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**Research Report**

## Developing country coalitions in multilateral negotiations: Addressing key issues and priorities of the Global South agenda

Research Paper, No. 98

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

South Centre, Geneva

*Suggested Citation:* Timossi, Adriano José (2019) : Developing country coalitions in multilateral negotiations: Addressing key issues and priorities of the Global South agenda, Research Paper, No. 98, South Centre, Geneva

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/232217>

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**SOUTH  
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Research  
Paper  
September 2019

**98**

**DEVELOPING COUNTRY COALITIONS IN  
MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS:  
ADDRESSING KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITIES OF  
THE GLOBAL SOUTH AGENDA**

Adriano José Timossi





# **RESEARCH PAPERS**

**98**

## **DEVELOPING COUNTRY COALITIONS IN MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS: ADDRESSING KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITIES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH AGENDA**

**Adriano José Timossi\***

**SOUTH CENTRE**

**SEPTEMBER 2019**

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View of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York. Photo credit: UN Photo

## ABSTRACT

The recent increasing and unprecedented attacks on multilateralism and its institutions as well as the growing dangers of weakening international cooperation are regrettably leading to an enormous setback in the history of the international system. These developments could reverse decades of collective efforts to establish a more stable, equitable and inclusive path of development and social justice for all. An immediate impact is that international negotiations, which have increasingly become important for developing countries over the past decades, are now becoming even more complex. If the resurging path of unilateralism and protectionism adopted by some powerful countries is maintained, the risks of further deterioration grow even larger. The instabilities of the contemporary world pose serious risks to the achievement of the longstanding development goals of the Global South such as poverty eradication, the South's ability to successfully address emerging challenges such as climate change, and to overall global stability, a pattern not seen since the Second World War. In this context, developing countries' negotiating coalitions such as the Group of 77 (G77) + China and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), while respecting and adapting to the differences that might emerge within these large groups, need to remain together and ensure that their coalitions are preserved and strengthened. Working collectively will improve negotiating capacity and leverage and increase bargaining power of developing countries in the multilateral negotiations in order to get more balanced outcomes.

*Les attaques incessantes et sans précédent formulées contre le multilatéralisme et ses institutions et l'affaiblissement croissant des dispositifs de coopération internationale sont à l'origine d'un recul considérable et pour le moins regrettable du système international. Cette évolution pourrait remettre en cause des décennies d'efforts menées collectivement pour favoriser un développement plus stable, plus équitable et plus inclusif et instaurer la justice sociale pour tous. Elle a pour conséquence immédiate de rendre les négociations internationales encore plus complexes pour les pays en développement, des négociations devenues essentielles pour eux au cours des dernières décennies. Si certains pays parmi les plus puissants persistent sur la voie de l'unilatéralisme et du protectionnisme, les risques sont grands d'une nouvelle détérioration des relations internationales. L'instabilité qui règne actuellement dans le monde, que l'on n'avait plus observée depuis la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, est susceptible de compromettre gravement la réalisation des objectifs de développement*



*pour les pays du Sud, telle que l'élimination de la pauvreté, la capacité de ces pays à relever avec succès les nouveaux défis liés au changement climatique et la stabilité mondiale en général. Dans ce contexte, les coalitions formées par les pays en développement, à l'image du Groupe des 77 (G77) + Chine et du Mouvement des pays non alignés doivent, tout en respectant les différences qui peuvent apparaître en leur sein, faire preuve d'unité et agir de sorte à préserver et renforcer leur rôle. En agissant conjointement, les pays en développement pourront accroître leur capacité et leur force de négociation dans le cadre des négociations multilatérales et seront à même de peser davantage sur les discussions, l'objectif étant pour eux de parvenir à plus d'équilibre dans les résultats obtenus.*

*Lamentablement, los recientes ataques cada vez más frecuentes y sin precedentes contra el multilateralismo y sus instituciones, así como los crecientes peligros que conlleva una cooperación internacional debilitada, implican un grave retroceso en la historia del sistema internacional. Estas tendencias podrían revertir décadas de esfuerzos colectivos dedicados a establecer un camino más estable, equitativo e inclusivo de desarrollo y justicia social para todos. Un efecto inmediato es la complejidad que están adquiriendo las negociaciones internacionales, que en las últimas décadas se han vuelto cada vez más importantes para los países en desarrollo. Si se continúa por la vía del unilateralismo y del proteccionismo, que ha vuelto a resurgir y ya han seguido algunos países poderosos, aumenta el riesgo de que las negociaciones internacionales se deterioren aún más. Las inestabilidades del mundo contemporáneo suponen un grave peligro para la consecución de los objetivos de desarrollo que desde siempre han perseguido los países del Sur, como la erradicación de la pobreza, la capacidad del Sur para abordar con éxito los desafíos emergentes como el cambio climático y lograr la estabilidad mundial en general. Se trata de un patrón que no se observaba desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial. En este contexto, las coaliciones de negociación de los países en desarrollo, como el Grupo de los 77 (G-77) y China, y el Movimiento de los Países No Alineados (MNOAL), deben permanecer unidos, respetando las diferencias que puedan surgir dentro de estos grandes grupos y adaptándose a ellas, y garantizar que sus coaliciones se preserven y fortalezcan. Trabajar colectivamente mejorará la capacidad de negociación y la influencia de los países en desarrollo y aumentará su poder en las negociaciones multilaterales para así obtener resultados más equilibrados.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

For the past seventy years or so, since multilateralism and its institutions emerged from the ashes of a devastating Second World War (WWII) which cost millions of lives, the multilateral system, in particular at the United Nations (UN), has been and continues to still be today the main arena for debating issues of concern for the world community. The UN has served as the platform for advancing international cooperation and creating a more inclusive environment for all countries independent of their size, economic development or military power. Multilateralism was the driving force to initiate more inclusive discussions, to effectively negotiate and, ultimately, reach an agreement on many core global issues and on actions to be taken for implementing the outcomes. A great focus was obviously on world stability and peace and improving development conditions, particularly for those countries left out of economic growth.

In the 1960s, for instance, when the negotiating platform of the Group of 77 (G77) + China was created, an important dialogue was held in the North-South context with the aim of setting actions for reducing inequalities and guaranteeing inclusiveness in the system. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was also born. Those developing countries that did not benefit from past economic growth wanted to get the opportunity to benefit from it. They wanted to be included in the economic development processes of prosperity. In addition, they also wanted developed countries to provide some sort of compensation for historical mistakes after years of colonization that provided economic benefits to colonizing powers and which greatly contributed to reach the high standards achieved and the level of development they enjoy today. They also called for the North to agree to reforms in the international system with the view of contributing to create an environment more supportive of development through a true path of growth and structural transformation in the South. This goal would be in the interest of developed and developing countries and their people<sup>1</sup>.

Today, as we live in a world marked by a rise in unilateral and protectionist policies, the multilateralism system and its institutions, a system built upon cooperation among states that governed the world for the past seven decades, is under serious attack. The survival of the system will depend on the capacity and political will to keep open the door for international cooperation in the years to come. The door is still ajar but this is without any doubt being challenged. If this cooperation and commitment to multilateralism and its role in sustaining peace and development erode, the system erodes.

The world and particularly developing countries are facing many challenges. These include: (i) the weak and potentially even worsening levels of economic growth and rising debt; (ii) growing geopolitical tensions and socio-economic instability with the return of social unrest, as a result of growing inequality and rising unemployment, particularly in the youth and, the impact of the implementation of austerity policies that were adopted to deal with the 2008 financial crisis; (iii) the increasing impacts of environmental and biodiversity degradation and climate change with recent examples being Cyclones Idai and Kenneth with devastating impacts in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe; (iv) the rise of unilateralism

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<sup>1</sup> Gamani Corea, "The Negotiating platform of the Group of 77. The platform in action – a historical overview". Input prepared for the South Commission (Geneva, 1988).

and trade protectionism by some major powers and heightened global trade tensions; (v) the rise of populism and xenophobia at a level not seen since the Second World War; and (vi) unprecedented and rising attacks on multilateralism and its institutions which undermine their crucial role in maintaining and advancing peace and security and promoting development and human rights, the key pillars of the UN. All of these factors together increase global tensions with risks of instability in the global order established post-WWII and is leading to an environment of uncertainties which could imperil the development prospects of developing countries and lead to more serious negative consequences.

This paper enumerates some of the achievements of the Global South. It also provides a list of key events and negotiations in 2019 (see Annex 1), with a focus in Geneva and New York. It further discusses some priorities and issues for consideration. The ultimate goal should be to revitalize and defend multilateralism, and to act collectively to protect the common good, as this is the unique and inclusive way in which developing countries have the opportunity to deliver on the needs of their peoples, particularly of the most vulnerable, to promote inclusive development, and fight injustice in all forms.

## **II. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE NEGOTIATING AGENDA OF THE G77 AND CHINA**

A very first important and historical event for developing countries and the international community taking place in the year 2019 is the Chairmanship of the G77 and China of its New York Chapter by the State of Palestine through the year. It is the first time that Palestine presides over the largest negotiating group in the UN system. Established in 1964, the Group of 77 and China represents the voice and concerns of 134 developing countries in the multilateral arena, a strong coalition composed of two-thirds of the UN membership and 80 percent of the world's population. The Group works mostly on economic and development issues at the second committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York<sup>2</sup>.

In the work of the General Assembly, developing countries have achieved important outcomes when it managed to remain united in defence of their positions. Some important examples are the establishment of UNCTAD in 1964 and the continuing existence of the Group of 77 and China for the past decades, despite outside pressures to divide and weaken its collective role and its increase in membership, today with 134 Member States. Key areas of action with important achievements in recent years are climate change, sustainable development, ensuring that international principles such as common but differentiated responsibilities and special and differential treatment for developing countries continue to be reflected in international arrangements, international tax and the impact of international investment and trade agreements, among others. The Group gathers every year at high-level at the annual ministerial meeting of the G77 and China held at the side-lines of the high-level general debate of the UNGA, as done last September 2018. The Ministerial Declaration is a blueprint for the developing countries' negotiation coalitions, a must-read document for all those interested in the cause of the South. In its adopted declaration in September 2018 (see Box 1), the 134 Member Countries recognized that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty remains the greatest global challenge. Therefore, it is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. Poverty eradication and under-development are still main issues for the global South<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> As the State of Palestine has a non-member status at the UNGA similar to the Vatican, a resolution had to be proposed in order to allow Palestine to have rights of a full participation in the work of the UNGA. The resolution on the Chair of the Group of 77 for 2019 (A/RES/73/5) voted with 146 votes in favour entitles Palestine to all procedural rules of a Member State to represent the Group during its presidency. This includes making statements, submitting and co-sponsoring proposals and amendments, giving rights of reply and raising points of order.

<sup>3</sup> Ministerial Declaration adopted by the 42nd Annual Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 (New York, 27 September 2018). Available from <http://www.g77.org/doc/Declaration2018.htm>.

