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## Reinvigorating the Non-Aligned Movement for the post-COVID-19 era

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# Reinvigorating the Non-Aligned Movement for the Post-COVID-19 Era

Yuefen Li, Daniel Uribe and Danish





# **RESEARCH PAPER**

**179**

## **REINVIGORATING THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT FOR THE POST-COVID-19 ERA<sup>\*</sup>**

**Yuefen Li, Daniel Uribe and Danish**

**SOUTH CENTRE**

**14 JULY 2023**

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<sup>\*</sup> This paper benefitted greatly from the discussions during the Side Event to the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, co-organized by the South Centre and the Islamic Development Bank in Baku, Azerbaijan on 6 July 2023.



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## ABSTRACT

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was born out of the need felt by newly emerging post-colonial nations not to be compelled to be part of any single political or military bloc during the Cold War. As the international community finds itself once again in the midst of heightened geo-political tensions, the principles of non-alignment have seen a resurgence in the Global South, providing NAM with the potential to become a major force in the configuration of a new international order.

Over six decades after its inception, the NAM stands at a crucial juncture, where consolidating non-alignment among developing countries can help build solidarity, promote collaboration and defend the interest of developing countries in the reconfiguration of global governance. Dealing with these challenges requires unprecedented levels of international cooperation, both North-South and South-South. As the grouping of non-aligned countries, the NAM could play an important role against global fragmentation, build solidarity, and strengthen multilateralism.

This paper therefore looks at the role and position of the NAM at this time, and how it can be reinvigorated to address the most critical challenges facing its Member States and other developing countries today. Considering the history, evolution and important achievements of the NAM, the paper provides some proposals that can support NAM Member States in their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and make progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

*Le Mouvement des pays non-alignés est né de la nécessité ressentie par les nations post-coloniales de ne pas être contraintes d'appartenir à un seul bloc politique ou militaire pendant la guerre froide. Alors que la communauté internationale se trouve à nouveau au cœur de tensions géopolitiques accrues, le principe de non-alignement a connu un regain d'intérêt dans le Sud global, donnant au Mouvement des non-alignés le potentiel de devenir une force majeure dans la construction d'un nouvel ordre international.*

*Plus de six décennies après sa création, le Mouvement des pays non alignés est arrivé à un moment décisif, où la consolidation du principe de non-alignement peut contribuer à renforcer la solidarité, à promouvoir la coopération et à défendre les intérêts des pays en développement dans la recomposition de la gouvernance mondiale. Pour relever ces défis, un niveau sans précédent de coopération internationale, à la fois Nord-Sud et Sud-Sud est nécessaire. En tant que groupement de pays non alignés, le Mouvement est susceptible de jouer un rôle important dans la lutte contre la fragmentation mondiale et le renforcement de la solidarité internationale et du multilatéralisme.*

*Le présent document examine la place et le rôle du Mouvement des pays non alignés dans le monde actuel, ainsi que la manière dont il peut être renforcé pour relever les défis les plus importants auxquels ses États membres et d'autres pays en développement sont confrontés. S'appuyant sur son histoire, son évolution et ses importantes réalisations, il formule des propositions susceptibles d'aider les États qui le composent à se relever de la pandémie de COVID-19 et à progresser dans la mise en œuvre du Programme de développement durable à l'horizon 2030.*



*El Movimiento de Países No Alineados (MNOAL) nació de la necesidad que tenían las nuevas naciones poscoloniales emergentes de no verse obligadas a formar parte de ningún partido político o bloque militar durante la Guerra Fría. Dado que la comunidad internacional vuelve a encontrarse ante un aumento de las tensiones geopolíticas, los principios de no alineamiento han resurgido en el Sur Global, una circunstancia que brinda al MNOAL la posibilidad de convertirse en una gran fuerza en la configuración de un nuevo orden internacional.*

*Más de seis décadas después de su establecimiento, el MNOAL se encuentra en una coyuntura decisiva, en la que la consolidación del no alineamiento entre los países en desarrollo puede ayudar a generar solidaridad, promover la colaboración y defender los intereses de los países en desarrollo en la reconfiguración de la gobernanza mundial. Para sortear estos retos, se necesitan unos niveles sin precedentes de cooperación internacional, tanto Norte-Sur como Sur-Sur. El MNOAL, en calidad de agrupación de países no alineados, podría desempeñar una función importante para frenar la fragmentación mundial, generar solidaridad y reforzar el multilateralismo.*

*Por lo tanto, en este documento se examinan el papel y la posición del MNOAL en estos momentos, y el modo en que se puede revitalizar para abordar las dificultades más críticas que afrontan actualmente sus Estados miembros y otros países en desarrollo. En el presente estudio, que tiene en cuenta la historia, la evolución y los logros importantes del MNOAL, figuran algunas propuestas que pueden apoyar a los Estados miembros del Movimiento para recuperarse de los efectos provocados por la pandemia de COVID-19 y conseguir avances en la aplicación de la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The world is undergoing a period of transformative change, with many countries facing social, economic and environmental crises and other parallel crises in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. This 'polycrises' has accelerated global economic and political fragmentation, further widened inequalities among and between nations, and reversed progress made in some Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This has led to increasing discontent over the global governance structure built in the post-World War II (WWII) period, which has become more and more outdated and dysfunctional. The Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) is requesting for re-examining and re-configuring the global financial architecture for the 21st century, which can provide a global safety net for developing countries<sup>1</sup>. The United States of America has made moves to introduce a new 'Washington Consensus' and new 'global economic order', again led by the United States<sup>2</sup>. Politically, since WWII, the world has gone through different phases, starting with a bi-polar world with two military blocs – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact - to a unipolar world dominated by the United States after the end of the cold war, and recently moving towards a multipolar world. The fractures and increasing strains between the United States and China (the two largest economies) has forced many countries and multinational corporations to try to navigate this political and economic fragmentation.

As the international community finds itself once again in the midst of heightened geo-political tensions, including a war in the European continent, the principles of non-alignment have seen a strong resurgence in the Global South. Non-aligned and other developing countries have strongly emphasised their intention to chart an independent pathway towards their sustainable development, without getting drawn into new economic or political 'blocs' and safeguarding their own national interests<sup>3</sup>. With the emergence of a multipolar world, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has the potential to once again become a major force in the reconfiguration of the world order.

Over six decades after its inception, the NAM thus rests at a crucial juncture, where consolidating non-alignment among its members can help build solidarity, promote international cooperation and defend the common interests of developing countries in the reconfiguration of global governance structure. To be certain, non-alignment does not indicate a refusal to engage with any country or grouping. Instead, it enjoins non-aligned States to cooperate with any country or entity that will promote and fulfil the founding principles of the NAM.

The transformations seen since 1961, not least the end of the Cold War and the rise of globalization, triggered many to prophesise the end of non-alignment itself. Yet, the NAM has operationalized its principles with shifted emphasis, in line with the changing political and economic conditions. It has evolved to address the changing needs and priorities of its

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<sup>1</sup> António Guterres, "Secretary-General remarks at the Paris Summit on a New Global Financing Pact", United Nations, 22 June 2023. Available from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2023-06-22/secretary-general-remarks-the-paris-summit-new-global-financing-pact>.

<sup>2</sup> Remarks by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Renewing American Economic Leadership at the Brookings Institution, The Whitehouse, 27 April 2023. Available from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/04/27/remarks-by-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-on-renewing-american-economic-leadership-at-the-brookings-institution/>.

<sup>3</sup> See: Jorge Heine, "Global South forging a new foreign policy", *Asia Times*, 19 June 2023. Available from <https://asiatimes.com/2023/06/global-south-forging-a-new-foreign-policy/>.

members. As Samir Amin had underscored, “Non-alignment was, therefore, itself a positive factor in the transformation of the world for the better, despite all its limitations”<sup>4</sup>.

