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Extraordinary meeting of the Committee on South-South Cooperation: opportunities
for renewed international development cooperation
in Latin America and the Caribbean

Virtual meeting, 19–20 August 2021

**FROM THE COMMITTEE ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION TO THE REGIONAL
CONFERENCE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR RENEWED INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Note by the secretariat

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INTRODUCTION

During the thirty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), held virtually in October 2020, the countries adopted resolution 749(XXXVIII),¹ requesting the Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation to convene, with the support of the secretariat, an extraordinary meeting of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, outside the framework of the session of the Commission, as soon as possible and no later than the second half of 2021, in order to examine ways to enhance its functioning, including the need for institutional changes, with a view to providing recommendations to the Commission on these deliberations.

In that context, Costa Rica, in its capacity as Chair of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC, requested the secretariat to prepare this note as an input for the extraordinary meeting.

A. BACKGROUND

1. Four decades of the subsidiary body

In April 1979, at the eighteenth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), the member States adopted resolution 387(XVIII),² by which they requested the Executive Secretary of the Commission to establish in the secretariat appropriate servicing machinery directly responsible for promotion, information and coordination activities related to technical and economic cooperation among developing countries, which led to the establishment of the Committee on Cooperation among Developing Countries and Regions. It was also decided that the question of cooperation among developing countries and regions should be examined at each session of the Commission by a sessional committee, following consultation with governments, in order to examine the intraregional and interregional cooperation activities carried out by the secretariat of the Commission with a view to formulating appropriate support measures to promote such cooperation.

The Committee on Cooperation among Developing Countries and Regions was thus established and met for the first time on 5 May 1981 in the framework of the nineteenth session of the Commission held in Montevideo, when a note by the Secretariat entitled “Activities of the CEPAL system in promotion and support of technical and economic co-operation among developing countries” was presented.³ The Committee on Cooperation among Developing Countries and Regions operated continuously and held periodic meetings from 1981 to 2004.

By its resolution 58/220 on economic and technical cooperation among developing countries, adopted in December 2003,⁴ the United Nations General Assembly urged developing countries and their partners to intensify South-South and triangular cooperation, as they contributed to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. It also urged all relevant United Nations organizations and multilateral institutions to intensify their efforts to effectively mainstream the use of

¹ See [online] https://periododesesiones.cepal.org/38/sites/ps38/files/20-00786_ses.38_resolutions_adopted-10_nov.pdf.

² See [online] https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/16270/RES-387-E_en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

³ E/CEPAL/G.1167 see [online] https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/14852/S8100023_en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

⁴ See [online] <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/58/220>.

South-South cooperation in the design, formulation and implementation of their regular programmes and to consider increasing allocations of human, technical and financial resources for supporting South-South cooperation initiatives.

In line with the above and pursuant to resolution 61/1(XXX), adopted by the member States of ECLAC at its thirtieth session in San Juan in 2004, the countries decided to change the name of the Committee on Cooperation among Developing Countries and Regions to Committee on South-South Cooperation and requested, among other measures, modernization of the Commission's strategic approaches with respect to international cooperation for development, including South-South, North-South and multilateral cooperation, in accordance with the new mandates and approaches adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations; intensification of activities aimed at incorporating modalities of South-South cooperation into the various areas of the programme of work of the secretariat, especially with regard to the formulation and execution of technical cooperation projects; and continued strengthening of strategic partnerships with donor countries and institutions, both within and outside the region, to increase levels of North-South and South-South cooperation.

In 2019, the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40)⁵ reaffirmed the key role of United Nations system entities in promoting South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since then, various efforts have been made within the United Nations system to strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); this has been done through support for and facilitation of policy dialogue, promotion of technical assistance, policy support, development and strengthening of collaborative partnerships, knowledge sharing, active multi-stakeholder engagement, and mobilization of development finance from all sources.

All efforts by the United Nations system to strengthen implementation of the 2030 Agenda through South-South and triangular cooperation are also being made in the context of the repositioning of the United Nations development system, with outcomes such as: the establishment of a new generation of United Nations country teams; a strengthened United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF); revitalization of the resident coordinator system; and an overhaul of the regional approach, including creation of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean in November 2020.