**Box 1: Key Priorities as per the Chairman's Statement of 15 January 2019**

- Uphold and defend the interests of the Group and to strengthen the positions of its members in the United Nations.
- The founding principles of the G77 are interconnected with the principles that form the international consensus and with the purposes, principles and goals of the United Nations. These principles constitute the strongest pillar for upholding the multilateral system and its institutions, as well as the rule of international law, and mutual cooperation, especially in the context of the assaults underway against this system.
- Preservation of the multilateral international order and by strengthening the ties that unite the G77 and all our partners in the United Nations, on the basis of respect for national sovereignty, support of the development agenda, and protection of the interests of the South and of the developing countries and their just causes.
- To reinforce South-South cooperation and to continue pursuit of the initiatives undertaken to implement the 2030 Agenda for development, including as they pertain to financing for development and solidarity through development, as complementary to, and not as an alternative to North-South cooperation and to triangular cooperation, given the key role of the international community and partners in the field of development in advancing the implementation of the development goals.
- Sustainable human development is development by the people and for the people and with their participation, and the right to development is a right we shall strive to strengthen and realize, together with all other human rights enshrined in international law and in the G77's founding and central documents.
- Ensure and preserve this right also for peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, in line with the decisions of the Group, including the Johannesburg Plan of Action, and in accordance with the relevant provisions of international law, including international humanitarian law, and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Palestine cannot be an exception.
- With the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the international community as a whole has endorsed an action plan to achieve prosperity for all peoples of the world and considers the elimination of poverty in all its forms and dimensions as an indispensable requirement for achieving sustainable development in line with the principles adopted at Rio+20, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. This issue will be at the top of our priorities throughout this year.
- Climate change has negative and destructive implications and dangerous ramifications for our peoples more than any others, despite the fact that we are far less responsible for emissions and pollution than others. Addressing this situation requires bold decisions, without delay, to preserve the future of our peoples and our planet. This urgent matter, and the concerns and interests of the Group in this regard, will be at the top of the priorities of the Palestinian chairmanship of the Group.
- Sustainable development and community building is a long-term investment in peacebuilding, and in strengthening our world's immunity to crises, disasters, conflicts and wars, on the path to a world that upholds human rights, advances solidarity through development, as well as knowledge sharing, capacity building and technical assistance. This must include enhanced developmental assistance and economic resources towards eliminating poverty and hunger, addressing the digital gap, providing decent work, advancing sustainable development, ensuring justice, eliminating child labor, slavery and human trafficking, and ensuring benefit sharing and a just distribution of economic prosperity and growth, including for women and youth.
- The Members of our Group have also played a pivotal and principled role in defending the inalienable rights of peoples, including their right to self-determination and national independence, and many countries in the South continue to suffer from conflicts, wars, violence and terrorism, aggression and occupation. The State of Palestine will continue to work together with the Members of the Group to confront these challenges. The establishment of peace and security in the Middle East will significantly enhance the opportunities for realization of sustainable and stable development for all countries of the region.
- We will dedicate our efforts to protecting the interests of the Group in all its geographical components, guided by the principle of unity in diversity, including Africa, and with the needed attention for the Least Developed Countries, Small Developing Island States, Middle Income Countries, and peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, so as to ensure no one is left behind.

Source: Statement by H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, Chair of the Group of 77, on the occasion of the Handover Ceremony of the Group of 77 (New York, 15 January 2019). Available from <https://www.g77.org/statement/getstatement.php?id=190115b>.

2019 will mark the commemoration of important international years and launch of decades under the leadership of the United Nations, most of them proposed by developing countries and approved with the support of their coalitions in New York or other Chapters. These international decades currently observed by the United Nations are occasions to mark particular events or topics in order to promote, through awareness and action, the objectives of the organization.

Some of the celebrations are the United Nations Decade of Family Farming to be implemented by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in cooperation with UN agencies, Member States and other key stakeholders. We are also celebrating the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa and structural transformation, a key area of work UNCTAD is very keen on. Below is a list of some selected international years and decades (see Box 2).

<b>Box 2: International Years/Decade<sup>4</sup></b>	
2019	International Year of Moderation (A/RES/72/129)
2019	International Year of Indigenous Languages (A/RES/71/178)
2019-2028	United Nations Decade of Family Farming (A/RES/72/239)
2016-2025	Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (A/RES/70/293)
2014-2024	United Nations Decade on Sustainable Energy for All (A/RES/67/215)
2011-2020	Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (A/RES/65/119) United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (A/RES/65/161)
2010-2020	UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (A/RES/62/195)
Source: AT/South Centre, 2019	

## ***II.1. South-South Cooperation***

### **II.1.1. UN Second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40)**

Developing countries today face multiple interlinked macroeconomic, financial, climate, and development challenges; in this context, South-South cooperation is an important element for developing countries to meet these challenges individually and collectively, and in multilateral North-South dialogue and global governance<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> UN Observances available at <https://www.un.org/en/sections/observances/united-nations-observances/>

<sup>5</sup> Vicente Paolo Yu, “Key Issues for BAPA+40: South-South Cooperation and the BAPA+40 Subthemes”, South Centre Research Paper 91 (February 2019). Available from <https://www.southcentre.int/wp->



At the very beginning of January, the Palestinian presidency started with the task of leading the developing countries' coalition in New York in the negotiations of the draft outcome text of the **UN Second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40)** held in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 20 to 22 March 2019.

The high-level conference marked the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC) held in Buenos Aires from 30 August to 12 September 1978<sup>6</sup>. The Conference adopted the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries<sup>7</sup>, a blueprint document for TCDC. BAPA+40 aimed at reviewing the trends and challenges faced in the implementation of the action plan adopted forty years ago. It also reviewed South-South cooperation (SSC) and triangular cooperation, in particular the role of the United Nations, in supporting and promoting such cooperation and identifying new opportunities, as well as challenges and suggestions to overcome them<sup>8</sup>. Building upon the BAPA and Nairobi Outcome of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, BAPA+40 aimed also at enabling the international community to consolidate its approach to the role of South-South and triangular Cooperation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals.

The President of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the General Assembly, H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa (Ecuador), appointed H.E. Ms. Audra Plepyté (Lithuania) and H.E. Mr. Adonia Ayebare (Uganda), both Permanent Representatives to the UN in New York, as the co-Facilitators of the preparatory process with the responsibility of conducting the negotiations on the zero draft towards a successful final outcome text which was presented for adoption by Member States in Buenos Aires.

For the G77 and China, BAPA+40 was also an opportunity to identify challenges with a view to enhance the current institutional arrangements to effectively support SSC, to promote the SSC agenda and to step up SSC contribution to the ambitious goal of eradicating poverty in all its forms, dimensions, taking advantage of the significant achievements by developing countries.

During the preparatory negotiating process on the outcome document and during the Conference in Buenos Aires in March 2019, the G77 and China maintained its longstanding position of the group that SSC is a complement and not a substitute for North-South cooperation which remains the main channel for international cooperation as stated in the group's input to the zero draft and several other occasions. The group stated that SSC must be set by the countries of the South and must continue to be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefits. The G77 and China reaffirmed their

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[content/uploads/2019/02/RP91\\_Key-Issues-for-BAPA40-South-South-Cooperation-and-the-BAPA40-Subthemes\\_EN-1.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1467295/content/uploads/2019/02/RP91_Key-Issues-for-BAPA40-South-South-Cooperation-and-the-BAPA40-Subthemes_EN-1.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> See the Report of the Conference at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/56998>.

<sup>7</sup> The Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries is available at <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/bapa40/documents/buenos-aires-plan-of-action/>.

<sup>8</sup> –United Nations, General Assembly, Preparatory process of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, Note by the Secretary-General, UN document A/72/711. Available from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1467295>.

view that South-South Cooperation deserves its own separate and independent promotion, as reaffirmed in the Nairobi Outcome<sup>9</sup>. The Group also stated at the Buenos Aires Conference that SSC is a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national well-being, national and collective self-reliance and the attainment of the 2030 Agenda<sup>10</sup>.

While welcoming the adoption of the Buenos Aires Outcome Document of the Second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation last April in New York, the Group regretted that the text to some extent had fallen below their expectations. It regretted the fact the text singled out one Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) over the other 16 SDGs that are of equal importance<sup>11</sup>. The G77 and China restated the importance of the full and comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in this regard, they also stressed that this should not create a precedent for future intergovernmental negotiation processes. The Group also regretted the inclusion of certain references such as development effectiveness “as it remains inapplicable to South-South cooperation, and more related to international development cooperation”.

Regarding measuring of SSC, the G77 and China stated that while the group agrees with the fact that knowledge, experience and success stories should be shared among developing countries, they expressed concern and affirmed that they strongly oppose attempts to measure, monitor or harmonize SSC with the official development assistance (ODA) frameworks, which in their view, “will not bring more resources for development; but, on the contrary, it will jeopardize the existing diversity of flows”. The Group stressed that the South needs the international community to continue and increase its contributions with a focus on the achievement of the 17 SDGs, rather than the demands of measurement, monitoring and reporting.<sup>12</sup>

There was also an attempt by the developing countries to strengthen the language on trade issues in the BAPA+40 outcome but this was not taken on board in the final version of the outcome document. The G77 and China called upon relevant United Nations organizations, including UNCTAD, to continue providing support for developing countries in deepening and enlarging South-South trade integration, regional, sub-regional and interregional economic integration and cooperation arrangements. Finally, the G77 and China expressed deep concern over the increase in the unilateral and protectionist measures that “will not only undermine the multilateral trading system, but also will lead to negative impact on access of the developing countries' exports to the global markets”.<sup>13</sup>

The Global South's concern is that measuring of SSC may ignore its voluntary nature. It may potentially lead to it being used to transfer the burden to emerging partners and/or to

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<sup>9</sup> Adopted at the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, held in Nairobi from 1 to 3 December 2009. Available from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-buqyoV0jpSbExUYVdoT0dMZGc/view>.

<sup>10</sup> –United Nations, General Assembly, Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, UN document A/RES/73/291. Available from [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/291](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/291)

<sup>11</sup> See Statement delivered by the delegation of the State of Palestine on behalf of the G77 and China following the adoption of the Buenos Aires outcome document of the Second High-level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40), New York, 15 April 2019. Available from <https://www.g77.org/statement/getstatement.php?id=190415b>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

reduce the engagement and the fulfilment of financial commitments of developed countries to development cooperation which, in fact, have not been met so far and that are being diverted to other areas as the use of ODA for migration and refugees in the developed countries.

The G77 and China is of the view that South-South Cooperation is a “collective effort of the developing countries, and seeks to enable them to play a more active role in international policy and decision-making processes, in support of their efforts to achieve sustainable development and eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions; and must be pursued as an expression of South-South solidarity and as a mean to foster the economic autonomy and self-reliance of the South based on their common objectives”. Based on this, the Group strongly believes that this important process must be Member-State-driven, in fact, a G-77 driven process, and should abide by the principle of openness and transparency through an intergovernmental negotiation process.<sup>14</sup>

While some developing countries may have developed their own mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (M&E), such mechanisms should not necessarily follow the OECD-type of M&E as they are likely to differ from mechanisms of reporting used in traditional cooperation, as stated in a recent South Centre Research Paper dedicated to this issue<sup>15</sup>.

Overall, the G77 and China’s issues and priority during the negotiations focused on the reaffirmation of the **Yamoussoukro Consensus of South-South Cooperation** adopted at the Twelfth Session of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (IFCCC) in Yamoussoukro, Côte d’Ivoire, in June 2008<sup>16</sup> and which led to the elaboration of a set of **14 Principles for South-South Cooperation** adopted by the group in the same year at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Ministerial Meeting of the G77 and China held at the UN Headquarters in New York on 26 September 2008. For the group, the conference in Buenos Aires should step up SSC on the basis of the principles below (see Box 3).

### **Box 3: 14 Principles of South-South Cooperation**

- i. South-South cooperation is a common endeavour of peoples and countries of the South and must be pursued as an expression of South-South solidarity and a strategy for economic independence and self-reliance of the South based on their common objectives and solidarity;
- ii. South-South cooperation and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South;
- iii. South-South cooperation must not be seen as a replacement for North-South cooperation. Strengthening South-South cooperation must not be a measure of coping with the receding interest of the developed world in assisting developing countries;

<sup>14</sup> Read full statement by the G77 and China at the second informal consultations on the draft outcome document of the Second-High level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation - BAPA + 40 (New York, 17 January 2019) at <http://www.g77.org/statement/getstatement.php?id=190117>.

<sup>15</sup> Yuefen LI, “Assessment of South-South Cooperation and the Global Narrative on the Eve of BAPA+40”, South Centre Research Paper 88 (November 2018). Available from [https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RP88\\_Assessment-of-South-South-Cooperation-and-the-Global-Narrative-on-the-Eve-of-BAPA40\\_EN-2.pdf](https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RP88_Assessment-of-South-South-Cooperation-and-the-Global-Narrative-on-the-Eve-of-BAPA40_EN-2.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> The Yamoussoukro Consensus of South-South Cooperation was adopted at the Twelfth Session of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (IFCCC) in Yamoussoukro, Côte d’Ivoire, on 10-13 June 2008. Available from [http://www.g77.org/ifcc12/Yamoussoukro\\_Consensus.pdf](http://www.g77.org/ifcc12/Yamoussoukro_Consensus.pdf).