The increasing challenges faced today by non-aligned and other developing countries, such as the triple planetary crisis, increased geo-political tensions, indebtedness, internal and external armed conflicts, inflation, food insecurity and rising protectionism have all hampered their efforts towards sustainable development and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dealing with these challenges requires unprecedented levels of international cooperation, both North-South and South-South. With rising concerns about the global implications of the re-emergence of country blocs<sup>5</sup> and the establishment of a new ‘multipolar’ world<sup>6</sup>, the NAM could play an important role against global fragmentation, build solidarity, and strengthen multilateralism.

This research paper therefore looks at the role and position of the NAM at this time, and how it can be reinvigorated to address the most critical challenges facing its members and other developing countries today. Considering the past history, evolution and achievements of the NAM in the face of constant changing global economic and political landscape, the paper provides some proposals that can support NAM Member States’ collective action to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic and make progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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<sup>4</sup> Samir Amin, “The revival of the movement of non-aligned countries”, *Third World Resurgence* No. 286, June 2014, pp. 27-28

<sup>5</sup> Gideon Rachman, “The US, China and the return of a two-bloc world”, *Financial Times*, 11 March 2019. Available from <https://www.ft.com/content/35accdc0-43de-11e9-a965-23d669740bfb>.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Poast, “The Signs of the Multipolar World Are All Around Us”, *World Politics Review*, 26 May 2023. Available from <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/multipolarity-us-vs-china-russia-superpower-hegemony/>.

## **2. EVOLUTION OF NAM AND THE CHANGING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE SINCE ITS INCEPTION**

The direction and evolution of the NAM since its inception in 1961 reflect both an attempt to place the concerns of its members on the global agenda as well as the Movement's collective response to global developments.

### ***2.1. Emergence of post-colonial nations in the bipolar world***

The post-World War II period was marked by the rivalry between the Warsaw Pact (which was referred to as the 'Eastern bloc') and the NATO (comprised of the Western countries and thus also called the 'Western bloc'). The two blocs had ideological clashes and also an intense arms race that lasted the entire Cold War period.

Meanwhile, a bright development in the world was the mushrooming of newly independent States emerging from colonialism. However, these new States faced some common challenges, mainly as a result of their colonial past. They were underdeveloped, lacking in strong institutional structures and possessed no voice at the international level. At the same time, they had a strong desire to support other countries which were still under the yoke of colonialism to become independent.

The NAM was born in 1961 against the backdrop of the Cold War tensions between the two blocs. It did not wish to belong to any military alliance itself and stood for "the end of colonialism, the realization of the right of self-determination of peoples, equal rights of races and peoples, nuclear disarmament and peaceful international cooperation of all peoples and states"<sup>7</sup>. Yet, there was also a common desire among them "to co-operate with any government which sought to contribute to the strengthening of confidence and peace in the world"<sup>8</sup>. NAM Member States hoped that the 'solidarity of the weak' could defend their common interests at the international and regional levels.

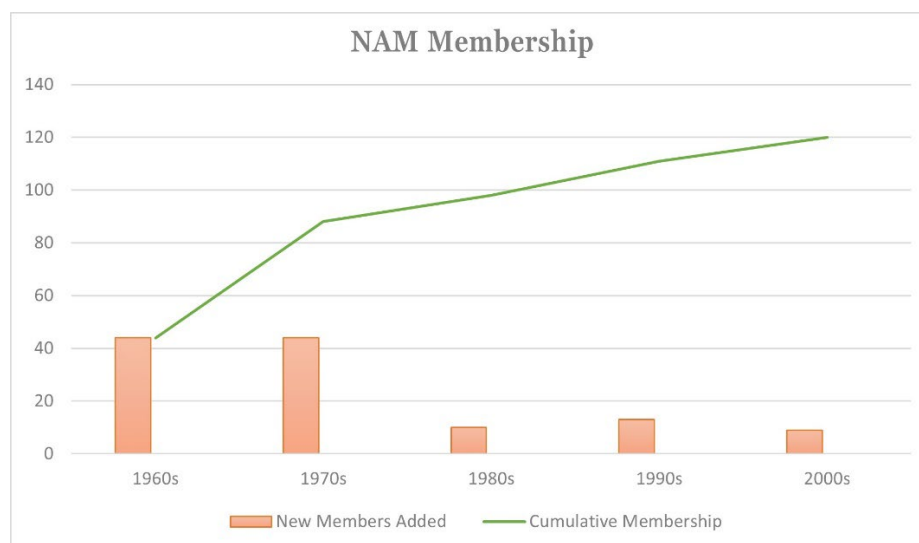
Following its establishment, the steady expansion in the agenda of the NAM and the international fora in which it participated as a group, as well as the solid expansion in the number of its Member States (see Figure 1) is proof of its continuing relevance and importance. The NAM remains an important force at the international arena on issues of high relevance to its Member States.

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<sup>7</sup> Wolfgang Spröte, "Non-Aligned Movement And The UN", A Concise Encyclopedia of the United Nations (Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill | Nijhoff, 2010). Available from <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004180048.i-962.415>.

<sup>8</sup> Bimal Prasad, "The Evolution of Non-Alignment", *India Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 3 (1983), pp. 299–309. Available from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45071842>.

Figure 1 - Growth in NAM Membership since 1961



Source: by authors

Some important meetings held by newly independent countries prior to 1961 played a decisive role in the creation of the NAM. For instance, the 1955 Asian-African Conference held in Bandung was a major milestone for developing countries emerging from the shadow of colonialism. The conference particularly “recognised the urgency of promoting economic development in the Asian-African region” and expressed a “general desire for economic co-operation among the participating countries on the basis of mutual interest and respect for national sovereignty”. Most importantly, the conference elaborated the ‘Ten Principles of Bandung’, which contained the basic principles that would guide the efforts of developing countries to promote peace and cooperation in the world<sup>9</sup>.

This was followed by a meeting in July 1956, between Yugoslavia’s Josip Broz Tito, Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser, and India’s Jawaharlal Nehru on the island of Brijuni to “assess the impact of the Bandung Conference and discuss their vision for a non-aligned force”<sup>10</sup>. This tripartite meeting led to the signing of the Declaration of Brijuni, which laid the groundwork for bringing together a group of countries that were not aligned with any of the ‘Great Power’ blocs.

Following a preparatory meeting in Cairo in June 1961, the ‘First Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries’ took place in Belgrade on 1-6 September 1961 with 25 full participants and 3 observer countries. Led by leaders from India (Nehru), Ghana (Nkrumah), Egypt (Nasser), Indonesia (Sukarno), and Yugoslavia (Tito), its stated purpose was to have an exchange “on international problems with a view to contributing more effectively to world peace and security and peaceful co-operation among peoples”<sup>11</sup>. Foundations for key political and economic issues that would dominate the NAM discourse for many years were set in this conference, including anti-colonialism and strengthening of

<sup>9</sup> South Centre, “Non Aligned Movement and Bandung Principles as Relevant Today as Ever”, *South Bulletin* 99, 1 May 2017. Available from <https://www.southcentre.int/question/non-aligned-movement-and-bandung-principles-as-relevant-today-as-ever-south-centre/>.

<sup>10</sup> “1961: First NAM summit in Belgrade”, *Frontline*, 12 August 2022. Available from <https://frontline.thehindu.com/world-affairs/india-at-75-epochal-moments-1961-first-nam-summit-in-belgrade/article65727322.ece>.

<sup>11</sup> 1961 Belgrade Declaration. The final documents from all the NAM Summits are available here: <https://ris.org.in/en/documents-non-aligned-movement>.

international peace and security, development and a more just and equitable economic order<sup>12</sup>.

The second NAM summit was held in Cairo in October 1964, this time with 47 participants and 10 observer countries, as well as two international organizations (Organization of African Unity and the League of Arab States). In his opening remarks, Nasser expressed that “non-alignment did not evolve into a pure negation of international alignments but it had become a clear affirmation of an independently proclaimed stance in world politics”<sup>13</sup>.

The Declaration titled ‘Programme for Peace and International Co-operation’<sup>14</sup> emphasised the “next stage of political evolution of the non-aligned group”, going beyond but including anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism<sup>15</sup>. The Bandung Principles were also folded within the overall goals and objectives of the policy of non-alignment. They became an essential element for the NAM membership<sup>16</sup>.