In this context of change, the international cooperation system is also transforming with the same speed and depth as the international reality.

In October 2020, in the framework of the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC, Costa Rica, in its capacity as Chair of the Commission, rekindled the proposal to modify the cycle of meetings of the Committee on South-South Cooperation so that it would meet separately from the sessions of ECLAC, in the same way as the other subsidiary bodies of the Commission. This was proposed so that its Presiding Officers could adopt their own decisions on the dates and agendas of meetings, and it would thereby acquire the status of a conference as another subsidiary body of the Commission, as was done in 2012 with the Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development when it became the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which allowed for more and better follow-up of regional implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development, more in-depth examination of the issues specific to the Conference, and adoption of agreements such as the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.

⁵ See [online] <https://undocs.org/A/RES/73/291>.

Similarly, a regional conference on development cooperation would acquire its own identity and would be able to make decisions on the substantive items to be addressed in its sessions. Those decisions would also guide its work, to be followed up by Presiding Officers, over a two-year period.

The conference would include all member States and associate members of ECLAC: the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, together with several nations of North America, Europe and Asia that have historical, economic and cultural ties with the region (46 States in total) and the 14 associate members.

The conference would also be able to consider substantive discussion papers and establish an agenda that can be covered in two or three days, as is the case with other meetings of subsidiary bodies of ECLAC.⁶

The new global context, with gaps that have been deepened by the pandemic and its severe economic and social repercussions, makes it vital to strengthen institutional frameworks in the area of cooperation, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their work and the implementation of their decisions. The task is a very challenging one, calling for discussions, agreements and cooperation actions to overcome the crisis, to build forward better, with a transformative recovery with equality and sustainability, to move towards a sustainable and inclusive development model.

(a) The origin of the proposal

The proposal to transform the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC into a regional conference was made by the member States of the Commission following the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) and in-depth discussions on the importance of this issue, as highlighted by the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region in various forums, such as the thirty-seventh session of ECLAC, held in May 2018 in Havana.

At the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC in October 2020, the Committee on South-South Cooperation, in resolution 749(XXXVIII), requested “the Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation to convene, with the support of the secretariat, an extraordinary meeting of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, outside the framework of the session of the Commission, as soon as possible and no later than the second half of 2021, in order to examine ways to enhance its functioning, including the need for institutional changes, with a view to providing recommendations to the Commission on these deliberations”.

At the tenth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, held in March 2021, a request was made for “the secretariat to prepare a draft programme for the extraordinary meeting of the Committee on South-South Cooperation, to be held no later than the second half of 2021, as requested in ECLAC resolution 749(XXXVIII) on the Committee on South-South Cooperation, adopted by the Commission at its thirty-eighth session”.

⁶ Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies; Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean; Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean; Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean; Statistical Conference of the Americas; Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee; Regional Council for Planning of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES).

2. The second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40)

The Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40), in its outcome document, called upon the United Nations development system to assist developing countries, upon request, in building the human and institutional capacity needed to formulate and implement national development policies, strategies and programmes for South-South and triangular cooperation. It also recognized the role of the regional commissions in supporting South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, in accordance with their respective mandates, and bearing in mind the United Nations development system reform.

Following the guidelines of BAPA+40, the outcome document for which refers to subregional, regional and interregional triangular cooperation, ECLAC offers its capacity to assist the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in creating knowledge networks and partnerships and improving technical and research capacities, and assistance through technical, policy and research support, all with a view to increasing the development impact of South-South, North-South, triangular and multilateral cooperation.

3. Strategy of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC): spur collective and coherent action through the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024

The growing complexity of South-South and triangular cooperation activities requires the United Nations system to be more strategic, coherent, coordinated, agile, collaborative and results-oriented at all levels: nationally, regionally and globally. Accordingly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his report to the General Assembly on the state of South-South cooperation,⁷ requested UNOSSC “to coordinate, in consultation with the United Nations agencies, the preparation of a United Nations system-wide South-South cooperation strategy”.