- iv. Cooperation between countries of the South must not be analyzed and evaluated using the same standards as those used for North-South relations;
- v. Financial contributions from other developing countries should not be seen as Official Development Assistance from these countries to other countries of the South. These are merely expressions of solidarity and cooperation borne out of shared experiences and sympathies;
- vi. South-South cooperation is a development agenda based on premises, conditions and objectives that are specific to the historic and political context of developing countries and to their needs and expectations. South-South cooperation deserves its own separate and independent promotion;
- vii. South-South cooperation is based on a strong, genuine, broad-based partnership and solidarity;
- viii. South-South cooperation is based on complete equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit;
- ix. South-South cooperation respects national sovereignty in the context of shared responsibility;
- x. South-South cooperation strives for strengthened multilateralism in the promotion of an action-oriented approach to development challenges;
- xi. South-South cooperation promotes the exchange of best practices and support among developing countries in the common pursuit of their broad development objectives (encompassing all aspects of international relations and not just in the traditional economic and technical areas);
- xii. South-South cooperation is based on the collective self-reliance of developing countries;
- xiii. South-South cooperation seeks to enable developing countries to play a more active role in international policy and decision-making processes, in support of their efforts to achieve sustainable development;
- xiv. The modalities and mechanisms for promoting South-South cooperation are based on bilateral, sub-regional, regional and interregional cooperation and integration as well as multilateral cooperation.

Source: Ministerial Declaration adopted by the 42nd Annual Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 (New York, 27 September 2018)

## **II.1.2. Revitalizing the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on South-South Cooperation (IFCC)**

The 2018 Ministerial Declaration of the G77 and China has called upon its membership to come forward with an offer for hosting the Thirteenth session of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on South-South Cooperation (IFCC). This mechanism is a plenary body consisting of senior officials that is expected to meet once every two years to review the state of implementation of the Caracas Programme of Action (CPA) adopted by the Group of 77 in 1981 and the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the South Summits in the field of South-South cooperation. Is it still relevant after BAPA+40? The last time the IFCC met was a decade ago for its twelfth session held in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire in June 2008 and which adopted the Consensus on South-South Cooperation<sup>17</sup>. A country in the Asia and the Pacific region should be the host for the next meeting, but as of the date of publication of this paper, no country from this region has offered to host the IFCC. The revitalization of this forum is an important priority for the developing countries as it could be used to debate key issues, set priorities and to strengthen the negotiating platform capacity of the G77 and China.

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<sup>17</sup> The Yamoussoukro Consensus on South-South Cooperation. Twelfth Session of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries, Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, 10-13 June 2008. Available from [http://www.g77.org/ifcc12/Yamoussoukro\\_Consensus.pdf](http://www.g77.org/ifcc12/Yamoussoukro_Consensus.pdf).

### **II.1.3. General Assembly High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation**

The High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation is the main policy body of the General Assembly to debate the issue. Established as one of the outcomes and recommendations of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC), it was first convened in Geneva from 26 May to 2 June 1980 to carry out an overall intergovernmental review of TCDC within the United Nations development system<sup>18</sup>. Since 2003, it has been renamed to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation and the meeting is held on a biannual basis under the auspices of the General Assembly in New York. The UN Office for South-South Cooperation acts as its Secretariat and the current Chair of the Committee is H.E. Ambassador (Dr.) Adonia Ayebare, Uganda's Permanent Representative to the UN. The upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee will be held in 2020.

## ***II.2. Financing for Development***

In a recent statement to an informal consultations meeting held on 26 February 2019 on the upcoming 2019 High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development (FfD) in September, the G77 and China stated their understanding that the fourth Forum on Financing for Development follow-up of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), held from 14-18 April 2019 and the High-Level Dialogue to be held in September 2019 at Summit level, “however correlated, are independent events and have each its own format”<sup>19</sup>. The group reiterated its views that the September event on FfD under the auspices of the General Assembly will be an opportunity to take stock of the progress and identify the gaps on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. It is important to note that it will be the first FfD High-Level Dialogue, held on a quadrennial basis, back to back with the high-level political forum under the auspices of the General Assembly.

Earlier in April, Member States and stakeholders gathered in New York to attend the ECOSOC FfD Forum follow-up which was held from 14-18 April 2019. The Forum was convened by the President of ECOSOC, H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The G77 and China engaged constructively throughout the negotiations over the draft text of agreed conclusions and recommendations with a view to reaching a consensus-based outcome document encompassing all action areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda which was adopted by the Ministers<sup>20</sup> during the week long deliberations in New York. The conclusions and recommendations adopted will serve as input for the upcoming FfD Summit in September under the auspices of the UNGA. The ECOSOC meeting also included the special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and UNCTAD<sup>21</sup>. In April, the 2019 Financing for Sustainable

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<sup>18</sup> See more details at <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/our-work/policy-and-intergovernmental-support/high-level-committee-on-south-south-cooperation/>.

<sup>19</sup> Group of 77 and China statement at the informal consultations on the 2019 High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development of the General Assembly and the draft outcome of the 2019 Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up (New York, 26 February 2019) available from <https://www.g77.org/statement/getstatement.php?id=190226>.

<sup>20</sup> See Follow-up and review of the financing for development outcomes and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available from <https://undocs.org/E/FFDF/2019/L.1>.

<sup>21</sup> See Summary by the President of the ECOSOC of the Forum on Financing for Development follow-up, including the special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and UNCTAD available at

Development Report of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development<sup>22</sup> was also launched. The Report urged world leaders to revamp national and international financial systems and keep on their promises so important to overcome critical issues such as combatting climate change and eradicating poverty by 2030.

Key issues and concerns raised by the G77 and China at the 2019 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up held last April in New York were the following<sup>23</sup>:

#### *Poverty eradication and financing for development*

Despite the progress made, many challenges continue to resurface, hindering global efforts in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Group attaches great importance on correlating Financing for Development with eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, which is the overarching goal of the 2030 Agenda and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

In this context, the G77 and China reiterated that Financing for Development should focus on resource mobilization by channelling resources to poverty eradication, one of the world's greatest challenges. Any resources to finance development must be aligned with national priorities and development strategies of the countries taking into consideration different realities and contexts, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. In addition, every country has, and shall freely exercise, full permanent sovereignty over all its wealth, natural resources and economic activity.

#### *Countries in special situations*

The Group stressed their commitment to addressing developmental challenges faced by countries in special situations, in particular African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small-island developing States, as well as the specific challenges faced by middle-income countries, countries in transition to development that have recently exceeded the median income upper threshold, but still have structural gaps and vulnerabilities, countries in conflict and post-conflict situations and countries and peoples under foreign occupation, while respecting the permanent sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states.

#### *Coercive economic measures*

In the efforts to achieve the 2030 agenda, attention should be paid to any measures that could hinder accomplishment of the agreed goals and their means of implementation. In this regard, the group reaffirmed that imposition of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries, does not contribute to economic and social development.

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[https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffdforum/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/05/2019-FfD-Forum-Summary-of-President\\_AUV.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffdforum/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/05/2019-FfD-Forum-Summary-of-President_AUV.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> See the report at <https://developmentfinance.un.org/2019-financing-sustainable-development-report-preparatory-materials>.

<sup>23</sup> The G77 and China statement at the 2019 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up on 15 April 2019 is available at <http://www.g77.org/statement/getstatement.php?id=190415c>.

### *Official Development Assistance*

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is not only the main channel for international cooperation, it is also key and indispensable for achieving the SDGs and should be aligned with national priorities and development strategies of the recipient countries. In this regard, the Group called upon developed countries to fulfill the commitments they have made as to ODA by achieving the UN target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national income (GNI).

The Group expressed its concerns regarding the decrease of net Official Development Assistance of 0.1 per cent in real terms in 2017 from 2016, and noted that donor countries have shifted more ODA resources to funds for hosting and processing refugees within donor countries themselves in recent years. This shift in ODA resources towards humanitarian and crisis situations is not consistent with the long-term and sustainable approach to financing development needed to achieve 2030 Agenda targets.

### *International trade*

The Group recognized that international trade, at all levels, plays a vital and dynamic role in enhancing cooperation and is an important source to finance development as it enables the fuller utilization of necessary resources through promoting mutual cooperation among different countries and regions, resulting in the stimulation of national, regional, and global economic growth. In this connection, the Group reaffirmed the significance of the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries in harnessing the developmental benefit of international trade.

The Group also recognized that international trade strengthens the multilateral trading system, which relies on a universal, rule-based, open, transparent, inclusive, non-discriminatory multilateral trading system as embodied in the WTO, that can stimulate development worldwide. In this connection, the Group remains alerted by the increase in the unilateral and protectionist measures that will not only undermine the multilateral trading system, but also will lead to negative impact on access of the developing countries' exports to the global markets.

### *International development cooperation*

The Group reiterated that international development cooperation, especially North-South cooperation, remains a fundamental catalyst to sustainable economic growth. The core of South-South cooperation is the technical cooperation and shared experience and knowledge among countries of the global South. The Group reiterated that South-South cooperation is a complement rather than a substitute for North-South cooperation.

### *Debt vulnerabilities*

The Group highlighted the important and relevant challenge that needs to be collectively addressed which is the intensification of debt vulnerabilities across developing countries since 2017, risking a renewed cycle of debt crises and economic disruption, which pose severe challenges to the achievement of the SDGs.

Debt-related challenges and vulnerabilities have restricted many developing countries in generating and initiating the necessary resources needed for implementation of the 2030

Agenda due to heavy debt burdens. As a result, the Group of 77 and China stressed the need to explore the means and instruments required to achieve debt sustainability as well as the necessary measures to reduce the indebtedness of the developing countries.

### *International tax cooperation*

The Group noted in particular that tax-related offences continue to remain a significant barrier to domestic resource mobilization efforts in all parts of the world. The G77 and China recognized with concern that there is still no single globally inclusive intergovernmental forum for international tax cooperation<sup>24</sup>. In that regard, the group reiterated the need to fully upgrade the Committee of Experts in Tax Matters to an intergovernmental body with experts representing their respective governments which would be an important instrument to support developing countries in their efforts to combat illicit financial flows and tax evasion<sup>25</sup> in order to improve developing countries' domestic mobilization for the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The UN has been denied twice the opportunity to play a more prominent role in this issue, due to resistance by developed countries as observed at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in 2015 and UNCTAD XIV in Nairobi in 2016. In the African continent for instance, an estimated US\$ 50 to US\$ 80 billion is lost annually due to illicit transfer of funds, according to President Mbeki's high-level panel on illicit financial flows. Mbeki, who is also the Chair of the Board of the South Centre, has advocated for actively engaging stakeholders to curb the flow of much needed resources from the continent<sup>26</sup>.

With the increasing emphasis on domestic resource mobilization, the G77 and China is of the view that effective taxation of large businesses, including multinational enterprises, can boost revenue, while contributing to perceptions of fairness in the tax systems, as well as reducing inequalities within and between States. In this regard, the Group encouraged international initiatives that aim to ensure that multinational enterprises pay taxes where economic activity occurs and where value is created, in accordance with national and international laws and policies. The G77 and China also called for greater public availability of aggregate data on offshore financial assets and the taxation of multinational enterprises to strengthen tax transparency.

### *Domestic resource mobilization*

The G77 and China stated that it is counterproductive to highlight the importance of domestic resource mobilization in developing countries without addressing the international loopholes that impedes on their ability to retain a large chunk of their resources. In this context, the Group reiterated that illicit financial flows reduce the availability of resources for financing sustainable development and negatively impact the economic, social and political

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<sup>24</sup> G77 and China Ministerial Declaration of the Forty-second Annual Meeting, 27 September 2018. Available from <https://www.g77.org/doc/Declaration2018.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> See Thalif Deen, "G77 Developing Nations Seek Tax Body to Curb Illicit Financial Flows", *IPS News*, 8 August 2016 available at <http://www.ipsnews.net/2016/08/developing-nations-seek-tax-body-to-curb-illicit-financial-flows>.

<sup>26</sup> High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows (see <https://www.uneca.org/iff>). Read the Report of the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa commissioned by the African Union Commission/Economic Commission for Africa Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development available at [https://www.unodc.org/documents/NGO/AU\\_ECA\\_Illicit\\_Financial\\_Flows\\_report\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/NGO/AU_ECA_Illicit_Financial_Flows_report_EN.pdf).



stability and development of societies, especially in developing countries. The G77 and China stressed that more and better data is needed for countries to assess the real impact of illicit financial flows and how to tackle it and called upon all member states and corporate entities participating in this Forum to recommit to combatting illicit financial flows and to strengthen good practices on asset recovery and return to foster sustainable development in the affected countries.