The third NAM Conference held in Lusaka in 1970 was a defining moment for the NAM, as it led to its further institutionalization<sup>17</sup> through the commitment “to ensure the continuity of action by holding periodic consultations of representatives of non-aligned countries at different levels and by convening summit conferences more frequently depending on the prevailing international situation”. It also created the ‘Standing Committee’, which “first met in April 1970 at the preparatory meeting in Dar es Salaam”<sup>18</sup>. This body eventually was referred to as “the ‘Preparatory Committee’ when it was preparing for conferences and the ‘Coordinating Bureau’ when it was coordinating the implementation of resolutions. Its tasks, then, were chiefly of a technical and administrative character”<sup>19</sup>. After Lusaka, NAM also had more “clearly defined set of principles and ideas, concrete programme of future activities and permanence in both institutional existence and summit continuity”<sup>20</sup>.

The Lusaka Declaration noted that “the growth of non-alignment into a broad, international movement cutting across racial, regional and other barriers, is an integral part of significant changes in the structure of the entire international community”<sup>21</sup>. It also had a separate ‘Declaration on Non-Alignment and Economic Progress’ which included many elements that would be adopted as part of the Declaration on the New International Economic Order (NIEO)<sup>22</sup>.

Following the developments in Lusaka, a more structured and streamlined approach was adopted by the NAM, which focused distinctly on political and economic issues. While initially anchored by anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and South-South cooperation, the number of items being addressed by the NAM was gradually expanded to include issues such as apartheid, conflict zones, reforming the United Nations system, unilateral coercive measures,

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<sup>12</sup> Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits: a History* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), p. 64.

<sup>13</sup> Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits: a History* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), p. 86.

<sup>14</sup> Cairo Declaration from the 2<sup>nd</sup> NAM Summit, 1964.

<sup>15</sup> Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits: a History* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), p. 89.

<sup>16</sup> Azerbaijani Chairmanship to the Non-Aligned Movement 2019-2023, Official Website. Available from <https://www.namazerbaijan.org/founding-principles>.

<sup>17</sup> Azerbaijani Chairmanship to the Non-Aligned Movement 2019-2023, Official Website. Available from <https://www.namazerbaijan.org/history-of-nam>.

<sup>18</sup> Jürgen Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organization and Politics (1927-1992)* (Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 20 Dec. 2018), p. 175. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004336131>.

<sup>19</sup> Jürgen Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organization and Politics (1927-1992)* (Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 20 Dec. 2018), p. 176. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004336131>.

<sup>20</sup> Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits: a History* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), p. 99.

<sup>21</sup> Lusaka Declaration on Peace, Independence, Development, Co-operation, and Democratisation of International Relations from the 3<sup>rd</sup> NAM Summit, 1970.

<sup>22</sup> See: Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, 1974, available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/218450?ln=en>.



globalization, sovereign debt, international trade and investment, the right to development, human rights, climate change, among many others.

The initial impetus generated by the Bandung conference and the rise of South-South cooperation was further leveraged by the NAM members during the late 1960s and 70s. For instance, the NAM sought to influence global narratives towards addressing the needs of its members - “by coordinating its members’ activities and acting as a united front at the UN, over the next few years the non-aligned states (...) ensured the adoption of UN resolutions intended to reform the world order and initiated the expansion of South-South relations”<sup>23</sup>. In addition, “in the organs of the United Nations, meanwhile, the non-aligned countries pushed for decisions that reflected their objectives by closing ranks and coordinating their votes” which “helped transform the UN’s agenda, which paid more attention to non-aligned priorities in the 1970s”<sup>24</sup>.

The 1980s were a generally tumultuous time for the global economy, having started with an economic recession and facing increased global military tensions between the blocs<sup>25</sup>. Hyper globalization also made its first appearance, driven by a rise in global value chains<sup>26</sup>. At the same time, the role of developing countries in global trade flows rose significantly, “disrupting the dominant pattern of North–North trade in the previous era of managed globalization, and establishing a landscape in which North–South and South–South trade have assumed greater weight”<sup>27</sup>. This also led to divergences between the speed and pathways to industrialization being followed by different regions. Globalization and its impacts thus became a vital issue for NAM countries.

However, promoting peace and cooperation, and opting out of blocs remained a pillar of the NAM throughout this period. For instance, the New Delhi Declaration from the 7<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit of 1983 sent out a strong message regarding the “determination of NAM members to keep away from power blocs and groupings aligned against one another”<sup>28</sup>.

## **2.2. Upholding economic development and cooperation in an unipolar world**

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the change to a unipolar world dominated by the United States. This was accompanied by an accelerated rise in global financial liberalization, where the Washington Consensus and institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank flourished, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) pushed for trade and economic liberalization across developing countries. These were years of increasingly freer flows of goods, services and capital, and the extension of global value chains. It was also a period marked by the fast rise of East Asian economies, while the sub-Saharan African countries remained relatively stagnant economically and several Latin American countries were suffering through debt crises. The tide of globalization and hyper-globalization did raise some boats, but not all, producing both winners and losers. There has been consequent widening income inequality both between and within countries. Along with the uneven economic development among countries, NAM Member States, which used to be a relatively homogeneous group of countries, became more diversified. However, global governance all along remained firmly in the hands of Western

<sup>23</sup> Jürgen Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organization and Politics (1927-1992)* (Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 20 Dec. 2018), p. 279. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004336131>.

<sup>24</sup> Jürgen Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organization and Politics (1927-1992)* (Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 20 Dec. 2018), p. 189. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004336131>.

<sup>25</sup> Reginald Herbold Green, “Things fall apart: The world economy in the 1980s”, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1983), pp. 72-94.

<sup>26</sup> UNCTAD, *Trade and Development Report 2018*, p. 40.

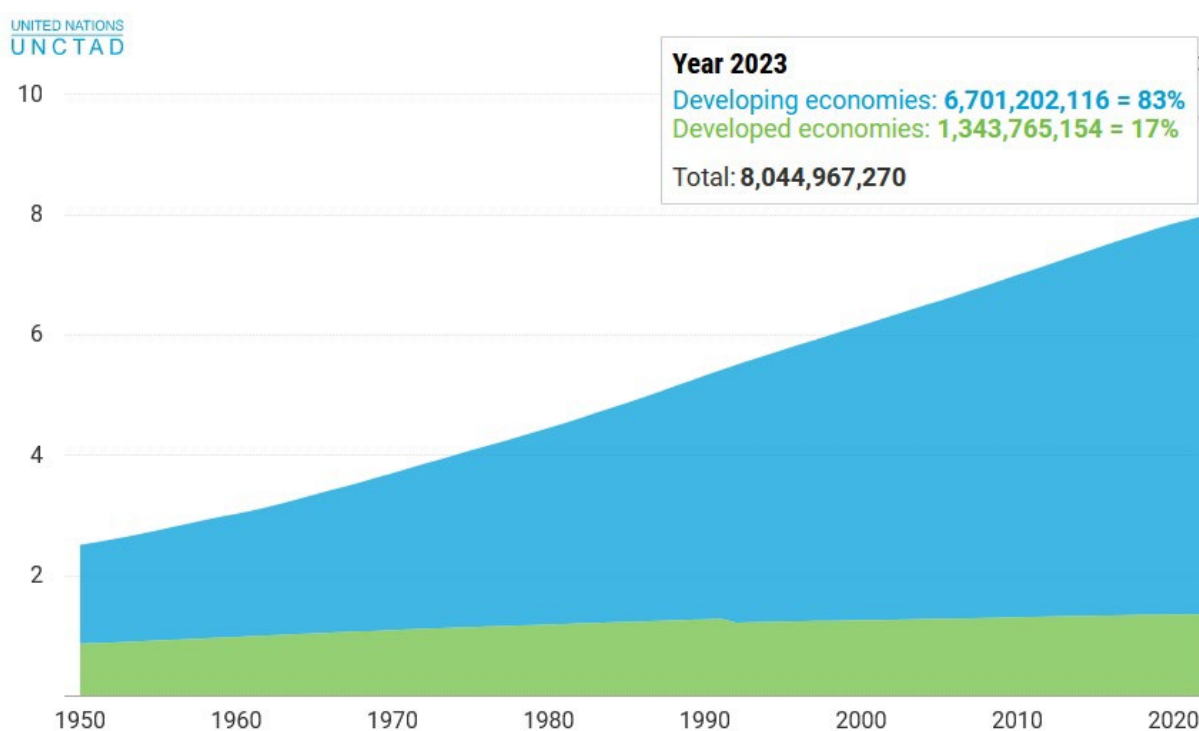
<sup>27</sup> UNCTAD, *Trade and Development Report 2018*, p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> New Delhi Declaration from the 7<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit, 1983.

powers, aided by the Bretton Woods institutions and led by the transnational corporations headquartered in those countries<sup>29</sup>.