Thus, building on existing synergies, a United Nations inter-agency mechanism developed a United Nations system-wide coordination strategy, within prevailing strategic frameworks that guide global sustainable development, taking into account the repositioning of the United Nations development system. Through implementation of this strategy, United Nations entities will be better positioned to coordinate and harmonize their institutional policies and operational and programmatic support for South-South and triangular cooperation at the global, regional and national levels, in order to support the national priorities of the countries of the South, to further the 2030 Agenda and the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020–2024⁸ addresses the regional dimension by stating in paragraph 40 that the engagement of the United Nations system in South-South and triangular cooperation at the regional level will focus on support to policy formulation, knowledge-sharing, and promoting regional cooperation, including through implementation of regional agreements and policy frameworks. The strategy also acknowledges that because of their mandates and focus on development issues that are regional in scope,

⁷ *United Nations, State of South-South cooperation. Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/297)*, 2017 [online] <https://undocs.org/en/A/72/297>.

⁸ See [online] <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/United-Nations-system-wide-strategy-on-South-South-and-triangular-cooperation-for-sustainable-development-2020%E2%80%932024.pdf>.

regional commissions will play a key role in advancing South-South and triangular cooperation at the regional level, in partnership with other United Nations development system partners. Region-specific arrangements should be developed by regional collaborative platforms, once established.

With regard to support to policy development and regional cooperation, paragraph 41 states that most South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives are developed and implemented within regions owing to commonality of history, language, culture, ethnicity, geographical proximity and economic complementarities. Regional institutions are important venues for policy dialogue, agenda-setting, policy coordination, and the design and implementation of regional programmes and initiatives. In this regard, United Nations South-South and triangular cooperation activities at the regional level will continue to be targeted towards promoting strategy and policy formulation and coordination; facilitating peer-to-peer learning and knowledge, expertise and technology sharing; and supporting efforts towards regional dialogue and integration through the implementation of regional development frameworks, cooperation programmes, treaties and agreements.

Paragraph 42 also notes that coordination at the regional level strengthens the policy coherence and collaboration of United Nations entities in addressing regional development issues, including in support of South-South and triangular cooperation.

With regard to knowledge-sharing, the strategy recognizes in paragraph 43 that a strengthened United Nations response at the regional level is essential to maximizing the impact of support for South-South and triangular cooperation in every country. The demands of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis and the cross-border, subregional and regional challenges that countries face in their efforts to achieve the SDGs require a collaborative regional architecture and demand effective integration and system-wide coherence between the national, regional and global levels.

In addition, knowledge generated at the regional level plays a significant role in informing the common country analysis carried out at the national level, which integrates analysis of relevant regional, subregional and cross-border dynamics (para. 44).

The strategy also recognizes the role of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC by noting that dedicated regional and subregional South-South and triangular cooperation forums have been established in some regions, under the auspices of the regional commissions, to provide mechanisms to share best practices and knowledge on South-South and triangular cooperation. These mechanisms can be further leveraged, as appropriate, for enhanced policy coordination and partnerships to assist member States accelerate achievement of the 2030 Agenda through increased use of South-South and Triangular cooperation (para. 45).

4. From the Committee on Cooperation among Developing Countries and Regions to the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC

ECLAC is the only regional commission with a permanent intergovernmental body for cooperation: the Committee on South-South Cooperation.

The Committee on South-South Cooperation is one of the standing intergovernmental bodies of ECLAC that examines various public policy issues in the region, facilitates cooperation and peer-to-peer learning based on comparative experiences, adopts regional consensus in its respective areas of competence and generates mandates for the Office of the Secretary of the Commission.

(a) The mandates of the Committee on South-South Cooperation

Resolution 58/220 of the United Nations General Assembly on economic and technical cooperation among developing countries, adopted by the General Assembly on 23 December 2003, encouraged developing countries and their partners to intensify South-South and triangular cooperation and urged relevant United Nations organizations and multilateral institutions to intensify their efforts to effectively mainstream the use of South-South cooperation in the design, formulation and implementation of their regular programme.