### *Technology transfer*

The G77 and China stressed that technology transfer is one of the core priorities of the developing countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and reiterated the need to accelerate the transfer of technology on favourable terms including on concessional and preferential terms. The Group also reaffirmed that addressing the constraints on technology transfer along with enhancing capacity building in science, technology and innovation is essential for the progress of the developing countries in implementing a wide range of SDGs. In this context, the G77 and China expressed appreciation for the Inter-agency Task Force on FfD (IATF) report on Financing for Development launched in April and which covered the follow-up of all action areas which are reflected also in the agreed conclusions and recommendations.

### **II.3. Climate Change**

Climate change is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of humankind. Developing countries contributed the least or marginally to climate change over the past centuries up to today. Nevertheless, they are suffering the most from climate change impacts as several climate-related disasters in recent years have shown. Every year new figures based on concrete science confirm the dangers of today and ahead. The 20 warmest years on record have been in the past 22 years, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)<sup>27</sup>, which started collecting meteorological data since 1850.<sup>28</sup> The year 2018 was the fourth consecutive hottest year in history<sup>29</sup>.

The unprecedented and already scientifically well-documented and observed risks and impacts of climate change are creating a disproportionate burden on developing countries, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable among them as stated by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the G77 and China in their Declaration of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Meeting held in September 2018<sup>30</sup>. Reports published prior to the Katowice Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) 24)<sup>31</sup> confirmed the impacts and burden on developing countries. One single event triggered or caused by climate change such as hurricanes and cyclones whose incidence and intensity has increased, has the potential to

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<sup>27</sup> “WMO climate statement: past 4 years warmest on record”, World Meteorological Organization (WMO). 29 November 2018. Available from <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/wmo-climate-statement-past-4-years-warmest-record>

<sup>28</sup> See UN Secretary-General remarks on Climate Change (New York, 10 September 2018). Available from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-09-10/secretary-generals-remarks-climate-change-delivered>.

<sup>29</sup> See UN Secretary-General remarks at the opening of the COP24. (Katowice, 3 December 2018). Available from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2018-12-03/remarks-opening-cop24>.

<sup>30</sup> See G77 and China Declaration of of the Forty-second Annual Meeting, 27 September 2018. Available from <http://www.g77.org/doc/Declaration2018.htm>.

<sup>31</sup> COP 24 (see <https://cop24.gov.pl>)

devastate decades of development efforts. This was true for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) with huge loss of lives in the Caribbean region during the last hurricane season of 2018. In fact, the Caribbean region and Southeast Asia are the greatest examples with growing frequency of natural disasters and destructive impacts of climate change. In Africa, the economic and human damage caused by two powerful and destructive cyclones that reached Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe in the same season, something never seen before, is another important example. In Asia, India and Bangladesh are two recent examples also of the increasing power of natural disasters and their impacts in most vulnerable communities. These recent natural tragedies are a clear evidence that solidarity among all nations and financial cooperation from those who caused the climate crisis of today with instruments such as the Loss and Damage mechanism set up at the UNFCCC,<sup>32</sup> in which developed countries are requested to contribute to developing countries in situations of natural tragedies, should remain key in the agenda of the Group<sup>33</sup>.

The 6th UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report<sup>34</sup> calls for urgent global action on climate change in order to deliver on the Paris Agreement's central aim which is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Additionally, the agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change.<sup>35</sup> Inaction or inadequate action will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people<sup>36</sup>. A most recent report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) warned that "nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history – and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world now likely".<sup>37</sup>

Some developing countries are even at the risk of disappearing as sea water rises due to increased melting of the Arctic region in an unprecedented manner. Global carbon emissions have to decline by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and by 100% by 2050 ('net-zero'). Nonetheless, developed countries who are supposed to lead this reduction continue to report growth in emissions. This is a setback in their previous commitments contained in the Kyoto Protocol as well the pledges made under the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015.<sup>38</sup> Despite leadership shown by some developed countries in making necessary changes, there is still a

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<sup>32</sup> Martin Khor, "New climate deal on loss and damage", *The Star*, 25 November 2013. Available from <https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/columnists/global-trends/2013/11/25/new-climate-deal-on-loss-and-damage/>. Harjeet Singh, "Expert Dialogue underscores finance gap to address climate induced 'Loss and Damage'", Third World Network, 14 May 2018. Available from <https://twnetwork.org/climate-change/expert-dialogue-underscores-finance-gap-address-climate-induced-loss-and-damage>.

<sup>33</sup> Raman, Meena. Key challenges at COP 24. Third World Network. December 2018. Available at <https://twnetwork.org/climate-change/key-challenges-cop-24>

<sup>34</sup> See the work of the IPCC at <https://www.ipcc.ch>.

<sup>35</sup> Paris Agreement available at <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>.

<sup>36</sup> See IPCC Report available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>.

<sup>37</sup> IPBES report available at <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>.

<sup>38</sup> See United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Emissions GAP Report 2018. Available from <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2018>. See also, "UN Warns Climate Change Is Driving Global Hunger" at <https://unfccc.int/news/un-warns-climate-change-is-driving-global-hunger>.

long way to go in order to change the structure on which economic growth patterns are based today.

#### ***II.4. Sustainable Development and Climate Change Negotiations: Building upon past achievements of the Global South***

In the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio92) hosted by Brazil, which coined “sustainable development” as an internationally accepted concept, developing countries succeeded in including the development perspective into the environment discourse marking an important achievement for the Global South coalition and for international cooperation. This was only possible due to a strong and united G77 and China. The outcome document<sup>39</sup> aimed at balancing the environmental concerns perceived by the developing countries at that time as an area that was over-focused in negotiations with the consideration of the specific challenges to the South<sup>40</sup>.

The adoption of the Rio Principles, including Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), was not only a breakthrough for the G77 and China but was also an important confirmation of the value of engagement and the understanding of developed countries of the needs of the developing countries and of their historical responsibilities, as centuries of development had affected the world climate and created an additional huge burden for the developing countries already facing several challenges.

Two legally binding instruments were opened for signature at the 1992 Summit - the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. At Rio92, negotiations also began on the Convention to Combat Desertification, which was opened for signature in October 1994 and entered into force in December 1996<sup>41</sup>. These events marked the high times of international cooperation and active engagement of the G77 and China with partners in the North. Since Rio92, developing countries remain strongly united on the view that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be guided by the principles in accordance with paragraph 74 of the 2030 Agenda.

The Rio Principles, adopted after marathon negotiating sessions, achieved the integration of environment, development and equity elements. There were environmental principles such as the precautionary and polluter pays principles, development principles like the right to development, and equity principles like the common but differentiated responsibilities.

The adoption of CBDR in Rio represented one of the most memorable positive moments in international cooperation representing a balanced outcome for all. Regrettably, as

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<sup>39</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992), Annex I – Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Available from <https://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm>.

<sup>40</sup> See “The South Facing a New Era of Unilateralism and Protectionism”, A South Centre Briefing for Developing Countries by Martin Khor, Executive Director, Geneva, 17 April 2018. Available from <https://www.southcentre.int/sc-lunch-briefing-with-the-executive-director-17-april-2018/>.

<sup>41</sup> UN Outcomes on Sustainable Development. Available from <https://www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/sustainable.shtml>.

observed and as reported by developing countries' delegations actively engaged in the process, in the recent negotiations on climate change and other fora, developed countries have continued to seek to water down or to diminish the importance of the CBDR principle on the justification that the world of today is not the same as of decades ago. Therefore, it is crucial that G77 and China remains united and provides solid and substantial justification in defence of maintaining and strengthening the CBDR principle in the ongoing and future negotiations resisting any pressure to watering-down such crucial principle for the Global South. This should remain a key priority for the Group in 2019.

The Group will also need to work strongly and be united in pushing for climate finance and technology transfer in order to enable developing countries to make a transition of their economies and energy structures towards greener ones. Climate Change is a reality that came to stay and will have strong impacts on survival of humankind. It is a finance issue and not only an environmental issue with severe socio-economic impacts. Therefore, obtaining adequate climate finance and technology transfer from the developed countries is a longstanding collective objective of the South, that must be defended collectively, independently of the political ideology or promises by some climate sceptic developed countries. Developed countries must recognize their historical and present responsibilities in different stages of development as of today. Despite important achievements of the political agreement in Paris, little has been done. An important evidence of lack of implementation of commitments by developed countries on Climate Change are the difficulties regarding the adoption of the Programme of work for implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement (PA).

The PA is a balanced agreement; its negotiation reflected engagement of developing countries under the leadership of G77 and China and other alliances. However, it resulted mainly in a political commitment and the withdrawal of the US has been, as largely reported, an important setback for multilateralism. An important example of resistance and leadership has been California which has historically led the way on environmental standards within the US (and accounts for around 15% of US gross domestic product (GDP))<sup>42</sup>. Last September 2018, the Governor of California signed an executive order calling for the entire state economy to become carbon-neutral by 2045.

The COP25 will be a crucial negotiation for developing countries building upon the outcomes of COP24 in Katowice, and preparing for the implementation phase of the Paris Agreement. Developing countries are expected to continue supporting the implementation of the Paris Agreement. This is crucial as the interests and demands of the South are similar as they need to preserve the CBDR principle. CBDR is a South issue above any political ideology. It is about justice and fairness to developing countries and should not be given up due to narrowed political interests and expectations of gains in relations with the major powers in the developed world. Political and substantial technical support for the role of the G77 and China during the negotiations and key events will be crucial as this issue will become even more important for the Group in the coming years.

The Climate Action Summit to be held in New York in September 2019 under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) aims to raise ambition and mobilize the

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<sup>42</sup> "California plans to show the world how to meet the Paris climate target", *The Guardian*, 17 September 2018. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2018/sep/17/california-plans-to-show-the-world-how-to-meet-the-paris-climate-target>.

necessary resources as stated by the UNSG in his opening remarks at COP24 when he, in a very humbled way also recognised and presented his regret that “it is hard to comprehend why we are collectively still moving too slowly – and even in the wrong direction”<sup>43</sup>. In a joint appeal issued last May 2019 by leaders of the United Nations system organizations, Member States were urged to step up ambition and take concrete action to limit global temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The UN leadership called upon states to “adapt to the effects of climate change, as they strive to fulfil their obligations on human rights, including the right to health, the right to food security, the right to development, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women, intergenerational equity, and decent work and a just transition for all, as stated in the Paris Agreement”.<sup>44</sup>

Climate financing is a high priority on the G77 and China agenda. UN reports call for at least US\$ 1 trillion a year in terms of financial flows to developing countries as being required to fulfil the needs of developing countries in terms of financing their climate mitigation and adaptation measures.<sup>45</sup> In addition, natural disasters are increasingly becoming more frequent and with powerful and destructive impacts.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) which was established to support projects of adaptation and mitigation in developing countries also has received limited contributions far from the pledges of US\$ 10 billion agreed in 2014.<sup>46</sup> In 2009, developed countries also pledged to raise \$100 billion a year in climate finance, from both public and private sources, by 2020 to assist developing countries to tackle global warming but this pledge remains unfulfilled. Climate change-related debt is also increasing in the Global South. A study commissioned by the UNFCCC in 2018 shows that the risk from vulnerability to climate change is increasing the cost of capital and is projected to cause an additional USD 168 billion of debt payments over the next ten years among the most climate change vulnerable countries mainly coming from additional interest payments due to climate risk from floods, droughts, and severe weather events.<sup>47</sup>

The GCF will also have to work hard to boost its capitalization. The difficulties on the Green Climate Fund are also an issue the developing countries will have to address in 2019. In this context, it is crucial that the developing countries remain firm regarding its priorities and improve even more its negotiating capacity in this area. Over the past years, the South Centre has played an important role in the Climate Change processes as per other issues described in this paper by providing technical expertise and political support for the success

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<sup>43</sup> See UN Secretary-General remarks at the opening of the COP24. (Katowice, 3 December 2018). Available from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2018-12-03/remarks-opening-cop24>. See also “UN Chief Calls on Nations to Reach Consensus to Deliver on Paris Commitments”, UN Climate Speech, 12 December 2018. Available from <https://unfccc.int/news/un-chief-calls-on-nations-to-reach-consensus-to-deliver-on-paris-commitments>.

<sup>44</sup> “Note to Correspondents: Joint Appeal from the UN System to the Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit”, 9 May 2019. Available from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2019-05-09/note-correspondents-joint-appeal-the-un-system-the-secretary-general’s-climate-action-summit>.

<sup>45</sup> See e.g. UNCTAD, *World Investment Report 2014: Investing in the SDGs: An Action Plan*, Table IV.2. Available from [https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/wir2014\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/wir2014_en.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> Green Climate Fund available at <https://www.greenclimate.fund/who-we-are/about-the-fund>.

