included among those of the North: their slowdown can only have a negative impact on other countries (Missaglia, 2014). Paradoxically, the South, where the majority of countries of the world system are found, has always lived in crisis in the modern era; however, we have never talked about global crisis. Only when the 2008 crisis hit the North, the center of the world, we started talking about a crisis of global dimension due to the impact that has deployed and is deploying on the rest of the world. It raises a natural question whether the world system has reached a negative interdependence of its actors by establishing an inversely proportional equation such that the North can be comfortable only if the South is in crisis and vice versa.

SSCC promotes cooperation practices according to a geographical region of interest: the South. The three coordinating axes of SSCC (*Education, South* and *Pre/Post-Conflict*) justify its decision to operate in the South. In relation to Education, SSCC acts in accordance with the resolution of the four problems enunciated in the 2015 Sustainable Development 4th Goal of Quality Education: Enrolment in primary education in developing countries has reached 91 per cent but 57 million children remain out of school; More than half of children that have not enrolled in school live in sub-Saharan Africa; An estimated 50 per cent of out-of-school children of primary school age live in conflict-affected areas; 103 million youth worldwide lack basic literacy skills, and more than 60 per cent of them are women.

According to the SSCC primary focus, the fact that an estimated 50 per cent of out-of-school children of primary school age live in conflict-affected areas explains its mission and it leads to action for the two remaining axes: countries of the South share a racial-historical background marked by violence, conflicts and the struggle for self determination and independence, and nowadays are the only geographical areas where we witness a post conflict political and social reconstruction based on dialogues for the promotion of peace. The investment on the formation of human capital since primary school is of basic importance for developing and conflict afflicted areas of the South, so to build new foundations for an inclusive, equal and conscious society. Considering Education as a tool for change in all its aspects by stressing the vital importance played by Arts, Culture and other forms of informal training is at the ground base of SSCC vision. SSCC promotes its initiatives in respect and compliance with the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions issued by the UNESCO in 2005.

The Convention has the following objectives:

- (a) to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions;
- (b) to create the conditions for cultures to flourish and to freely interact in a mutually beneficial manner;

(c) to encourage dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchanges in the world in favor of intercultural respect and a culture of peace;

(d) to foster interculturality in order to develop cultural interaction in the spirit of building bridges among peoples;

(e) to promote respect for the diversity of cultural expressions and raise awareness of its value at the local, national and international levels;

(f) to reaffirm the importance of the link between culture and development for all countries, particularly for developing countries, and to support actions undertaken nationally and internationally to secure recognition of the true value of this link;

(g) to give recognition to the distinctive nature of cultural activities, goods and services as vehicles of identity, values and meaning;

(h) to reaffirm the sovereign rights of States to maintain, adopt and implement policies and measures that they deem appropriate for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions on their territory;

(i) to strengthen international cooperation and solidarity in a spirit of partnership with a view, in particular, to enhancing the capacities of developing countries in order to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions.

Lastly, the continuous pressure and efforts made by the UN to better respond to the challenges of peace building also needs to be highlighted: in the same year when Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions was adopted, the UN also approved the creation of a new Peacebuilding Commission, establishing through the resolution of the General Assembly and the Security Council a Peacebuilding Fund and Peacebuilding Support Office. The Peacebuilding Commission supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict, bringing together relevant actors in the global arena such international donors, international financial institutions, national governments, and proposing integrated strategies for post-conflict and Peacebuilding, making *de facto* the work of *SSCC* completely pertinent and aligned to the international agenda and the two other axes.

Target Group

The beneficiaries of the *SSCC* projects are all individuals, prioritizing children from primary education from conflict-affected and pre/post conflict areas in the South, who will receive formation in Arts and other alternative forms of education always through the respect and awareness of their culture. In general beneficiaries are all individuals who want to contribute and be an active part of the reconstruction of their society.

Project Implementation

The strength of *SSCC* is that it works through a network of prominent intellectuals, academics, policy makers, artists and activists for peace, mainly coming from post-conflict affected areas, under the framework of recognized alternative thinking, horizontal and inclusive development oriented institutions, such as the UNESCO, to establish a new and unique paradigm of development for the South: stimulate a culture of peace and sustainable development through the sharing and the implementation of good innovative practices of

Education, Arts and Culture. *The historic cycle the world is now facing is right on time to recognize South-South cooperation as the most viable modality of guaranteeing inclusive development for the often culturally forgotten regions of the South that are still being affected by violence and conflict and look forward to rebuild their future on a base of dialogue and peace.*

In order to generate adequate and inclusive condition of formation, always through the respect for any culture, *SSCC* empowers local individuals by having them trained and formed by qualified 'South' professionals in practices of development and education/arts with the objective of leaving them responsible and capable for the formation of their communities in loco.

Communication and Funding

Considering that the network of *SSCC* include recognized thinkers, academics, artists and policy makers, mainly from the South, with considerable gravitas, these actors are responsible for advocating, crowd-funding or for the search of co-financing. *SSCC* relies mainly on partnerships, donations, funding and calls for projects from strong and expert international and national entities focused on education and culture, such the UNESCO and Ministries of Culture/Education, from multilateral institutions and initiatives that promote South-South Cooperation in the geographic and working areas of interest of *SSCC*, such as the UN system (UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, UNESCO), the NEPAD, the IADB, ADB, the OAS, the CDB, the AU, the AfDB plus from corporate sector interested in social responsibility practices and present in *SSCC* regions and areas of focus. To the same degree, *SSCC* relies on the support of international and national initiatives compromised with the promotion of peace in pre/post-conflict areas, such as the UN Peacebuilding Commission, and particularly the Peacebuilding Fund, of important humanitarian non-governmental organizations such as International Rescue Committee and also of governments. It is also important to mention that *SSCC* recognizes the importance of forums and other initiatives about *SSC* cooperation practices between Latin America, Caribbean, Sub Saharan Africa Asia/Pacific and MENA Region, such as the Africa-South America (ASA) Summits, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Summits, Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the India-Africa Forum Summits (IAFS) to establish common spaces and priorities for action, and possibly participate.

In terms of communication, always bearing in mind the strong team of academics, policy makers, intellectuals and artists that compose *SSCC*, its website is designed to serve as a comprehensive think tank that includes numerous and reliable literature about South-South cooperation practices in general. More specifically it works as a research and advocacy center focused on peace processes, post-conflict issues, education, art, culture and political transparency in the geographic areas of interest, through essays, articles, conferences, seminars, videos, that are intended to reach and be visible in news/websites of strategic international and national partners for development as the ones mentioned above.