Cumulative gross domestic product (GDP) growth in developing countries increased significantly during this time, expanding their share in the global GDP<sup>30</sup>. However, there was also a tremendous increase in the population size in developing countries, while developed countries saw a relative stagnation in their populations (see Figure 2). Thus, when considering the population growth in developing countries, the GDP per capita of these countries has remained relatively stagnant (see Figure 3). The North and South divide held sway not only in GDP measurement but also in terms of access to technology, healthcare, social safety, etc.

**Figure 2 - Global Population Growth 1950-2023**



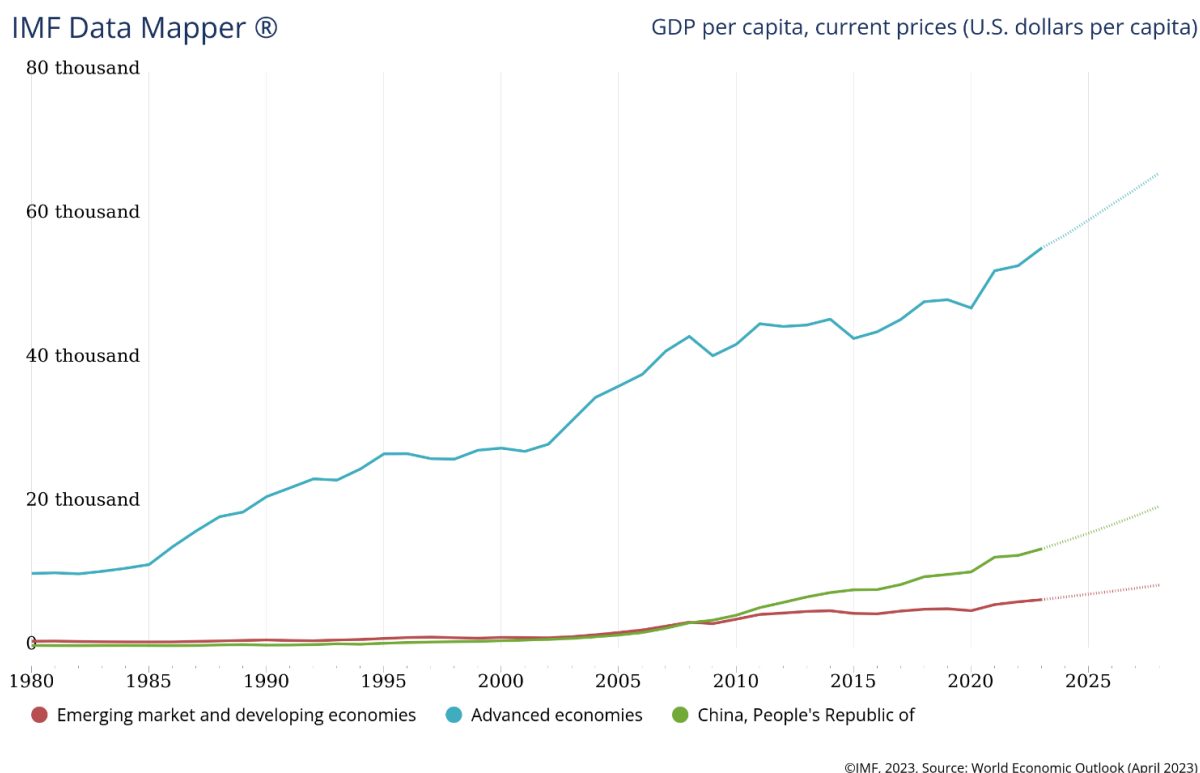
Source: UNCTADstat based on UN DESA Population Division, World Population Prospects 2022.

Note: The graph provides estimates from 1950 to 2021 and projections from 2022 to 2050 of total population

<sup>29</sup> See: Jeffrey Sachs, "US Politics and the Paris Finance Summit", 26 June 2023. Available from <https://www.jeffsachs.org/newspaper-articles/us-politics-and-the-paris-finance-summit>.

<sup>30</sup> See: IMF, GDP based on PPP, share of world. Available from <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PPPSH@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD?year=2023>.

Figure 3 - GDP per capita, current prices (U.S. dollars per capita)



At the same time, the NAM's focus on globalization and promoting economic cooperation among its members continued to grow in the 1990s. Meeting in Jakarta for its 10<sup>th</sup> Summit, just after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the NAM emphasised that,

*“the collapse of the bipolar structure of the world presents unprecedented possibilities as well as challenges for cooperation among nations. Interdependence, integration and globalization of the world economy are among these new realities”<sup>31</sup>.*

The concerns about the impact of hyperglobalization on NAM members were specifically brought to the fore in 1995 at the following 11<sup>th</sup> Summit in Cartagena, Colombia, where the NAM noted that,

*“the gap between rich countries and poor countries continues to widen. Instabilities spread more quickly from one country to another, particularly to developing countries, which are now more vulnerable and sensitive to external factors. The liberalization and globalization of financial markets have turned into a source of volatility and imbalances”<sup>32</sup>.*

The NAM continued its focus on the effects of globalization and liberalization, asserting in the Durban Declaration of the 12<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit that,

*“the central focus of international development efforts should be in the creation of an enabling environment where developing countries would be able to acquire the requisite capacities to successfully enter, compete and benefit from globalisation”<sup>33</sup>.*

<sup>31</sup> The Jakarta Message from the 10<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit, 1992.

<sup>32</sup> The Call from Colombia, Declaration from the 11<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit 1995, para. 199.

<sup>33</sup> Durban Declaration from the 12<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit, 1998, para. 261.

The turn of the new millennium also brought with it the realization that the NAM had to be further revitalized to meet the economic, social and environmental challenges, as well as opportunities brought by globalization. For instance, at the NAM Ministerial meeting in 1999, H.E. Thabo Mbeki said that the NAM

*“must ensure that the benefits of the twin processes of globalisation and liberalisation accrue to all of our countries and peoples and that its potential threats and risks are accordingly mitigated. It is therefore incumbent upon the Movement to continue being in the forefront of efforts to ensure the full integration of the developing countries’ economies into the global economy”*<sup>34</sup>.

The need for revitalization of NAM was specifically captured in the 13<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit held in 2003, which included the ‘Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Continuing the Revitalisation of the Non-Aligned Movement’<sup>35</sup>. This document outlined concrete measures that the NAM would take to, *inter alia*, “promote multilateralism, better defend the interests of developing countries and prevent their marginalisation”. It was strengthened by the ‘Declaration on the Purposes and Principles and the Role of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Present International Juncture’ which was adopted by the 14<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit in Havana in 2006.

### **2.3. NAM in the emerging multipolar world**

While the NAM continued promoting a collective narrative on the challenges faced by its members, there were a variety of internal factors at play within the countries themselves. For instance, the benefits of hyperglobalization were captured early by the East Asian countries in the 1990s, which supercharged their economic growth. It also led to a rapid increase of their share in global trade, leading to their higher importance in the global economy. However, the swift rise in financialization also led to the East Asian financial crisis of 1997-98, highlighting the risks of pernicious capital flows.