<sup>47</sup> “Climate Change is Driving Debt for Developing Countries”, UN Climate Change News, 3 July 2018. Available from <https://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-is-driving-debt-for-developing-countries>.

of the negotiations, an important example of the role of the organization in supporting developing countries and multilateralism. A most recent example of the Centre's work in this area is the provision of technical support on climate finance readiness to boost developing countries' access to available funds on climate change. A Climate Finance Readiness Brief E-Book by the South Centre, a series of short briefs prepared by the South Centre to provide developing countries with a "help desk" to access and to more effectively and efficiently utilize the complex web of climate finance information available to them<sup>48</sup>.

## **II.5. General Assembly High-Level Meetings in 2019**

The seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly (GA) will be held on 24-30 September 2019<sup>49</sup> at the UN Headquarters in New York and will host five important high-level events of interest to the developing country negotiation groups (see Box 4). Most of these events will result in outcomes and recommendations that will be the result of intense negotiations:

- On September 23, the GA will hold a **High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** building upon the agenda of last year's GA high-level events which focused on Tuberculosis and Non-Communicable Diseases. A political declaration is expected to be adopted and negotiations started in January under guidance of the Permanent Representatives of Hungary and Thailand to the UN in New York.<sup>50</sup>
- The GA will also host the first quadrennial **High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development** at Heads of State Level on 24 and 25 September<sup>51</sup>. This will be the first heads of state and government level meeting of the HLPF since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in New York in September 2015.
- A **High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development (FfD)**<sup>52</sup> will also take place on 26 September 2019 as a follow-up to the outcome of the Third International Conference on FfD in 2015, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), which calls for convening a High-level Dialogue on FfD back-to-back with the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) when it convenes under the auspices of the UNGA every four years.<sup>53</sup>
- The GA will also host a high-level meeting to review progress made in addressing the priorities of **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**<sup>54</sup> through the implementation of the **SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA)** on September 27. The

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<sup>48</sup>See all South Centre work on Climate Change and other issues in the website: [www.southcentre.int](http://www.southcentre.int).

<sup>49</sup> See more details at <https://www.un.org/en/ga/>.

<sup>50</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, Scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, UN Doc. A/RES/73/131. Available from <https://undocs.org/A/RES/73/131>.

<sup>51</sup> See more details on the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2019 at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019>.

<sup>52</sup> See more details on the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development (FfD) at <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/events/2019-7> and <https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffdialogue>.

<sup>53</sup> Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) available from [https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA\\_Outcome.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> See more details on Small Island Developing States at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sids>.

one-day high-level review of the progress made in addressing the priorities of small island developing States through the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway will adopt a concise action-oriented and inter-governmentally agreed political declaration.

The UN Secretary-General will also host the 2019 Climate Action Summit on 23 September.<sup>55</sup> (See previous section.)

<b>Box 4: High-level Meetings under the auspices of the UNGA 74<sup>th</sup> Session in September 2019</b>		
Date	High-level Meeting Themes	Co-Chairs appointed by the President of the General Assembly
23	2019 Climate Action Summit	Hosted by the UN Secretary-General at Heads of State and Government Level
23	High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC)	H.E. Ms. Katalin Annamária Bogyay, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the UN, and H.E. Mr. Vitavas Srivihok, Permanent Representative of Thailand to the UN
24/25	High-Level Political Forum Summit level (held every four years, also called the SDG Summit and the HLPF Summit)	H.E. Ms. Sheila Gweneth Carey, Permanent Representative of The Bahamas, and H.E. Mr. Olof Skoog, Permanent Representative of Sweden, for the political declaration of the summit-level HLPF.  H.E. Mr. Rubén Armando Escalante Hasbún, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, was appointed facilitator of informal consultations for the HLPF.
26	High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development	H.E. Ms. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobe, Permanent Representative of Ghana, and H.E. Mr. Marc-Andre Blanchard, Permanent Representative of Canada
27	High-level review of SAMOA Pathway	H.E. Mr. Satyendra Prasad, Permanent Representative of Fiji, and H.E. Ms. Geraldine Byrne Nason, Permanent Representative of Ireland

## ***II.6. Activities by Other G77 and China Chapters***

Apart from the work undertaken by the G77 and China New York Chapter, the negotiations on economic and development related issues are also conducted in several other development fora that take place outside New York. G77 and China has five other chapters in Geneva, Rome, Nairobi, Vienna, and Paris where the group coordinates their positions on various issues dealt in each of the above venues. It is important to note that the coordination of the six chapters of the G77 and China has been fairly active for decades now but still needs some further improvement. This is particularly true because issues discussed by one Chapter are directly linked to another as in the case of the Rome, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi Chapters; issues such as agriculture and food security, development, investment and environment are also debated in New York. A stronger cooperation among Chapters will contribute to

<sup>55</sup> Information on Climate Action Summit available at <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange>.

improve the reinforcement of their actions in a united front in the multilateral negotiations. The six chapters' coordinators meet once a year under leadership of the New York Chapter.

The troika system is also a key element to be implemented in the structure of all Chapters of the Group. This will contribute to avoid difficulties in electing a Chair as in the troika system the Vice-Chair becomes the Chair in the coming year. It gives an opportunity to prepare the incoming Chair and as consequence, it contributes to improving the negotiating capacity of the Group. The Nairobi Chapter for instance faced such a challenge this year when differences within the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC) led to difficulties and delayed the appointment of a Chair that should come from the region. At the end, the Chairmanship of the Nairobi Chapter was moved to the Asian Group and finally the State of Palestine took over the Chairmanship after the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA). The Nairobi Chapter needs some support to become more active as environment and biodiversity issues are gaining prominence in multilateral negotiations. (See Box 5.)

<b>Box 5: Chairmanship of the G77 and China Chapters in 2019</b>		
January-December	<b>State of Palestine</b> holds the Chairmanship of the G77 and China through the year taking over from Egypt	New York Chapter of the G77 and China
	<b>Ecuador</b> holds the Chairmanship of the G77 and China through the year taking over from Pakistan	Geneva Chapter of the G77 and China
	<b>Arab Republic of Egypt</b> holds the Chairmanship of the G77 and China through the year taking over from Ecuador	Vienna Chapter of the G77 and China
	<b>South Sudan</b> holds the Chairmanship of the G77 and China through the year taking over from Egypt	Rome Chapter of the G77 and China
	<b>State of Palestine</b> holds the Chairmanship of the G77 and China through the year taking over from Ethiopia	Nairobi Chapter of the G77 and China
	<b>Iraq</b> holds the Chairmanship of the G77 and China through the year taking over from El Salvador	Paris Chapter of the G77 and China

### *Rome Chapter*

The Rome Chapter faces a challenging year in its efforts to advance policies to achieve the longstanding goals of food security and eliminating hunger. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019 report shows that world hunger is increasing for the third year in a row reaching over 820 million people due to conflicts, climate change and economic slowdowns. The report also stated that overweight and obesity continue to increase. A total of 2 billion people do not have regular access to safe, nutritious, sufficient food according to findings of the report<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>56</sup>The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019 - Safeguarding against economic slowdowns and downturns. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World is an annual flagship report jointly prepared



During the two terms of Dr. José Graziano da Silva, former Director-General (DG) of the FAO, the UN specialized agency on food and agriculture, important reforms have been made such as decentralization to regional and national offices in a way of bringing the organization closer to its membership and particularly to developing countries. Important achievements were also made to improve support for Triangular and South-South Cooperation, promote family farming and agriculture and biodiversity, thereby making FAO more inclusive to a diverse constituency and better prepared to deliver on the ground. Important paradigm change was also seen on the way the organization deals with hunger, as before it was mainly seen as a production issue when fighting hunger is also an access and food nutrition issue. Emerging challenges such as climate change and the growing levels of obesity in emerging countries gained greater attention in the work of FAO.<sup>57</sup>

In 23 June, the FAO Conference elected Mr. Qu Dongyu (China) as the new DG. Qu Dongyu received a total of 108 votes out of 191 casted, constituting a majority in the first round. His election was an important example of the unity among developing countries and at the same time, an important acknowledgement of the important and longstanding role of China in South-South Cooperation particularly in agriculture and for its outstanding support for multilateralism.

Mr. Qu Dongyu will serve initially for a four-year term of office starting on 1 August 2019 and ending on 31 July 2023 and will be eligible for only one additional mandate of four years. FAO is a key agency for the developing countries, supporting their efforts to achieve food security and eliminate hunger and fight poverty. According to FAO statistics, about 70% of the world's extreme poor live in rural areas and most of them depend on agriculture which makes agriculture and food security key elements in the negotiating agenda of developing countries<sup>58</sup>.

### *Nairobi Chapter*

The G77 and China Nairobi Chapter's main priority at the beginning of the year was to gather developing countries in a united position in the negotiations for the Fourth Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) held in March 2019. The UNEA IV focused on the following key issues: environmental challenges related to poverty and natural resource management, including sustainable food systems, food security and halting biodiversity loss; life-cycle approaches to resource efficiency, energy, chemicals and waste management; and innovative sustainable business development at a time of rapid technological change<sup>59</sup>.

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by FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Available from <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5162en/ca5162en.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Graziano da Silva, Director of FAO, Jamil Chade, 12 May 2019. Available in Portuguese at <https://jamilchade.blogosfera.uol.com.br/2019/05/12/combate-a-fome-nao-pode-ter-ideologia-alerta-pai-do-fome-zero/>

<sup>59</sup> "UNEA at a Glance: What You Need to Know about the Environment Assembly's Fourth Session" available at <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/unea-at-a-glance-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-environment-assemblys-fourth-session/>.

<sup>59</sup> "UNEA at a Glance: What You Need to Know about the Environment Assembly's Fourth Session" available at <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/unea-at-a-glance-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-environment-assemblys-fourth-session/>.

The Nairobi Chapter of the G77 and China should also engage actively in the intergovernmental negotiations of the Global Pact on the Environment. An ad hoc open-ended working group was established to consider options to address possible gaps in the environmental law and environmental related instruments, following adoption of General Assembly Resolution 72/277 of 10 May 2018 entitled “Towards a Global Pact for the Environment”. The President of the UN General Assembly, H.E. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés appointed H.E. Amal Mudallali, Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the UN, and H.E. Francisco Duarte Lopes, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the UN, as co-chairs of the ad hoc open-ended working group. A first substantive session of the ad hoc open-ended group was held on 14-18 January 2019, the second substantive session was held on 18-20 March 2019 and the third substantive session of the working group was held on 20-22 May 2019 in Nairobi. The negotiations on the Global Pact on the Environment will also require strong connection with colleagues in the G77 and China chapter in New York, and capitals.

### *Vienna Chapter*

In Vienna, the Group is playing an important role in supporting developing countries’ work on matters regarding the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other UN agencies. The Vienna Chapter’s Chair has been supported by a very active secretariat, which managed through the years to reaffirm the collective role of the Group in all issues dealt in Vienna. In 2018, the Group held a total of 126 meetings on all matters relating to international organizations in Vienna including UNIDO, IAEA, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). These meetings have helped to further consolidate the G77 positions and to demonstrate that a more cooperative model can serve as a basis for reinvigorating development cooperation and the common purpose of strengthening our multilateral system, despite it being questioned as never before<sup>60</sup>.

Another important issue in which the South Centre is also providing full support to the G77 and China in Vienna is the ongoing work on investments at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) which held its 52<sup>nd</sup> session in July 2019.<sup>61</sup> Under the leadership of Egypt, the Vienna Chapter is working collectively to join forces to improve the global investment environment. In a statement delivered last October 2018, the Chair of the Chapter at that time (Ecuador) called for a global regime of investments that encourages fairness and promotes investment policies that are in line with the three pillars of sustainable development.

The Group also emphasized the necessity of designing and implementing appropriate investment policies, including transparent and fair investment dispute settlement regimes, to maximize the potential of cross border investments. The Group raised concerns relating to the existing ISDS system and stated that reforms are of central importance to the developing

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<sup>60</sup> Handover ceremony of the G-77 Vienna Chapter 2019 available at <https://www.g77.org/vienna/Statement%20handover%20ceremony%20G-77%202019VG.pdf>.