In line with this mandate, and pursuant to resolution 611(XXX) adopted at the thirtieth session of ECLAC (San Juan, Puerto Rico, 28 June–2 July 2004), it was decided to change the name of the Committee on Cooperation among Developing Countries and Regions to the Committee on South-South Cooperation, in accordance with the new mandates and approaches adopted by the General Assembly.

One of the key aims of the Committee on South-South Cooperation is to strengthen international cooperation for development, including South-South, North-South, triangular and multilateral cooperation.

Resolution 611(XXX) conferred a mandate upon ECLAC to continue to strengthen strategic partnerships with donor countries and institutions, both within and outside the region, to increase levels of North-South and South-South cooperation; to strengthen contacts and collaboration with the development organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, and especially with other regional commissions, to foster interregional cooperation in the context of globalization; and to request the international community to support the efforts of the Latin American and Caribbean countries to respond effectively to the opportunities and problems associated with globalization so that they can position themselves advantageously in the global economic system, benefit from international trade and investment, strengthen productive development and environmental sustainability and institute appropriate systems of social protection.

In the area of South-South cooperation, a mandate was conferred upon the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC to: intensify activities aimed at incorporating modalities of South-South cooperation into the various areas of the programme of work of the secretariat for the biennium 2006–2007, especially with regard to the formulation and execution of technical cooperation projects financed with extrabudgetary resources from bilateral or multilateral sources of cooperation; to take advantage of the ample networking opportunities offered by the Commission's new Internet site on cooperation to widely disseminate projects and activities, both of the Commission and of member countries, that promote and strengthen South-South cooperation; and to participate in regional or subregional coordination activities and mechanisms for South-South cooperation in areas in which the Commission has recognized competence. ECLAC was also requested to support the regional activities envisaged by the United Nations Development Programme and the Latin American Economic System with a view to promoting the use of South-South cooperation in the work carried out by organizations of the United Nations system in the region.⁹

(b) Seventeen years of existence of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC

The year 2021 marks the seventeenth anniversary of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC. For close to two decades, the Committee has addressed a range of issues intended to strengthen

⁹ See resolution 611(XXX) [online] https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/16099/RES-611-E_en.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y.

international development cooperation activities, including South-South, North-South, triangular and multilateral cooperation, as well as peer learning through comparative experiences.

A brief review of the resolutions adopted by the Committee from 2004–2018 and the agreements of the Presiding Officers from 2004–2021 suffices to illustrate the innovation and strengthening of strategic approaches with respect to South-South cooperation and all international development cooperation, including North-South and multilateral cooperation, the analysis of new alternatives for mobilizing the resources necessary for financing the development of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the development of broad sets of indicators to reflect the particular realities in the countries and their needs, so that classification as a middle-income country ceases to be an a priori impediment to participation in official development assistance.¹⁰

Notable examples of institutional collaboration exist in the form of agreements with other divisions of ECLAC, such as work on issues related to structural development gaps with the Economic Development Division and its Financing for Development Unit. Similarly, the Committee has collaborated with subsidiary bodies of ECLAC—including the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean—on substantive issues such as the promotion of measures in support of the economic, political and physical autonomy of women, the design of methodologies to measure South-South cooperation and the evaluation of South-South cooperation, as well as with various entities involved in international cooperation for development in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to generate synergies and complementarities and avoid duplication of efforts.

With regard to the exchange of technical experience and knowledge related to common problems among the countries of the region, examples include evaluations of South-South cooperation, the design of methodologies and the development of indicators for measuring the social and economic impact of South-South cooperation, and supporting the countries of the region in calculation of structural gaps, which is a valuable tool for helping to measure and visualize development levels in each country beyond per capita income.

In its 17 years of existence, the Committee has heard debates on and considered the implementation of development agendas the likes of the Millennium Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (in the framework of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the preparatory process for BAPA+40 and its outcome document.