After the global financial crisis of 2007-08, the emergence of tensions between the United States and China in the trade and economic fields impacted the global economy<sup>36</sup>. Commencing with the issues around trade and currency manipulation, these tensions became successively more intensified with the election of Donald Trump. US efforts to delink from and slow down the economic growth and technological development of China have continued thereafter. Containment or “de-risking” China has become the main strategy for the United States and Western allies. This period also witnessed the weakening of multilateralism, with many countries focusing more narrowly on national and regional issues and developed countries embarking on a range of protectionist practices. Indicators show that progress towards achieving some of the SDGs have stagnated, while others have reversed<sup>37</sup>. There is also a massively widening gap in financing for development and in addressing the impact of climate change, which is essential for developing countries to move more people out of extreme poverty and meet their sustainable development objectives.

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<sup>34</sup> Address by the Chairperson of the Non-Aligned Movement, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, to the NAM Ministerial Meeting, United Nations, New York, 23 September 1999. Available from <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/address-chairperson-non-aligned-movement-president-thabo-mbeki-south-africa-nam-ministerial>.

<sup>35</sup> Kuala Lumpur Declaration from the 13<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit, 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Doug Palmer, Matt Spetalnick, “Obama hits China on trade; cautious on currency bill”, *Reuters*, 7 October 2011. Available from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-idUSN1E7950FF20111007>.

<sup>37</sup> UN, Secretary-General's remarks to launch the Special Edition of the Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report, 25 April 2023. Available from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2023-04-25/secretary-generals-remarks-launch-the-special-edition-of-the-sustainable-development-goals-progress-report-delivered>.

The scarring left by the COVID-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine, the disruption of global value chains, as well as food insecurity coupled with slowing global GDP growth, have resulted in tremendous economic suffering for developing countries. An estimated 120 million people have been pushed into extreme poverty between 2021 and 2023<sup>38</sup>. The accumulation of debt in the last decade, especially by low-income countries, has reached unprecedented levels. The interest rates hikes in advanced countries and a strong US dollar have made debt servicing an unbearable burden for heavily indebted countries, many of which are already in debt distress or at high risk of it. The international governance system has proved its ineffectiveness in addressing development needs and vulnerabilities of developing countries, and especially the worsening negative impacts of climate change. It has also proved ineffective to put an end to the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories and to prevent unilateral coercive measures that severely affect a large part of developing countries' populations.

As more NAM countries further integrate into the global economy, the cascading impacts of crises across national borders are becoming very apparent. The Sharm El Sheikh Declaration from the 15<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit in 2009, coming just after the 2007-08 global financial crisis directly addressed the issue, noting that the

*“Non-Aligned and other developing countries are and will increasingly be the most adversely affected by the crises, more than industrialized countries, where it originated as a result of the structural imbalances and deficiencies of the prevailing international economic and financial systems”<sup>39</sup>.*

Successive NAM Summit documents over the past decade, held in Iran (2012), Venezuela (2016) and Azerbaijan (2019), have addressed a plurality of topics under the headings of 'Global Issues', 'Regional and Sub-regional Political Issues'; and 'Development, Social and Human Rights Issues'.

The NAM has been fighting for an alternative world order to address several important issues for developing and least developed countries such as poverty and existing inequalities. NAM also came forward to help these countries in trying to assert their sovereignty and economic rights, including at the UN, in cooperation with other country groupings. For instance, the NAM has maintained a close relationship with the Group of 77 (G-77) and China, especially through the Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) of the G-77 and the NAM, which was established in 1994 with the objective of promoting coordination and cooperation between both, “wherever possible at all relevant multilateral fora to address issues of common concern to both groupings subject to their respective competencies”<sup>40</sup>.

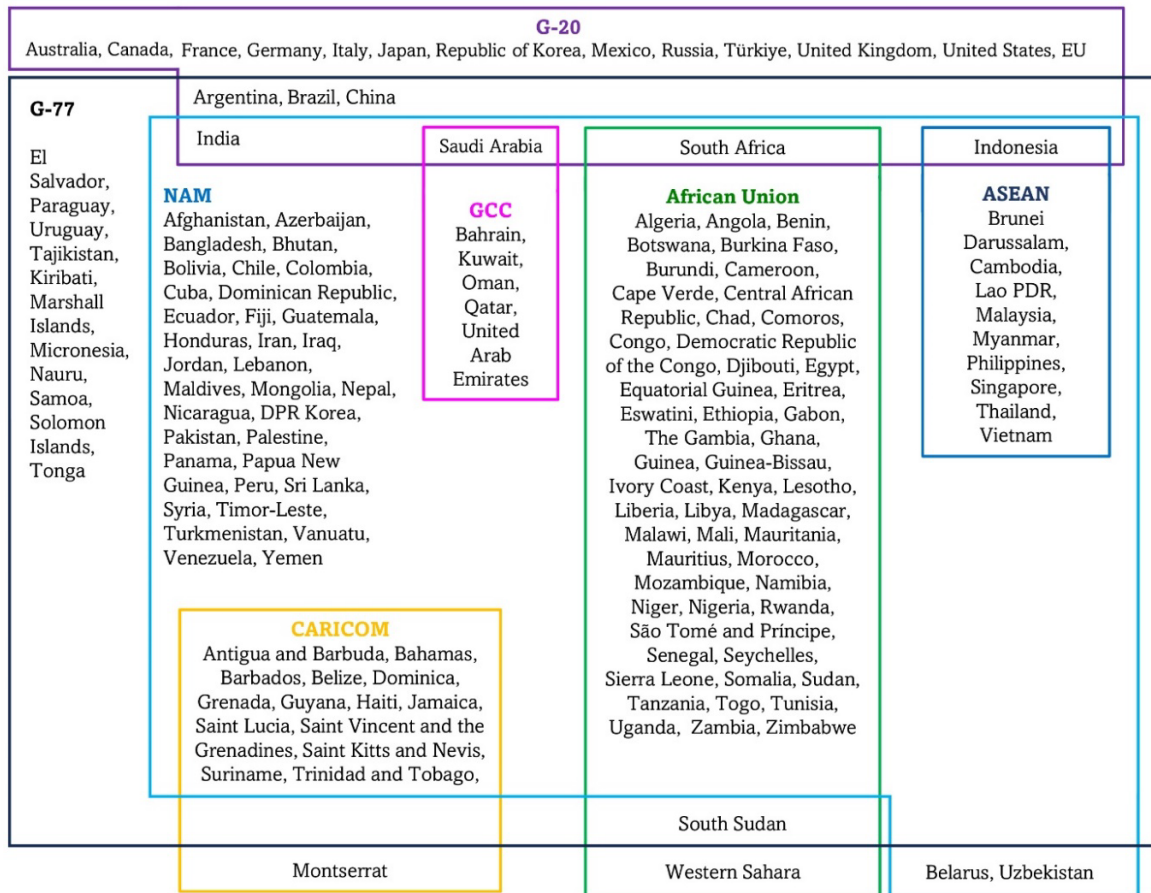
The emergence of newer country groupings, both within and across regions, has also influenced the NAM. Many NAM Member States are now engaged in economic and regional country groupings such as the G-20, BRICS, ASEAN etc. (see Figure 4).

<sup>38</sup> World Bank. Global Economic Prospects, June 2023.

<sup>39</sup> Sharm El Sheikh Declaration from the 15<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Baku Summit Declaration from the 18<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit, 2019, para. 24.19.

Figure 4 - Country Groupings



**G-77:** Group of 77 and China; **G-20:** Group of 20; **GCC:** Gulf Cooperation Council; **ASEAN:** Association of Southeast Asian Nations; **CARICOM:** Caribbean Community; **EU:** European Union

Source: by authors

It is worth recalling that at the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the NAM, its members emphasised “the prominent and dynamic role of the Movement over the past 50 years on vital issues of common concern to its Members, assured that the Movement has evolved from a forum garnering solidarity and uniting the visions of its Members to a forum resolutely advancing the causes of justice, peace and prosperity, while staying true to its founding principle of serving as an independent and objective voice amid the tides of international politics”<sup>41</sup>. The following section therefore looks at some of the more salient achievements of the NAM.