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., Kinda Mohamadieh, “The Future of Investor-State Dispute Settlement Deliberated at UNCITRAL: Unveiling a Dichotomy between Reforming and Consolidating the Current Regime”, South Centre Investment Policy Brief 16 (March 2019). Available from [https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IPB16\\_The-Future-of-ISDS-Deliberated-at-UNCITRAL\\_EN.pdf](https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IPB16_The-Future-of-ISDS-Deliberated-at-UNCITRAL_EN.pdf).

states that adopt such regime, given the impact of ISDS on the development process. Many of the group's members are already actively taking part in this process through, *inter alia*, refining the existing ISDS system, revising or in some cases terminating existing bilateral treaties, developing new models for future agreements, and engaging in multilateral processes<sup>62</sup>. Reform of ISDS is being deliberated at the UNCITRAL Working Group III, which just held a meeting in New York between the 1st and 5th of April 2019. While the reform process of international investment protection treaties is evolving, it is still at a nascent stage<sup>63</sup>.

### **II.6.1. Towards UNCTAD XV: Reaffirming the essential role of UNCTAD and multilateral cooperation**

The G77 and China Geneva Chapter negotiating coalition follow daily activities of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the UN's focal point for the integrated treatment of trade and development with areas of finance, technology and investment. UNCTAD's three pillars include research and analysis, technical cooperation and an intergovernmental machinery providing important support for developing countries in their efforts to integrate into the world economy and implement development policies. It is important to remember that both UNCTAD and the G77 and China were created in 1964 under the leadership of Raúl Prebisch and worked under the leadership of other outstanding leaders of the South as the late Gamani Corea, also former Secretary-General of UNCTAD and subsequently Chair of the Board of the South Centre.

The G77 and China has continually called for international rules to allow for policy space and policy flexibility for developing countries, which are crucial to enabling developing countries to formulate development strategies, in accordance with their sovereign rights, that reflect national interests and different needs, not always considered by international economic policymaking in the process of integration with the global economy<sup>64</sup>. The Group also demands reforms of international economic and financial governance in order to create an environment conducive to development strategies.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>G77 and China statement delivered at the UNCITRAL Working Group III (Investor-State Dispute Settlement Reform), 29 October – 2 November 2018. Available from [https://uncitral.un.org/sites/uncitral.un.org/files/g77wgiiifinal\\_291018.pdf](https://uncitral.un.org/sites/uncitral.un.org/files/g77wgiiifinal_291018.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> See the South Centre's Investment Policy Brief series, e.g., Kinda Mohamadieh, "Challenges of Investment Treaties on Policy Areas of Concern to Developing Countries", South Centre Investment Policy Brief 17 (April 2019). Available from [https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/IPB17\\_Challenges-of-Investment-Treaties-on-Policy-Areas-of-Concern-to-Developing-Countries\\_EN.pdf](https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/IPB17_Challenges-of-Investment-Treaties-on-Policy-Areas-of-Concern-to-Developing-Countries_EN.pdf). See also Lorenzo Cotula and Terrence Neal, "UNCITRAL Working Group III: Can Reforming Procedures Rebalance Investor Rights and Obligations?", South Centre Investment Policy Brief 15 (March 2019). Available from [https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IPB15\\_UNCITRAL-Working-Group-III-Can-Reforming-Procedures-Rebalance-Investor-Rights-and-Obligations\\_EN-1.pdf](https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IPB15_UNCITRAL-Working-Group-III-Can-Reforming-Procedures-Rebalance-Investor-Rights-and-Obligations_EN-1.pdf). And see also Kinda Mohamadieh, "The Future of Investor-State Dispute Settlement Deliberated at UNCITRAL: Unveiling a Dichotomy between Reforming and Consolidating the Current Regime", South Centre Investment Policy Brief 16 (March 2019). Available from [https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IPB16\\_The-Future-of-ISDS-Deliberated-at-UNCITRAL\\_EN.pdf](https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IPB16_The-Future-of-ISDS-Deliberated-at-UNCITRAL_EN.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Ministerial Declaration of the Group of 77 and China to UNCTAD XIV (Nairobi, 17-22 July 2016). Available from [https://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/td507\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/td507_en.pdf).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

The G77 and China Geneva Chapter's main priority in 2019, aside from reaffirming its active engagement in the routine work of the organization, are the preparations for the beginning of the negotiations of UNCTAD XV. The UNCTAD quadrennial conference is planned to be held in Barbados in 2020 and negotiations start already in the second half of 2019. The group will have to come together to strategize and set the priorities of the developing countries. Member State groups at UNCTAD will be requested to provide inputs for the President of the Trade and Development Board in order to prepare a first draft outcome. The negotiations on the draft outcome will take place sometime towards the end of the year. Under the leadership of Ecuador, the chair of the chapter in 2019 in Geneva, developing countries will have the challenge of working closely with its developed partners to reach consensus with the ultimate goal of reaffirming and strengthening UNCTAD's mandate for the next four years. To resist pressure to dilute the mandate of UNCTAD is always a main issue for the G77 and China in the negotiations of the quadrennial conferences.

The priorities for the developing countries in the negotiations of UNCTAD XV expressed by the Ministerial Declaration of the Group delivered to the UNCTAD XIV conference in Nairobi in July 2016 remain an important guidance for the Group.<sup>66</sup> The most pressing issues which caused long nights of negotiations between developing countries and developed countries included "policy space". This concept, which has been agreed to in past UNCTAD conferences (starting from UNCTAD X in Sao Paulo in 2004) implies that developing countries should be given the right to make use of policies and instruments required for their development. This space should not be eliminated by trade and other agreements. This concept had faced resistance by developed countries in several parts of the outcome text and was finally included in a nuanced way: "...and respecting each country's policy space while remaining consistent with relevant international rules and its commitments" (Para. 3).<sup>67</sup> Other areas are the work on debt issues, including the important work that led to the Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes adopted in 2015<sup>68</sup>, the conclusion of the WTO's Doha (Development) Round, technology transfer and the need to enhance international cooperation on tax issues, including how to deal with tax avoidance and tax havens, which has become a hot topic recently. A longstanding issue not only in UNCTAD but also in other UN multilateral fora is the need for an intergovernmental body under the auspices of the UN (and why not at UNCTAD) to deal with international cooperation on tax issues where all countries could come together and discuss and make decisions regarding tax evasion, tax avoidance, transfer of technology and illicit financial flows, but this was not acceptable to the developed countries.

Taking as a basis the current context, the negotiations for UNCTAD XV are expected to be as complex as in 2016. In a statement, the then-Chair of G77 and China Geneva Chapter, Ambassador Farukh Amil (Pakistan) summarized the situation during the Mid-Term Review of the Nairobi Maafakiano, the 2016 conference outcome document, held last October 2018 in Geneva<sup>69</sup>: "The 14<sup>th</sup> UN Conference on Trade and Development held in July

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<sup>66</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>67</sup> See also "Shaky state of North-South relations" by Martin Khor (1 August 2016). Available from <https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/columnists/global-trends/2016/08/01/shaky-state-of-northsouth-relations-the-uns-leading-development-organisation-just-got-a-renewed-mand/>.

<sup>68</sup> Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes, available at [https://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/a69L84\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/a69L84_en.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> Statement by the Group of 77 and China to be delivered by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China in Geneva H.E. Ambassador Farukh Amil (Pakistan). Sixty-Fifth Session of the Trade and Development Board

2016 in Nairobi, Kenya should rightly be considered as an important milestone in the United Nations' multilateral work on trade and development and interrelated issues of investment, finance, technology and sustainable development. However, since then we have already witnessed enormous deterioration in the principles and practice of multilateralism as a whole and multilateral trading system in particular. Indeed, ideological and fiscal onslaughts on multilateralism and multilateral institutions could overturn the painstaking work done over the decades”.

The Chair of the G77 and China Geneva Chapter in 2018 (Pakistan) noted also that the Nairobi Maafakiano had set the mandate for UNCTAD's work for four years and equally and importantly provided policy analysis on trade, economic and development issues. He recalled that the G77 and China had asked for undertaking a Mid-Term Review in order to assess the implementation of the outcome document, take stock of progress made so far and suggest ways and means to improve UNCTAD's future work.

The Group of 77 and China has called for correcting the inherent imbalances in the trade, economic and development systems that remain heavily tilted in favour of developed countries. Ambassador Farukh Amil stated in the Mid-Term Review that the global system is still a long way from its overarching goal of providing an enabling environment to developing countries to achieve their full economic potential (see Box 6).

**Box 6: G77 and China list of issues delivered at the Mid-Term Review of Nairobi Maafakiano in October 2018**

- i. At the global level, the developments since UNCTAD XIV in the areas of trade, investment, finance and technology demand constant and continuous attention from the international community; and some challenges in these fields have become more acute to many developing countries. Trade tensions are rising and the multilateral trading system is under severe stress. Productive investments appear to be in a negative cycle. The increase in many developing countries' public and private debt and a likely interest rate hike in advanced economies could lead to financial distress. Moreover, the role of technology in economic growth has further risen with digital economy, creating opportunities and challenges as “closing technological gaps” is becoming harder as the pace of innovation continues to accelerate;
- ii. The Group reaffirms important principles underpinning all of our work including policy space, special and differential treatment and right to development;
- iii. The G-77 & China reiterate the importance of the right to development. We cannot think of fulfilling human rights without ensuring human dignity through economic opportunities, trade and development. Freedom from poverty is a human right too;
- iv. As we called for dialogue between developed and developing countries, we believe that there is immense potential in UNCTAD to provide necessary space and platform enabling informed and confidence-building dialogue involving all stakeholders. With the “revitalization of intergovernmental machinery”, we tried to put fresh impetus to these efforts. Although that exercise did not yield optimum results, we are determined to continue our efforts for UNCTAD intergovernmental machinery to live up to its potential;
- v. We consider the establishment and operationalization of Intergovernmental Groups of Experts (IGE) on E-Commerce and Digital Economy and Financing for Development as one of the key successes of Nairobi Maafakiano. Overwhelming participation of relevant experts, concrete policy recommendations and visibility of these IGEs outside Geneva prove that with right conditions and political will,

intergovernmental machinery can serve its intended purpose of building consensus on important longstanding and emerging issues. In fact, IGE on E-Commerce and Digital Economy is one of its kind in the UN system. Therefore, we would like these IGEs to continue and be further strengthened in the next Ministerial Conference;

- vi. We are pleased to note the progress made in several important areas as identified in the Nairobi Maafakiano. However, there is much to be desired for progress in many areas including on tax evasion, tax avoidance, transfer of technology, illicit financial flows, trade and Intellectual Property;
- vii. Member States should be better informed and consulted before and after important meetings where UNCTAD Secretariat takes part to present a collective view of the organization. By making it a regular feature of UNCTAD's work would remove information gap and improve follow-up on important issues;
- viii. North-South Cooperation still remains the primary vehicle of international cooperation complemented but not substituted by South-South and Triangular Cooperation. With diverse backgrounds, varied economies and different levels of development achieved within the developing countries, there is a tremendous scope for cooperation on trade, investment and sharing experiences;
- ix. We have noted with concern the sharp decline in contributions from developed countries for important work done in technical cooperation. If this trend is not arrested immediately, there is a concern that many important projects/initiatives could not be sustained
- x. It's also a matter of concern that full implementation of para 55 (dd) could not be made possible due to "budgetary constraints and limited extrabudgetary support". We call for implementation of this important decision in support of Palestinian people and request the Secretariat to provide detailed proposal and the budget estimates required for fulfilling its mandate.

Source: Statement by the G77 and China delivered by the Chairman of the G77 and China in Geneva H.E. Ambassador Farukh Amil (Pakistan). Agenda Item 2: Evaluation and review of UNCTAD implementation of the quadrennial conference outcome. Sixty-Fifth Session of the Trade and Development Board (Part-II), Geneva, 1-4 October 2018.