The Committee on South-South Cooperation has championed support for proposals related to financing for development, calling for “every country to build the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into their international cooperation strategy”, and “to reflect on ways in which to promote the 2030 Agenda through cooperation”.¹¹ Furthermore, in line with the multi-stakeholder approach of the 2030 Agenda and the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, it has opened up participation in the meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation to

¹⁰ See Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC: compendium of resolutions and agreements, 2004–2021* (LC/RECSS.2021/DDR/1), Santiago, 2021.

¹¹ See agreements of the sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Committee on South-South Cooperation (Mexico City, 25 April 2017) [online] https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/41878/S1700606_en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

multiple stakeholders from the private sector, civil society, foundations and academia, as well representatives of parliaments and local governments, among others, with a view to maintaining a dialogue that would contribute to regional decision-making focused on improving South-South cooperation.

It was thanks to the Committee on South-South Cooperation that the Network for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean was established, by virtue of resolution 730(XXXVII) of ECLAC. The Network aims to strengthen the institutional and technical capacities of governments in the region that are establishing or seeking to establish national mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and follow-up to the 17 SDGs.

As part of the BAPA+40 process, the Committee has held regional dialogues on the priorities of the region, including a meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in 2018, and following up on the implementation of the Buenos Aires outcome document is one of the motives for resuming consideration of the transition from Committee to a conference is.

5. From Committee to conference: a necessary step

As underlined by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his 2018 report on South-South cooperation,¹² to leverage the potential of South-South and triangular cooperation in accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, institutional coordination mechanisms and capacities need to be further strengthened so that developing countries can put in place the necessary tools to provide and receive cooperation. The report also states that as South-South and triangular cooperation become more dynamic and expand in scale, scope and complexity, and as the number of actors multiply, the demand for enhanced coordination, advocacy and partnerships will also increase. In that context, it is of paramount importance to reinforce the institutional set-up of South-South and triangular cooperation at all levels.¹³

In this regard, in October 2020, in the informal consultations on the resolutions to be adopted at the thirty-eighth session of ECLAC, the countries discussed the possibility of renaming the Committee on South-South Cooperation to a regional conference. It was argued that while the subsidiary body of ECLAC would retain the same functions and act within existing resources, it would thus have more time for conducting in-depth discussions on the region's broad cooperation agenda.

The current format of meetings of the Committee on South-South Cooperation does not afford the Committee the time needed or sufficient autonomy to develop and expand on the issues within its remit. Meetings, lasting no more than 3 hours, are held every two years in the framework of sessions of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

(a) Changing the status of the Committee: a means of institution-building, streamlining discussions and implementing decisions

A change in the working methods of the Committee on South-South Cooperation of ECLAC is required; giving it a new status would reflect the central importance of cooperation for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Thanks to their efforts and interest, these countries have placed South-South and triangular

¹² See United Nations, *Role of South-South cooperation and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: challenges and opportunities Report of the Secretary-General (A/73/383)*, 2018, para. 51.

¹³ Ibid, para. 133.

cooperation at the forefront of the agenda as issues requiring institutional and substantive support at the highest level, in line with the report of the Secretary-General on the role of South-South cooperation in achieving the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

Converting the Committee into a conference would ensure that these issues are given their due prominence in the region, within existing resources.

This will have organizational and substantive implications. The Committee, once converted to a conference, would convene independently of the sessions of ECLAC, like all subsidiary bodies of the Commission, and its Presiding Officers would have the autonomy to decide on the dates and agendas of its meetings and its working methods. A conference would have greater decision-making authority, including on the substantive issues to be addressed in sessions and which would guide its work for a two-year period.

A regional conference would be able to consider position documents and establish a programme of work to be covered over two or three days. It would also be able to establish the working groups it deems appropriate to better fulfil its mandate, taking example from other meetings of subsidiary bodies of ECLAC (on statistical, social development and gender issues, among others). The change does not have any budget implications and sessions of the proposed conference could be held at the ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, using its own existing resources.