<sup>41</sup> Bali Commemorative Declaration on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement, XVI Ministerial Conference and Commemorative Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, Bali, Indonesia, 23 – 27 May 2011.





### 3.1. Decolonization

The struggle against colonialism was one of the initial challenges for the NAM. During the early days of the Movement, its actions were a key factor in the decolonization process, which later led to the attainment of freedom and independence by many countries and the establishment of new nation-states. While the colonial powers continued to apply apartheid and racial discrimination in countries such as Namibia and South Africa, the NAM sponsored a series of resolutions supporting the adoption and implementation of the *Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples*<sup>43</sup> recognising the right of self-determination of all peoples, and that the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights.

The adoption of the Declaration advanced the protection of human rights, and allowed countries to include items of colonialism, apartheid and racial discrimination in the United Nations agenda. The resolutions on “Activities of foreign economic and other interests which are impeding the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in Namibia and in all other Territories under colonial domination and efforts to eliminate colonialism, apartheid and racial discrimination in Southern Africa”<sup>44</sup> and on the “Question of Namibia”<sup>45</sup>, set the foundations towards the independence of Namibia, and the support necessary for ending apartheid and racial discrimination in South Africa.

### 3.2. New International Economic Order

During the 1970s, the NAM aimed at building up a multilateral system supportive of economic development and fundamental freedoms, calling for the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO)<sup>46</sup> that recognised the existence of a “gap between the developed and the developing countries (which) continues to widen in a system which was established at a time when most of the developing countries did not even exist as independent States and which perpetuates inequality”<sup>47</sup>. It also established a set of principles recognising the need for the respect of sovereignty of States over their natural resources, self-determination of all peoples, and the full and effective participation of all countries in the global financial and economic systems. It also gave special attention to developing countries seriously affected by economic crises and natural calamities, among others. The adoption of the Declaration on the NIEO marked a milestone for furthering the relevance of the human rights aspects in the international economic system.

The recognition of the need to establish a NIEO had significant implications for a global reform of the existing economic order. In 1977, at the suggestion of the World Bank, Willy Brandt formed a Commission comprised of economists and experts representing the North and South, and examined the trade, financial, and monetary issues affecting the world at that time. The Commission’s report considered the need to re-structure the world economy on the principles of equality, fair balance and mutual benefits, recognising that such reform was required to avoid the “threat of human survival posed by the threatening chaos in the world economy.”<sup>48</sup> The Commission also considered the need to limit the abusive practices of transnational corporations, the need to increase public awareness of the inherent waste of

<sup>43</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1514 (1960), Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Resolution A/C.4/L.916 (1968).

<sup>45</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 2403 (1968).

<sup>46</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 3201 (1974).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., para. 1.

<sup>48</sup> See: Overseas Development Institute, “The Brandt Commission”, Briefing Paper No. 2 (1980). Available from <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/6638.pdf>.



resources in the arms race, and the need to promote peaceful coexistence between countries for development, all of which were concerns raised by the NAM in discussion of the NIEO.

Likewise, the relationship between the NIEO and human rights was flagged by a resolution submitted on behalf of the NAM, requesting the UN Economic and Social Council to appoint a new Special Rapporteur with the mandate to prepare a study on “The new international economic order and the promotion of human rights”<sup>49</sup>. The report was submitted to the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in 1983. It emphasized that,

“The global nature of the structural crisis in international economic relations calls for global solutions also. The trend towards bilateralism may have harmful consequences. A new multilateralism is therefore needed, founded on co-ordinated policies in which all groups of countries would take part on an international basis.”<sup>50</sup>

By leading the process for the establishment of the NIEO, the NAM set out the priorities that the international community should consider for achieving the shared goal of development, and provided the grounds for an effective implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is not surprising at all that there has been interest in renewing the spirit of the NIEO Declaration on the occasion of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary<sup>51</sup>.

### 3.3. The Right to Development

The adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development in 1986 was an important achievement championed by the NAM. By recognising that the right to development is “an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized”<sup>52</sup>, the Declaration emphasised the importance of development in human progress. The role of the NAM in the adoption of this Declaration and its subsequent processes cannot be understated, as it has been actively pursuing its effective implementation, including through a legally binding instrument<sup>53</sup>.

Thus, the NAM has had an essential role in shaping the current framework of development, one that comprises not only its economic dimension, but that also pursues the human side of development. As was stated by the report prepared by the Special Rapporteur in 1980, development “should not be interpreted solely in terms of economic and material well-being but in much broader terms covering the physical, moral, intellectual and cultural growth of human rights”<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> United Nations Human Rights Commission, Resolution 18 (1980). Available from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/36236?ln=en>.

<sup>50</sup> Raul Ferrero, Study on the New International Economic Order and the Promotion of Human Rights (New York, United Nations, 1986), para. 297. Available from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Development/E.CN.4.Sub.2.1983.24.Rev.1.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> See: Varsha Gandikota-Nellutla, David Adler and Michael Galant, “The Progressive International launches a global process to mark the 50th anniversary of the New International Economic Order”, *Progressive International*, 16 November 2022. Available from <https://progressive.international/blueprint/1350647f-15c9-4f62-8b39-bddadc7046c3-the-new-international-economic-order/en>.

<sup>52</sup> Article 1 of the Declaration on the Right to Development.

<sup>53</sup> Yuefen Li, Daniel Uribe and Danish, *The International Discourse on the Right to Development and the Need to Reinvigorate its Implementation*, Research Paper, No. 149 (Geneva, South Centre, 2022). Available from <https://www.southcentre.int/research-paper-149-8-march-2022/>.

<sup>54</sup> Ferrero (1986), para. 292.

### **3.4. Peace and Security**

In the area of peace and security, and disarmament, the NAM has achieved vast progress. In the first place, the NAM has actively engaged in discussions related to the maintenance of peace and the cessation of the arms race. The Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is a landmark in the process towards nuclear disarmament. The NAM was not only actively engaged in the negotiations, but it also called for a complete and general disarmament by nuclear powers. The NAM has also been at the forefront of prompting bilateral negotiations to end the race of nuclear weapons in good faith<sup>55</sup>.

Furthermore, the NAM submitted the resolution on the establishment of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa in 1985<sup>56</sup>, with the objective of supporting initiatives towards maintaining peace, arms limitation and disarmament in the region. Likewise, the resolution requesting for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons was submitted on behalf of the NAM on the question on “Is the threat or use of nuclear weapons in any circumstance permitted under international law?”<sup>57</sup>.

The International Court of Justice recognised that the obligation to negotiate in good faith a nuclear disarmament, is an obligation “to achieve a precise result – nuclear disarmament in all its aspects – by adopting a particular course of conduct, namely, the pursuit of negotiations on the matter in good faith”<sup>58</sup>, which reaffirmed the historical position of the NAM countries with respect to the implementation of Article VI of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.<sup>59</sup> The NAM countries have also promoted the adoption and implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, following a long standing position of the NAM for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons testing, and contributing to the process of nuclear disarmament.

Likewise, the NAM has placed attention to improving the effectiveness and coordination of peacekeeping operations, with its member countries not only being the biggest troop contributors to UN peacekeeping operations (see Figure 6), but also by emphasising the need to strengthen the principles of the UN Charter with regard to peacekeeping operations, in particular the consent of the parties, impartiality, the non-use of force except in self-defence, and the principles of sovereign equality, political independence, territorial integrity of all States and non-intervention in matters that are essentially within their domestic jurisdiction.

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<sup>55</sup> See: Hossien Sharifi Tarazkahi and Iman Khosravi, “The Non-Aligned Movement and Nuclear Disarmament: Stance and Actions”, *World Sociopolitical Studies*, Vol. 1 (2017), p. 117.

