

Side event of the United Nations Development Cooperation Forum on:

South-South Climate Cooperation in Support of the SDGs
(Conference room 7, United Nations Headquarters, Monday 21, May 2018)

Notes for Francisco Sagasti's intervention

- Thanks to the United Nations Office for South South Cooperation, and its Director Jorge Chediek, for organizing this side event at the UN Development Cooperation Forum and for inviting me to participate.
- As a participant and observer of cooperation initiatives between developing countries for more than four decades, I can appreciate the progress and strides made in this field of international relations. Evolving initially from political initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s, incorporating the principles and concepts of collective self-reliance in the 1970s, and acquiring a concrete expression in the 1978 Buenos Aires Plan of Action on Technical Cooperation between Developing Countries, what in the mid-200s became South-South Cooperation has now come of age. It is a clearly established practice that draws commitment from all developing countries and continues to grow according to the principles of mutual interest and respect for national sovereignty.
- The rise of South-South Cooperation initiatives has also influenced conventional North-South cooperation initiatives, stimulating a transition to novel schemes in which Triangular —or as some prefer to call it Trilateral— cooperation programs and projects that are increasingly gaining track and becoming a widespread practice. Moreover, after a learning process, South-South Cooperation initiatives have managed to avoid the well-known problems and pitfalls of traditional form of North-South cooperation.
- It is worthwhile remembering that the 1955 Bandung Asian-African Conference, which led to the creation of the Non-Aligned movement, stressed the importance of collaboration between developing countries “on the basis of mutual interest and respect for national sovereignty ... in the form of: experts, trainees, pilot project and equipment for demonstration purposes; [and] exchange of know-how.”¹ This clearly indicates that science, technology and knowledge have been present in South-South Cooperation since its beginning, but as we are now fully immersed in the “knowledge society” they have acquired a critical and most important character. While the average income per capita of the countries of the OECD is about 80 times greater than that of the 40 poorest countries according to World Bank statistics, indicators of science and technology capabilities show a much greater and startling disparity: publications of scientific articles per 100,000 inhabitants are 270 times greater in the former than in the later countries, and patent applications by residents per 100,000 inhabitants are 2,000 greater (see annex to this note).

¹ Final communiqué of the Asian-African Conference of Bandung, 24 April, 1955 (paragraph 2 of section on economic cooperation).

- The 1979 Vienna Conference on Science and Technology for Development agreed on a program of action to begin redressing these disparities and building endogenous science and technology capabilities in developing countries. Political events shifted the orientation of dominant economic policies and the Vienna agreements were soon put aside, including the creation of a special fund to support cooperation programs aimed at creating and consolidating science and technology capabilities in developing countries.
- As South-South Cooperation initiatives become a well established practice, as Triangular Cooperation begins to supersede traditional North-South cooperation, and as the importance of science and technology in coping with climate change and other global challenges is increasingly recognized, it is high time to renew our commitment to build science and technology capabilities in developing countries, and to bridge the knowledge divide between rich and poor countries.
- The conference that will be held in Buenos Aires next year, four decades after the launch of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action on Technical Cooperation between Developing Countries, provides a propitious setting for establishing a new financial facility to promote and stimulate science and technology cooperation between developing countries, and for transforming North-South science and technology cooperation into renewed forms of Triangular Cooperation.