There are precedents of committees being renamed conferences. This is evidenced by the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development held in Quito from 4–6 July 2012, at which it adopted agreement 1:

“Consequently, and with the intention of facilitating and increasing the regional coordination and follow-up of population and development issues, including South-South cooperation,

Decides that the Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean will be renamed the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean”.¹⁴

In resolution 670(XXIV) (San Salvador, August 2012), the Commission:¹⁵

Decides that the Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean will be renamed the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and endorses the other provisions set forth in agreement 1 “Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean” adopted by the Ad Hoc Committee at its meeting held in Quito, from 4 to 6 July 2012.

It should be noted that, in this case, the renamed Conference contributed to the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in September 1994, and to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002. This is the same logic behind the proposed renaming of the Committee on South-South Cooperation to regional conference, as it would enable more comprehensive follow-up to BAPA+40. This would also facilitate the participation of multiple stakeholders and United Nations partners. By way of example, the sessions of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held outside the context of the sessions of ECLAC,

¹⁴ See [online] <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/CEPD-Agreements-final.pdf>.

¹⁵ See [online] <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/CEPD-Agreements-final.pdf>.

have given rise to the adoption of instruments such as the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development and the establishment of partnerships with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). These substantive contributions would not have been possible as a Committee, as meetings held during the sessions of ECLAC did not allow the requisite time or broad participation to address such important matters.

The transition from a committee to a conference is consistent with the repositioning of the United Nations development system, as it will enhance policy coherence and collaboration with the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in support of South-South and triangular cooperation, in line with the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development, 2020-2024, and in collaboration with UNOSSC. The conference would therefore serve as the platform to support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and its action plan¹⁶ at the regional level.

The change of name from Committee to conference has no budget implications. The regional conference would function like all other subsidiary bodies and, within existing resources, would promote coordination and coherence within the United Nations development system.

With regard to the frequency of meetings, the regional conference, if adopted, will meet every two years, as is customary for each subsidiary body of the Commission. This frequency will enable the conference and its presiding officers to fulfil their commitments and programme of work.

It is recommended that the conference be held in the years falling between years in which sessions of the Commission are held, thus allowing the regional conference to report to the session, such as is customary with other subsidiary bodies.

(b) Institution-building for more rapid, effective and efficient regional responses

The region has changed considerably since the formulation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the proclamation of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, and the adoption of the outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40). Not only have adverse trends (high levels of labour informality, precarious urban settlements, high levels of poverty and inequality, and the fragility of health and social protection systems) sharpened, but the COVID-19 pandemic has had catastrophic effects on societies. Times are uncertain. The evolution of the pandemic will be largely determined by progress in vaccination, which is too slow, highly uneven across countries and subject to financial negotiations and the availability of resources.

Development cooperation is a fundamental mechanism for promoting international and regional solidarity in times of pandemic and is a solution for addressing the crisis. Latin America and the Caribbean must strengthen its regional, political and economic agreements, deepen intraregional cooperation and actively forge a united voice before the world. In this context, in line with the “Caribbean first” strategy advanced by ECLAC since 2018, the region must take into consideration the specific vulnerabilities of Caribbean small island developing States, promoting regional cooperation and solidarity for sustainable and resilient development.

The region must have a common position for tackling global asymmetries and promoting international development cooperation at multiple levels (North-South, South-South, triangular, regional, among others), with multiple stakeholders (public, private, civil society, academia, United Nations

¹⁶ UNOSSC, Action plan for implementation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation, forthcoming.

agencies, funds and programmes and international organizations) and in multiple dimensions (including economic, productive, social, environmental and institutional).

In order to address country-specific challenges, the time has come to reconsider the criteria for measuring and classifying development and, where possible, to suspend the graduation of middle-income countries during the pandemic, moving towards a multidimensional approach to measuring poverty and the establishment of a multidimensional vulnerability index. Other aspects such as capacities, knowledge-sharing, technology transfer, fiscal and inequality gaps, vulnerabilities and the various stages of development of countries should be measured, with particular attention to the ease or lack of access to financial resources that could be mobilized, as well as their access to markets.

The task is daunting and cannot be achieved without in-depth and fruitful discussion, culminating in agreements that consolidate South-South cooperation and advance a unified voice for finding a way out of the crisis and moving towards a sustainable and inclusive development model.