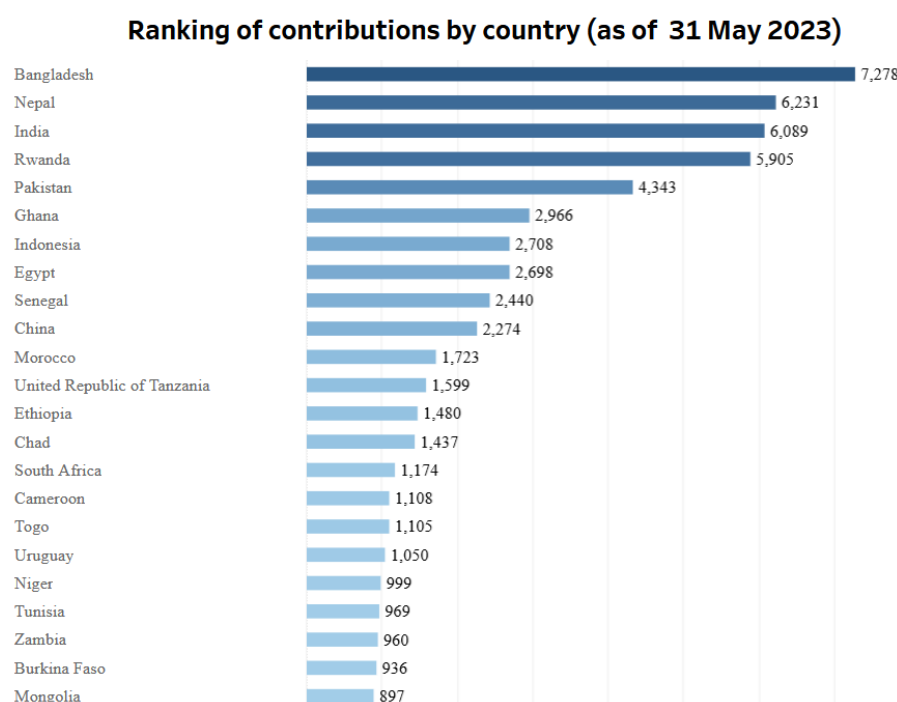
<sup>56</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 40/151 G (1985).

<sup>57</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 49/75 K (1994).

<sup>58</sup> Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, Advisory Opinion, ICJ Reports 1996, para. 99.

<sup>59</sup> See: Hossien Sharifi Tarazkahi and Iman Khosravi (2017).

Figure 6 - Ranking of Contribution of Personnel for Peacekeeping Operations



Source: United Nations Peacekeeping<sup>60</sup>

### 3.5. South-South and Triangular Cooperation

NAM itself is a demonstration of South-South cooperation. Its mission and vision are built on South-South collaboration in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, technical and other domains.

In 1995, the Government of Indonesia and the Government of Brunei Darussalam presented a proposal for the setting-up of the NAM Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation (NAM CSSTC) at the 11th NAM Summit, in Cartagena, Colombia, to improve capacity building in order to achieve NAM member countries' development goals in achieving sustainable human development and encouraging developing countries to engage more effectively and fairly in the globalization process<sup>61</sup>. Based in Jakarta, Indonesia, the Centre has been active ever since.

Similarly, the Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-aligned and Other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre) was established by the non-aligned countries in February 1985, and it became operational in August 1989. Based in New Delhi, India, this organization has the objective to *inter alia* promote "mutually beneficial collaboration among scientists and technologists and scientific organisations from the non-aligned and other developing countries" and to act as "a clearing house of information on technological capabilities of individual countries for promoting technological cooperation and transfer of technology"<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> See: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>.

<sup>61</sup> Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation, Official Website. Available from <http://csstc.org/>.

<sup>62</sup> The Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-aligned and Other Developing Countries, Official Website. Available from <http://www.namstct.org/namstc.html>.

The NAM also strongly supported the first UN Conference on South-South cooperation in 1996. At various NAM foreign ministers' meetings, the NAM has emphasized the importance of unleashing the full potential of South-South cooperation. With the current increasingly complex international landscape, South-South and Triangular cooperation is important more than ever.

### **3.6. Strengthening the United Nations and Multilateralism**

One of the outstanding contributions of the NAM has been the strengthening of the United Nations and promoting its principles worldwide. It has not only encouraged the promotion of peace, security and development, but also the duty of international cooperation towards the fulfilment of the objectives established in the UN Charter.

The NAM has been at the forefront of proposals for strengthening and reforming the United Nations. It has routinely drafted and submitted resolutions concerning the Commemoration of the Anniversary of the United Nations, and the promotion of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies<sup>63</sup>. It has also been the originator of proposals for the reform of the main bodies of the UN, including the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council<sup>64</sup>.

The NAM has continuously supported the United Nations as the bedrock of international cooperation in the attainment of the purposes and principles enshrined in its Charter. For the NAM, the United Nations serves as a pillar for multilateralism, and as a mechanism for promoting cooperation and development based on principles of inclusiveness, transparency, mutual benefit, solidarity and respect.

### **3.7. Environmental Protection and Climate Change**

The NAM has also recognized and emphasized the importance of environmental protection and the fight against climate change. The role of NAM in these issues included the consistent advocacy for environmental protection and sustainable development, including avoidance of environmental degradation, climate change, deforestation, protection of biodiversity, and the promotion of balanced economic growth and protection of natural resources. For NAM, the integration of environmental matters on development strategies and policies has been a key concern, and it has actively supported various international environmental agreements.

The NAM has been spearheading the discussion on combating desertification and drought, and submitted a resolution calling for an 'International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa'<sup>65</sup>, which was adopted in 1994. It also brought to the attention of the international community the need to protect the global climate for present and future generations,<sup>66</sup> and for the protection of biological diversity.<sup>67</sup> In both cases, the NAM has encouraged concrete actions for countries to fulfil their obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention

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<sup>63</sup> See: United Nations General Assembly, Draft Resolution A/AC.222/L.2 on Observance of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations, Draft Resolution A/AC.240/1994/L.15 on Commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, among others.

<sup>64</sup> Duško Dimitrijević, "The Non Aligned Movement and Reform Tendencies in the United Nations", in *The 60th Anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement*, Duško Dimitrijević, Jovan Čavoški, eds. (2021), pp. 429–462.

<sup>65</sup> See: United Nations General Assembly, draft Resolution A/C.2/51/L.10 (1996).

<sup>66</sup> See: United Nations General Assembly, draft Resolution A/C.2/51/L.6 (1996).

<sup>67</sup> See: United Nations General Assembly, draft Resolution A/C.2/51/L.5 (1966).

on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The NAM has also recognized the importance of capacity building and technical assistance in supporting environmental protection efforts. It has called for increased financial and technical support from developed countries to help developing nations strengthen their environmental governance, build resilience to climate change, and adopt sustainable practices.

## **4. REVITALIZING THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT**

The world is currently facing multiple crises, some of which are existential ones. These crises require a set of systemic, structural, innovative and global solutions. In order to contribute effectively to this transformative process for our common future, the NAM is required to increase solidarity and coordination among its Member States, with the objective of overcoming differences and resistance at the world stage. Moving ahead, there are a few avenues through which the NAM could focus its collective action, as well as strengthen its role and the visibility of its initiatives, as described below.

### **4.1. Preserving Multilateralism**

The United Nations remains the most appropriate forum for achieving the objectives of the NAM, to preserve peace and security, and promote a more equitable international economic order. The numerical strength of the NAM allows the exercise of considerable influence at the world stage, and in the UN General Assembly in particular. The NAM can play a vital role in ensuring that the multilateral system works for responding to current challenges, and for the achievement of the SDGs.

The fact that the NAM has historically represented a collective voice of developing countries striving for independence, sovereignty, and international cooperation, only reinforces its role as a catalyst for responding to current power dynamics and challenges through the promotion of unity, inclusivity, solidarity, peace and security and international cooperation. This participation can boost the needed transformation of the current world order, moving it towards a more just and prosperous one for all. Positioning the NAM as a unified negotiating bloc on the issue areas where it can be most effective is critical in this regard.