## **II.6.2. Revitalizing the GSTP**

The Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries (GSTP) is an important interregional trading agreement with the potential to expand and diversify trade flows among its participants. It was first considered in a series of G77 meetings held in the period 1976-1981. In light of the current tensions and possible stagnation of the multilateral trading system in 2019, developing countries are searching for alternatives to improve the international trade regime. An important agreement negotiated under the auspices of UNCTAD but for many years left aside is the GSTP. The GSTP is gaining increasing support from the G77 and China membership as a potential source of opportunities for the Global South. A historic achievement for the GSTP was the conclusion of the São Paulo Round in December 2010 after six years of negotiations. However, it has not entered into force due to the lack in the number of necessary ratifications. The São Paulo Round is the third round and has 11 participants but the total number of members of the original GSTP goes up to 43<sup>70</sup>. It could be revitalized and expanded under the leadership of the G77 and China. In January 2013, Cuba notified UNCTAD of the completion of its ratification process, and submitted the instrument of ratification. Cuba is the third signatory to the São Paulo Round Protocol to

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<sup>70</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), "Conclusion of the São Paulo Round of the GSTP: A historical achievement for South-South Economic Cooperation and Integration", ECIDC Unit. Briefing Notes No. 1 (January 2011). Available from [https://unctad.org/en/docs/webecidc2011d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/docs/webecidc2011d1_en.pdf).

complete ratification procedures. The other two signatories to do so are India and Malaysia. According to the São Paulo Round Protocol, the ratification of at least four signatories is required in order for it to enter into force. That is to say, the ratification of one more country will bring tariff reduction commitments made during the Round into effective application among the signatories concerned.<sup>71</sup> Mercosur participates in the GSTP as a bloc. So far, two countries have already ratified (Argentina and Uruguay) and ratification is now pending for Brazil and Paraguay which could lead to a new stage in the future of the GSTP by reactivating this important modality of trade negotiations so important in times of trade tensions and paralysation of the multilateral trading system. It could open the doors for another negotiation including more members of the GSTP and why not its full membership of 43 developing countries.

### ***II.7. Communications and Outreach***

As we enter the era of digital diplomacy, another important action that could be implemented under the leadership of the chairs of the 6 chapters of the Group of 77 and China, with the support of its membership, including financially, is the upgrade of the chapters' websites. This work would be an important initiative to improve communications and outreach of the Group not only within its membership but also, to a broader constituency. There is growing demand for and a need to spread better information and the concerns of the developing countries in the various negotiations, which could be disseminated through the website and other outreach tools. Broader access to the work of the G77 and China among officials, young students, parliamentarians, civil society and development experts is crucially important for forming opinions on the needs of the South. Some chapters have made some significant progress, such as the example of the Rome Chapter of the G77 and China (<http://www.fao.org/g77/en>). The support Secretariats of the Chapters and organizations providing technical support, including the South Centre, should cooperate closely and receive financial support from its members to improve their work in support of the Group.

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<sup>71</sup> "Cuba's ratification of trade preferences pact welcomed" available at <https://unctad.org/fr/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=495>.

### **III. KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE NEGOTIATING PLATFORM OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)**

#### ***III.1. Human Rights Council***

The Human Rights Council (HRC) is composed of 47 Member States. In October 2018, the 73rd UN General Assembly elected 18 new Council members who will be serving for a period of three years, starting in January 2019, and they are Argentina, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Czech Republic, Denmark, Eritrea, Fiji, India, Italy, Philippines, Somalia, Togo and Uruguay.<sup>72</sup>

The election of Ambassador Coly Seck, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations Office at Geneva, to serve as the President of the Human Rights Council for a one-year term beginning on 1 January 2019 was seen as an important achievement for developing countries. He has outstanding experience and his country plays the role of an exemplary consensus builder in the negotiating platform of the developing countries and in the multilateral front.

The negotiating platform of the developing countries in the Human Rights Council<sup>73</sup> is mainly led by the Non-Aligned Movement, a group of 120 developing countries, and other regional and likeminded groups set for specific issues. In 2019, Azerbaijan will succeed Venezuela as NAM Chair for three years. The March 2019 session of the Council was the busiest one with a High-Level Segment with participation of over 80 senior dignitaries<sup>74</sup>. Developing countries have, for a long time, requested for greater balance in the work of the Council in regards to the Human Rights Agenda. The group is of the view that currently, there is a stronger focus on political and civil rights while economic, social and cultural rights do not receive the attention it should have and development is a key element to achieve all human rights.

The group also advocates for greater representation of developing country officials in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which currently is mainly composed of staff from developed countries, in particular the higher-level posts.

#### *Right to development*

The Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on the Right to Development (RtD) had a busy agenda in its 20<sup>th</sup> session from 29 April to 3 May 2019 in Geneva. As per resolution 39/9<sup>75</sup> the Human Rights Council requested that the Working Group at its twentieth session “shall commence the discussion to elaborate a draft legally binding instrument on the right to development through a collaborative process of engagement, including on the content and scope of the future instrument”. The resolution also

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<sup>72</sup> United Nations, Human Rights Council, “Human Rights Council elects Coly Seck of Senegal as its President for 2019”, 3 December 2018. Available from

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=23973&LangID=E>.

<sup>73</sup> Human Rights Council, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/pages/aboutcouncil.aspx>.

<sup>74</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session1/Pages/HLS.aspx>.

<sup>75</sup> A/HRC/RES/39/9 available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/296/49/PDF/G1829649.pdf?OpenElement>.



requests that the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group shall prepare a draft legally binding instrument on the basis of the discussions held during the twentieth session of the Working Group and the resource material from previous Working Group sessions to serve as a basis for substantive negotiations on a draft legally binding instrument, commencing at its twenty-first session.

At the 20<sup>th</sup> Session, the IWG re-elected by acclamation Ambassador Zamir Akram (Pakistan) as the Chair-Rapporteur for the 20th session.

Ambassador Akram provided a brief update of his recent activities, including the presentation of the report of the 19th session of the IWG on RtD to the UNGA in New York. In his meeting with the High Commissioner on Human Rights and the UN Secretary-General, he highlighted to them the request from the Human Rights Council to “take sufficient measures to ensure balanced and visible allocation of resources and due attention to ensure the visibility of the right to development by identifying and implementing tangible projects dedicated to the right to development”<sup>76</sup>. This is an issue of priority for the NAM.

For 20 years important discussions were held at the working group on the way to implement this right but challenges still persist. NAM is of the view that a legally binding instrument will contribute to overcome barriers and to finally operationalize the RtD as a priority to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The European Union (EU) stated that the IWG should recognize that “divergent views in the understanding of the implementation of the right to development persist”<sup>77</sup>. The EU is not in favour of the elaboration of an international legal standard of a binding nature as the group does not believe that this is the appropriate mechanism to realise RtD. The US has disengaged from the IWG since last year.

The Special Rapporteur on the RtD updated the IWG on his recent activities and country missions. He visited Cabo Verde and is now preparing for a country mission to Switzerland. He also informed that he concluded the regional consultations with a meeting in Senegal.

The Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, the think tank of the Council, was also requested in Human Rights Council resolution 39/9<sup>78</sup>, “while taking into account the views of Member States”, to prepare a research-based report on the importance of a legally binding instrument on the right to development, to present an oral update on the preparation of the report to the Council at its forty-second session, and to present the report to the Council at its forty-fifth session. The same resolution asked the Special Rapporteur to participate in relevant international dialogues and policy forums relating to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the high-level political forum on sustainable development, financing for development, climate change and disaster risk reduction, with a view to enhancing the integration of the right to development into these forums and dialogues, and requests Member States, international organizations, United Nations agencies, regional economic commissions

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<sup>76</sup> Opening statement by the Chair-Rapporteur, Mr. Zamir Akram, delivered at the twentieth session of the Working Group on the Right to Development, 29 April – 3 May 2019. Available from <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Development/Session20/ZamirAkram.pdf>.

<sup>77</sup> Statement delivered by the EU at the twentieth session of the Working Group on the Right to Development.

<sup>78</sup> Human Rights Council resolution 39/9 The right to development available from [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/39/9](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/39/9).

and other relevant organizations to facilitate the meaningful participation of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development in these forums and dialogues.

In October 2019, the fifth session of the Human Rights Council Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group for the Elaboration of an International Legally Binding Instrument on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with respect to Human Rights (OEIGWG)<sup>79</sup>, as per Resolution A/HRC/26/9, will be held in Geneva. The Chair of the Working Group, the ambassador of the Mission of Ecuador in Geneva, has made important contributions during the process by engaging fully with all parties. A zero-draft of the Legally Binding Instrument and the draft of an optional protocol as annex were released in July 2018<sup>80</sup>. The first reading of the draft text took place during the Fourth Session of the OEIGWG that was held from 15 to 19 October 2018.

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<sup>79</sup> The OEIGWG is available at

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/WGTransCorp/Pages/IGWGOntnc.aspx>.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

#### **IV. DEVELOPING COUNTRIES' ROLE IN STRENGTHENING MULTILATERALISM**

Developing countries have played a crucial role in the establishment and strengthening of the multilateral system and its institutions for the past decades. In the 1950s and 1960s, the increased number of developing countries participating in the UN particularly in the work of the General Assembly contributed not only to reaffirm but also to advance the multilateral agenda in the various processes. The negotiating platform of the global South played an important role in this process.

The establishment of UNCTAD is an important example of the level of engagement at that time and the potential to deliver when developing countries decide to work together and remain strongly united. The '70s and '80s saw a different scenario with economic and debt crises, and even the so-called lost decades for development which particularly affected the Latin American and Caribbean region. It was also a period of crisis for multilateralism with several multilateral processes having produced little or nothing with major examples being the goals of commodity stabilization, of preferential tariffs for developing countries, of targeted aid flows. Domestic issues also took an important role in reducing attention and support for multilateralism. The 1990s and 2000s saw a golden age of globalization and the 2010s saw its gloomy side with inequality on the rise and social unrest movements all over the world. Today, as we live in a new moment of crisis in multilateralism, the developing countries' coalitions are needed and should be reaffirmed and strengthened.

The major objectives on climate, sustainable development and finance for development will require significant amounts of finance, technology transfer and capacity building to be achieved, with good negotiations and follow-up on implementation mechanisms. An articulated action by developing countries can achieve important results that address both developing countries' domestic needs and multilateral aspirations.

In its Ministerial Declaration of September 2018<sup>81</sup>, the Ministers of the G77 and China reaffirmed their views on the importance of building a culture of peace by strengthening multilateralism and developing friendly relations among nations, based on international law, dialogue, respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and of taking other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace and the fulfilment, promotion and protection of all human rights including the right to development. They also recognized that peace is not only the absence of conflict, but also requires a positive, dynamic participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. They reaffirmed that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

Poverty reduction remains a main priority for the Group. In the same declaration, G77 and China Ministers stated that poverty eradication, in all its forms and dimensions, is a central imperative of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and emphasized the need to address poverty in all its forms and dimensions in order to truly leave no one behind, focusing in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. While expressing their commitment to work and engage fully with the international community in the

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<sup>81</sup> G77 and China Ministerial Declaration, 27 September 2018 available at <https://www.g77.org/doc/Declaration2018.htm>.

implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the group is of the view that it should be implemented in a balanced and integrated manner and unfinished business and standing unfulfilled commitments must be made. The economic coalition of the global South also raised concerns over the many challenges the world is facing today which could make it difficult to achieve the 2030 agenda.

These challenges include the increase in protectionist measures, a disorderly tightening of financial conditions, the adoption of inward-looking policies and debt vulnerabilities as well as escalation of geopolitical tensions which could disrupt development progress, stated the G77 and China declaration.

The Ministers of the G77 and China also warned that high levels of inequality pose a challenge to robust growth and sustainable development. Declining private investment in infrastructure indicates inability to sufficiently align investment with long-term sustainable development. Those challenges should be addressed through developing countries' collective endeavours. Appropriate emphasis has to be placed on an enabling global environment and global partnership for development, balanced against the increasing emphasis being placed in domestic resource mobilization.

The Group also stated that the current challenging global environment to national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development included not only economic factors such as difficult macroeconomic conditions, low commodity prices, subdued trade growth and volatile capital flows, but also natural disasters, climate change, environmental degradation, humanitarian crises and conflicts.

In order to deal with the multiple challenges described above, the negotiating platform of the global South will need to adapt its platform to changing conditions but also to strengthen its capability in negotiations in support of multilateralism. The growing complexity of negotiations and the pressuring attacks on the system require great transformations in the platforms.

## V. CONCLUSION

Multilateralism has been celebrated, on the one hand, for its achievements – for instance, the establishment of UNCTAD as the UN organization to support developing countries on trade and development. Multilateralism, under the leadership of the UN, contributed to ringing the bell for emerging challenges as the risk of climate change and most recently, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 goals. On the other hand, multilateralism has also been criticized for its shortcomings when it did not deliver on expectations as per several development agreements and agendas which have not given concrete results on the ground and, sometimes, even led to setbacks due to bland outcomes or implementation of agreed commitments by its Member States. However, and despite all the challenges, multilateralism has allowed the international community to gather together in an environment of dialogue and to promote international cooperation among all countries. This has been its utmost achievement. Through multilateralism, different views can be expressed and common positions can be achieved for the common good of mankind, preservation of our environment and a more humanistic approach to international relations above geopolitical and narrowed national interests or the influence of the most powerful.