Latin America and the Caribbean must strengthen its institutional framework for cooperation, by making it more efficient and effective and improving the implementation of decisions. To this end, it is essential that the Committee becomes a conference.

ANNEX

I. PROPOSED FUNCTIONING OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN¹

1. Nature

The Committee on South-South Cooperation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean will be renamed the “Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean” and shall be a subsidiary body of the Commission that will support member States in South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, in line with the roles of United Nations regional commissions as set forth in paragraphs 21, 26 and 27 (i) of the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and in accordance with their respective mandates.

2. Purpose

Its objectives shall be:

- (a) To strengthen national South-South cooperation mechanisms and possible linkages with North-South and multilateral cooperation;
- (b) To further South-South and triangular cooperation among regional and extraregional stakeholders, including donor countries and international organizations, to facilitate technology and knowledge transfer and joint activities in the field of cooperation;
- (c) To examine the experiences of South-South and triangular cooperation in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and to make progress in evaluating them, in conjunction with the relevant subsidiary bodies that conduct studies in this field, with the support of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Commission;
- (d) To expand and deepen information-sharing on experiences of South-South cooperation conducted by member States of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean between Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions of the world, to foster exchanges of knowledge on issues of mutual interest;
- (e) To promote dialogue on South-South and triangular cooperation between Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions of the world; and
- (f) To bring a Latin American and Caribbean perspective to the debates and proposals led by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).

3. Membership

The members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean shall be members of the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

¹ Prepared on the basis of agreed language in resolutions establishing other subsidiary bodies of ECLAC, such as Economic and Social Council resolutions 2000/7 Establishment of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and 2014/32 Establishment of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

4. Meetings of the Conference

The Conference shall hold its regular meetings every two years at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, in alternating years to the sessions of ECLAC. The Conference may accept an invitation from the government of a member country to host the regular meeting in that country.

5. Presiding Officers

The Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean shall elect Presiding Officers in accordance with the general guidelines established in section II of this annex. The Chair of the Presiding Officers shall also preside over the meetings of the Conference.

6. Secretariat

The secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean shall serve as the secretariat for the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean. The secretariat shall make available to the Regional Conference the existing facilities and resources necessary to carry out its work.

II. PROPOSED FUNCTIONING OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

1. Nature

The Conference shall appoint Presiding Officers to support it, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 4 below.

2. Membership

The Presiding Officers shall be composed of a Chair and four or more members. The members shall be elected from among the member countries of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Special attention shall be devoted to ensuring that the subregional groupings of countries are duly represented among the Presiding Officers.

3. Election of Presiding Officers and duration of mandates

At the beginning of each meeting of the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Chair of the Presiding Officers, in consultation with the Presiding Officers and the Conference, shall draw up a proposal for the election of the next Presiding Officers.

The newly elected Officers shall take up their duties upon the conclusion of the regular meeting of the Conference at which they were elected and shall remain in office until the conclusion of the next regular meeting.

The Presiding Officers, including the Chair, shall be elected by the Conference at its regular meeting for a term of two years.

The members of the Presiding Officers may be re-elected for three successive terms. The Chair may not be re-elected to that office for a second consecutive term, but may be elected as a member of the Presiding Officers. Any country which has served on the Presiding Officers for three successive terms may be elected again after two years have elapsed since the end of its last term of office.

4. Duties

The Presiding Officers shall have the following duties:

- (a) To carry out the tasks assigned to them by the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean;
- (b) To follow up on the implementation of the agreements adopted and the tasks assigned by the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean; and
- (c) To decide on the documentation required for its meetings; and
- (d) Decide on requests concerning agenda items proposed by ECLAC member States for the consideration of the Conference.

5. Meetings

The Presiding Officers shall meet at least once during the interval between regular sessions of the Conference. At the meeting of the Presiding Officers preceding the next session of the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean, they shall adopt a draft programme of activities for the Conference, which shall be submitted for the consideration of member States at its regular meeting.

The Presiding Officers may invite to their meetings any countries or experts they consider may make a contribution to the fulfilment of their duties.