### **4.2. Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals**

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are at serious risk of reversal, and the necessary means of implementation have been severely lacking for many developing countries. There is a widening annual investment deficit that developing countries face to achieve the SDGs by 2030, with UNCTAD stating that “the gap is now about \$4 trillion per year – up from \$2.5 trillion in 2015 when the SDGs were adopted”<sup>68</sup>.

The voice of the Global South is represented by the NAM and the G-77 and China in various international fora. Southern unity can be strengthened by deeper collaboration between them, including through enhancing the use of the Joint Coordinating Committee, for achieving their legitimate demands and taking actions to promote the SDGs. In addition, the NAM should also consider further improving its collaboration with other developing countries’ organizations and groupings, such as the African Union and ASEAN among others to find common positions and have better and coordinated engagement in the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and other international negotiating fora.

### **4.3. Reforming Global Governance**

Promoting a reform agenda to enhance the inclusivity, participation, transparency, equity and effectiveness of global governance mechanisms should be a priority for the NAM, including

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<sup>68</sup> UNCTAD, *World Investment Report 2023*, p. xi.

the fight against illicit financial flows. Reforming the international financial architecture to better serve the interests of developing countries and preventing its weaponization is also equally important. The NAM should ensure that these reform processes also reflect contemporary issues, particularly sustainable development, poverty eradication, and fair and just global governance. Critical issues such as climate change, digital transformation, just energy transition among others, should also be part of this process.

None of these challenges can be implemented without sufficient means, especially financial capability. This explains why for decades developing countries have demanded the reform of the international financial architecture<sup>69</sup> and of the international tax system<sup>70</sup> to allow proper bridging of the ever widening gap of development finance. However, resistance has been strong and progress minimal and incremental. The current parallel crises have made this reform a burning need. By addressing these concerns collectively, NAM Member States can amplify their voice and champion global progress.

#### **4.4. Strengthening the NAM Chairmanship**

The NAM is only occasionally organized as a voting bloc at the United Nations bodies and other international institutions. The NAM Summits and ministerial meetings are occasions to coordinate positions on a wide spectrum of economic and political issues of common interests among the NAM Member States. The rotating chairmanship among Member States, which carries a duration of 3 years, therefore has significant power to influence the priorities of issues and ways to advocate them at various fora. Recent developments such as the setting up of networks for NAM parliamentarians and the youth reflect the important role that the Chair can play.

However, realizing the full potential of the Chairmanship requires a continuous, consistent and ongoing engagement of the Chair with all the NAM Member States. Increasing the use of NAM's internal mechanisms such as the 'Troika', and other existing bodies such as working groups, task forces etc. can also help the NAM in responding quickly to evolving challenges. In addition, engaging with developing countries' institutions on issues of their expertise can support and amplify the Chair's efforts. Thus, the strengthening of the Chairmanship can significantly contribute to the strengthening of the NAM itself.

#### **4.5. Promoting Peace and Security**

The NAM should continue promoting peace and security in all regions, especially in conflict areas. The diversity of NAM's membership could promote NAM as a forum for global conflict mediation, and increase its credibility as a non-aligned and impartial entity. For instance, the NAM has consistently expressed its "commitment to achieve a fair and lasting solution to the Palestine question and genuine peace and security in the Middle East on the basis of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions"<sup>71</sup>. The NAM could also facilitate dialogue, peace negotiations, and reconciliation processes to reduce tensions and prevent the escalation of conflicts, in line with the principles and purposes of the UN Charter.

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<sup>69</sup> See: Yuefen Li, International debt architecture reform and human rights, United Nations General Assembly report, A/76/167, August 2021; "The Long March towards an International Legal Framework for Sovereign Debt Restructuring", *Journal of Globalization and Development*, 2015.

<sup>70</sup> See: Anna Isaac, "UN to vote on new tax convention proposed by African states", *The Guardian*, 23 November 2022. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/23/united-nations-vote-new-tax-convention-proposed-by-african-states>.

<sup>71</sup> Statement by the Non-Aligned Movement on the Occasion of the Special Meeting in Observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, New York, 29 November 2022. Available from <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/message-of-solidarity-with-the-palestinian-people-non-aligned-movement/>.

#### **4.6. Leveraging South-South and Triangular Cooperation**

South-South Cooperation has been the NAM's flagship modality for global governance, while Triangular Cooperation has also been gaining relevance in recent years. The strengthening of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTrC) through increased collaboration and cooperation among NAM Member States can facilitate knowledge-sharing, promote self-reliance and mutual development. The mainstreaming of SSTrC in the development plans of countries, as well as the emergence of new actors and institutions such as national agencies for SSTrC has provided new impetus to these efforts<sup>72</sup>.

The design and establishment of 'National Ecosystems for South-South and Triangular Cooperation'<sup>73</sup> can provide platforms that encourage capacity building initiatives that could foster economic partnerships and help increase, *inter alia*, exchange of developmental solutions, as well as trade and investment flows among NAM countries.

#### **4.7. Increasing collaboration with Global South institutions**

Considering the highly complex and technical nature of the issues currently being addressed in the multilateral agenda, the NAM Member States should increase their cooperation with intergovernmental think tanks and institutions of developing countries, such as the South Centre, as well as the organizations under NAM itself, such as those in Jakarta, Tehran<sup>74</sup> and New Delhi. It should also consider the establishment of working groups within the NAM to analyse and develop frameworks for managing specific issues with the aim of advancing its Member States' interests.

#### **4.8. Amplifying Digital Engagement**

The digital transformation has provided many new opportunities which can be used to support the reinvigoration of NAM. Leveraging digital diplomacy can enhance communication, collaboration, and information sharing among NAM Member States using digital technologies. Similarly, it could provide a platform for increasing the visibility and outreach of the NAM. The use of social media platforms, webinars, virtual conferences, and forums could highlight the achievements and relevance of NAM, while disseminating its common interests and objectives. The development of an interactive knowledge hub and a dedicated website could also bolster the role of the NAM in the international arena.

To this end, the NAM should also consider how its official documents, communiqués etc. could be made more accessible to a larger audience. The activities and initiatives being undertaken by the NAM could be stored in a publicly accessible digital repository, which would help showcase the important role and achievements of the NAM, in addition to better preserving its institutional memory and historical archives. This could also facilitate better communication about the NAM to the general public, which will help build greater awareness of its roles and activities. It can also bring more attention to the SSTrC initiatives of the NAM and how different

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<sup>72</sup> For instance, Indonesia has included SSTrC in its National Medium-Term Development Plan for 2020-2024 and also set up the new Indonesian Agency of International Development (<https://idkpi.kemenkeu.go.id/en/>).

<sup>73</sup> See: South Centre and Islamic Development Bank Joint Publication on Developing National Ecosystems for South-South and Triangular Cooperation to Achieve Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (September 2019) at: <https://www.southcentre.int/sc-and-isdb-joint-publication-september-2019/>.

<sup>74</sup> The NAM Center for Human Rights and Cultural Diversity was established in Tehran, Iran through the Tehran Declaration and Programme of Action on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity, adopted at the NAM Ministerial Meeting on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity in September 2007.



stakeholders could participate in them. This kind of digital outreach is especially important given that the majority of the population in most of its Member States is under the age of 30 and are digital natives.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The NAM was born at a tumultuous time when there was intense ideological and military rivalry between NATO and the Warsaw Pact - representing a bipolar world. The NAM united the weak third world countries in a broad coalition, defended their interests and supported them during the anti-colonial and post-colonial periods. In this process, it became an important international force. The transition from a bipolar to unipolar world was muted as there were clear winners and losers from the advent of globalization. Despite questions about its continued relevance in the post-colonial period, the NAM has shifted its priorities in a changing world and proved its worth, while its membership has kept growing. It has accomplished important achievements on many political and economic issues.

The current transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world has already shown signs of tension, inertia and resistance. It is going to be tumultuous again until a reformed international governance structure is put in place. The NAM, with its experience, achievements and its large membership should, in pursuing its principles, play an important role at this critical historical juncture in reconfiguring the international economic order, promoting development, peace and security, and fighting for a better common future.

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