In advancing negotiations with the North, developing countries should remember, particularly in times of crisis, the common interests that unite the developing countries and that are stronger than what might disunite them. An example is the longstanding need for reform of the international economic framework enabling developing countries to have policy space for implementing national policies that are beneficial for their development. The fulfilment of unfulfilled development commitments such as 0.7% of GNI for development and the climate financing pledges which are two separate tracks, and the implementation of the key Rio92 principles of equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) are some of the common challenges ahead.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the WTO Doha (Development) Round, and the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) post-2020 framework to be adopted in October 2020 in Beijing, China and implementation of BAPA+40 are some of the areas in which developing countries need to be united and be very pro-active in pushing for the implementation of long-standing commitments from developed countries that are still to be fulfilled, particularly on issues such as Means of Implementation - SDG 17 for all other SDGs and transfer of technology and capacity building to developing countries.

Developed countries will have to show greater engagement with developing countries so that the longstanding development objectives of developing countries are met. Also, historical responsibilities should be taken under consideration in the negotiations. Developing country economies which are vibrant and result in inclusive development are crucial. This will create important market opportunities and stability for both North and South. Failure to address development challenges in the South will have costs for the developed countries as we can see with the migration and refugees crisis despite the greatest burden still being within the developing countries so far.

The same for climate change. Countries that contributed the least to climate change are being affected the most by the climate change impacts such as the recent hurricanes in the

Caribbean region or typhoons and cyclones in Asia and Africa. These impacts are devastating decades of development efforts, causing great human losses and economic, environment and social crisis. All those issues must be put on the table and seriously discussed in a constructive and very frank manner in the context of existing multilateral arrangements under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). There is a need to leave aside rhetoric as well as short-sighted national political interests and move ahead towards concrete actions and deliverables.

As the challenges increase in the economic, social and environmental areas, and the need to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, remains the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, the G77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement negotiating platforms will need to strengthen and play their role in support of multilateralism and express their full commitment to the multilateral system in the search for a more just and equitable international economic system that offers opportunities to raise the standard of living of their peoples<sup>82</sup>. Acting united in negotiating platforms such as the G77 and China and NAM is necessary for developing countries. The global South coalitions should encourage that differences be solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation with full respect for the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

In this troubled and increasingly challenging context, developing countries will have to act firmly and proactively by supporting a strong, inclusive, and dynamic multilateral system, in particular through the United Nations. The attainment of the common development objectives of the Global South in the several multilateral negotiations in which developing countries engage as a group will require fresh thinking, redoubled efforts and stronger unity. Furthermore, the negotiating coalitions in which developing countries will be acting as a group will require the investment of political will and commitment, an inclusive process, and the development of well-prepared negotiators with better-informed policy positions, in order for developing countries to get good results in the increasing complex multilateral negotiating processes.

The leadership of the G77 + China will be another important element in the multilateral negotiations. The negotiating groups must also benefit from those developing countries that have made important progress in economic development and in negotiation skills. They have to work together to defend and to advance common interests of the developing countries in the various multilateral fora taking place in 2019. The challenges will be greater and so will the opportunities.

This is essential to attain and enable developing countries to achieve their longstanding common objectives. This is not an easy task, particularly considering the growing diversity and the different levels of development in the Global South and outside pressure the coalitions face in the negotiating processes as had been well stated by one of most memorable leaders of the South, Dr. Gamani Corea, former UNCTAD Secretary-General and a Member of the South Commission, who wrote a paper entitled “The negotiating platform of the Group of 77” from which this paper was greatly inspired and has benefited<sup>83</sup> (see Annex 2).

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<sup>82</sup> G77 and China Ministerial Declaration 2018

<sup>83</sup> Gamani Corea, “The Negotiating platform of the Group of 77. The platform in action – a historical overview”. Input prepared for the South Commission (Geneva, 1988).

Over past decades, developing countries have proven that when working in a united manner they can reach important outcomes<sup>84</sup>. However there are weaknesses which still need to be addressed. For instance, most developing countries are understaffed with only few delegates to cover an increasingly demanding agenda, both in the capital as well as in the posts where multilateral negotiations take place. They need support before and during the meetings as well as in the follow-up of implementation. Training is an important part which also needs to be improved on several issues such as negotiation procedures and improving communications and even in languages that can be still a barrier sometimes. To engage effectively in negotiations, delegations can benefit from each other through groups working collectively and in collaborating they strengthen their negotiating capacity and get better benefits from more legitimate outcomes.

As negotiations tend to become even more complex in the years to come, developing countries will be required to ensure that “whilst every country do not have an equal interest in every issue, the common platform of the South, taken as a whole, must contain elements of major interest to each of the South. The platforms must have relevance and appeal to all regions”<sup>85</sup>. This is crucial for strengthening the coalitions such as G77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement and to reaffirm their relevance and value in the negotiations. For that to happen, it will require to have greater unity, coordination, and preparation with the support of a strong research and analysis base so necessary to effectively negotiate, to leverage their position and to build consensus with partners in the developed countries. The ultimate objective is a strong and revitalized multilateral system that can deliver on the expectations and needs of all peoples of the world while respecting their common and differentiated responsibilities.

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<sup>84</sup> Sheila Page, “Developing Countries: Victims or Participants. Their Changing Role in International Negotiations”, Overseas Development Institute (2003). Available from <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/2418.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

## ANNEX 1

<b>CALENDAR OF MAJOR MULTILATERAL PROCESSES IN 2019</b>		
14-18 January	Towards a Global Pact for the Environment: First Substantive Session	United Nations Office in Nairobi, Kenya
25 February to 22 March	40th session of the Human Rights Council, including a High-Level Segment attended by over 80 senior dignitaries	United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland
11-15 March	Fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)	United Nations Office in Nairobi, Kenya
18-20 March	Towards a Global Pact for the Environment: Second Substantive Session	United Nations Office in Nairobi, Kenya
20-22 March	Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40)	Buenos Aires, Argentina
28 March	General Assembly High-level Meeting on Climate and Sustainable Development for All	UN Headquarters in New York
1-5 April	37th Session of UNCITRAL Working Group III, Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) Reform	UN Headquarters in New York
15-18 April	ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum	UN Headquarters in New York
23-24 April	First FAO/WHO/AU International Conference on Food Safety	Geneva, Switzerland
29 April	Economic and Social Council one-day special meeting of the Council on international cooperation in tax matters	UN Headquarters in New York
29 April to May 3	Twentieth session of the Human Rights Council Working Group on the Right to Development	UN Office in Geneva, Switzerland
20 May	Towards a Global Pact for the Environment: Third Substantive Session	United Nations Office in Nairobi, Kenya
20-28 May	72nd World Health Assembly (WHA) Meetings of the Ministers of Health of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and of BRICS Health Ministers	UN Office in Geneva, Switzerland
24 June-5 July	66 <sup>th</sup> annual session of UNCTAD Trade and Development Board	UN Office in Geneva, Switzerland
22-29 June	Forty-first Session of the FAO Conference will elect the next Director-General of the organization	FAO, Rome, Italy
8-26 July	52nd session of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)	UN Office in Vienna, Austria
9-18 July	Seventh Session of the High-Level Political Forum (annual review) convened by ECOSOC on the theme "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" (SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, 16, and 17 (reviewed every year))	UN Headquarters in New York



23 September	Climate Action Summit (Informal Leaders Dialogue on Climate Change, hosted by the UN Secretary-General)  High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) under auspices of the General Assembly	UN Headquarters in New York
24-25 September	High-level Political Forum Summit level under auspices of the General Assembly (held every four years)	UN Headquarters in New York
26 September	High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development under auspices of the General Assembly	UN Headquarters in New York
27 September	High-level review of SAMOA Pathway under auspices of the General Assembly	UN Headquarters in New York
30 September to 9 October	Fifty-Ninth Series of Meetings of the WIPO Assemblies. Process of selection of next Director-General will be initiated with a new DG to be elected in May 2020.	Geneva, Switzerland
14-18 October	5th Session of the Human Rights Council Open-ended intergovernmental working group for the elaboration of an International Legally Binding Instrument on Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises with respect to human rights (OEIGWG), Resolution A/HRC/26/9	UN Office in Geneva, Switzerland
3-7 November	18th Session of the UNIDO General Conference	UN Office in Vienna, Austria
11-22 November	UNFCCC (COP 25) in Santiago, Chile	Santiago, Chile
TBC	G77 and China Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on South-South Cooperation (IFCC) to be hosted by a Member of the Asia-Pacific Group	TBC
Source: AT/South Centre, 2019		

## ANNEX 2

### Reaffirming the Concept of the South

A prior issue, however, is the realism and validity underlying the very concept of the South, a South that embraces over 160 countries with varying endowments and degrees of development and spread over the continents of the North and South America, Asia, Africa, and even Europe. Are their common interests and common solutions to problems that can be incorporated into a common platform and negotiated jointly with the North? This is not a new question. It was raised at the time of UNCTAD I and emerges again with even greater force in the light of the growing differentiation among the developing countries.

At UNCTAD I, developing countries surprised the North by coming together to form a group, one that still calls itself the Group of 77. They were able to rally round a set of proposals articulated by the conference secretariat under the leadership of Raul Prebisch. There were many factors that bound developing countries together at that time despite their considerable variety. A common colonial or semi-colonial past was certainly one such a factor. Their relative poverty, their dependence on a few primary products for export to the northern markets, their lack of industrialization – in short their peripheral place in the centre-periphery relationship – were among the other factors. **But the most important factor of all was the stake they had in common in the reform of an international economic framework, a global environment, that was not adequately supportive of their development efforts and in whose management they had no say. Such a reform could not be achieved by the developing countries individually or in limited groupings.** They had to join together into a single group so as to make up for their lack of economic strength by maximizing their political impact.

Despite the changes over past two decades these factors remain to a given common identity to the countries of the South. The interests of these countries are not identical in respect to every single issue. The oil producing countries, the newly industrializing countries, the least developed countries, (the agricultural exporting countries), have varying concerns and needs but they also have a **common interest in an international economic framework that is supportive of development.** Whilst such a framework is also in the interest of the North the latter's priority, in a negotiating context, are likely to be different. **If countries of the South fail to mobilize their strength through unity the chances of their influencing the reform of the systems in such areas as money, finance, trade and commodities are slender indeed.**

In recent times, certain voices from the North have suggested that aid to the poorest countries is virtually the only issue with a North-South or rich-poor dimension. Other issues such as money, trade, finance and commodities, should in this view, be negotiated outside a North-South context in light of the separate interests of countries.

There is a **development dimension to all major issues.** And all countries of the South have an overriding common interest in negotiating international systems in these areas that are directly supportive of the development process. They need to mobilize their full political and economic strength for this purpose. The specific interests of individual developing countries or categories of countries do not in any way negate this overriding common interest. The validity and relevance of the concept of the South, therefore, remains and with it the validity and relevance of a common platform. Such a platform must, however, secure the commitment of all countries of the South. It must be recognised that despite efforts to recognise and safeguard the interests of all groups of countries in the South in it will not be likely that every issue will have the same interest for every country. Thus the interest of the commodity producers in commodity arrangements will be greater than that of non-producers. The more industrialized developing countries will have a special interest in liberalizing market access for their manufactured exports, while the poorest countries will be particularly concerned with concessional aid flows. However, whilst every country will not have an equal interest in every issue, the common platform of the South, taken as a whole, must contain elements of major interest of each country. It is only in this way that all countries of the South could rally round on a common platform. The platform of the south must have relevance and appeal for the several regions of the developing world. The countries of the South are already, to a certain degree, organized in a sub-regional or regional basis and such organization is likely to increase in the future. It is therefore important, that regional interests are reflected and reconciled in the platform as a whole. Indeed, in the period to come regional commitments to the common platform are likely to be more important and more needed than ever before in the past.

Source: Gamani Corea, "The Negotiating platform of the Group of 77. The platform in action – a historical overview". Input prepared for the South Commission (Geneva, 1988).

**SOUTH CENTRE RESEARCH PAPERS**

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**ISSN 1819-6926**