Concept Note: 2022 GSSD Expo Side-event (Virtual)
Launch of South-South Ideas Paper on Digital Transformation

Tuesday, 13 September 2022, 8:30am- 9:45am (NY Time)
Zoom link: https://undp.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_7q90EDXeSP-1CMiaXuedSQ

Introduction of the South-South Global Thinkers initiative

The 2030 Agenda calls for a new and inclusive global partnership, of which South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTrC) forms an integral part. SDG 17 focuses on the need to enhance knowledge-sharing through improved coordination among existing mechanisms.

The BAPA+40 Outcome Document also reiterated that to fully unleash the potential of SSTrC, it is imperative to continue support technical, policy and research support for countries. Think tanks and research institutes from the Global South play a vital role in the political and policy arenas at the local, national level, and global levels and assist governments in understanding and in making informed choices about issues of domestic and international concerns. Thus, they can strategically champion the thought leadership on South-South Cooperation (SSC) and Triangular Cooperation (TrC). The final Report of the 20th High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation (2021) explicitly recognizes the key contribution of the South-South Global Thinkers initiative in this endeavor. Similarly, the United Nations System-Wide Strategy for SSTrC for Sustainable Development (2020-2025) indicates that UN entities can build on this global project to jointly conduct evidence-based analysis, research, dialogue and advocacy to inform policymaking on SSTrC for supporting the achievement of the SDGs.

The South-South Global Thinkers initiative- A Global Coalition of Think Tank Networks, was jointly launched by United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and United Nations Development (UNDP), for SSC in partnership with various Southern-led thinks tank networks and private sector entities. The objective of the initiative is to contribute to a growing body of

evidence and knowledge on issues pertinent to SSC. This is a joint effort to draw on the high-quality expertise of think tank networks and research institutes from the Global South (as well as some from the North) and to develop a platform for SSC research, knowledge sharing and dialogues. The aim is to inform global policy dialogues and agenda setting on SSC and inform policymakers and development practitioners on the value of SSTrC and assist them in making informed decisions on their SSTrC investments with the goal in accelerating progress toward the SDGs and the attainment of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Every year under the initiative research grants are provided to think tanks as part of initiative through a competitive process on the selected themes. These research papers provide an extensive and cross-disciplinary breadth of knowledge, evidence-based analyses, independent intellectual debate, as well as inspiring policy recommendations for the achievement of the SDGs through leveraging SSTrC.

The 2021 Research Grant cycle, among other four research priority areas, included South-South Cooperation in technology and digital transformation. The three papers commissioned on this theme will be launched on the margins of the Global South-South Development Expo 2022 held from 12-14 September 2022.

Background and objective

Southern economies are leveraging digital transformation as an opportunity to leapfrog industrial age infrastructure, to draw on the vast knowledge spillovers from the internet, to take advantage of new markets offered by digital platforms, technologies and systems and to exploit production possibilities enabled by digital technologies for economic transformation and to spur broad-based sustainable development needed for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Policy making is shifting dramatically as governments strive to keep up with new technologies and manage the increasing volume of data flowing across borders. Institutions — national, regional, and international — must evolve quickly to fill governance and regulatory gaps at a time when support for international cooperation needs to be further mobilized. The digital economy, driven largely by data and other intangibles, demands a new approach and mechanisms to international governance across the areas of trade, finance, law, security, economic policy, and privacy, to name a few.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further triggered the use of digital technologies and a surge in digital skills. It has been credited with bridging the disruption caused by the pandemic. As Southern countries continue efforts to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, digital solutions are enabling economic transformation and putting them on a path toward green, resilient, and inclusive growth. Private and public investment in digital solutions is bringing critical services to the poorest and most marginalized, creating decent employment opportunities, strengthening small and medium businesses, enabling trade and services, and building resilience to future shocks. Yet at the end of 2021, according to ITU nearly 3 billion people remained offline, the vast majority

concentrated in Southern countries. And the usage gap remains a challenge. Meanwhile, close to half (43%) of the world's population are not using mobile internet, despite living in areas with mobile broadband coverage.

The research papers commissioned under South-South Global Thinkers aims to explore relevant policy recommendations to strengthen SSTrC in addressing the widening digital divide, scaling-up technological transfers, and innovations, and enabling digital economic transformation. The papers discuss different aspects and bring diverse perspectives from the Global South that can help inform the policy discourse and decision-making processes.

The paper to be launched in the 2022 Expo Side-event include the following:

1. South-South Cooperation on Technology and Digital Transformation Through Establishment of Science and Technology Park under the Belt and Road Initiative
2. South-South cooperation, Technology, and Digital Transformation: The Case of Arab Countries
3. Digital Trade Integration: Role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation

The launched papers will also be available on the South-South Global thinkers Platform.

Target audience

The publications presented at the side event are expected to inspire SSTrC practitioners and policymakers from governments, regional or international institutions, UN entities, the private sector, academia, think tanks, and civil society.

<div align="center">Agenda</div>

	Moderator: **Dr. Hany Besada**, Senior Research and Programme Advisor, UNOSSC
	Opening Remarks:
8:35	**Mr. Zanofer Ismalebbe,** (Incoming) Chief, Knowledge Management, UNOSSC
8:40	**Mr. Babatunde Abidoye**, Global Policy Advisor and Team Leader for Integrated Policy and Analytics, UNDP
8.45	**Launch of South-South Ideas Papers: Guided presentation by authors (10 min each)**
8:50	**Professor Dr. Samia Satti Osman Mohamed Nour**, Full Professor of Economics and Head of the Department of Economics, Khartoum University, Khartoum, Sudan and an Affiliated Research Fellow of the Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries (ERF) Present paper on: **South-South cooperation, Technology and Digital Transformation: The case of Arab Countries**
9:00	**Dr. Wen Chen**, Research Fellow, Department of International Development Cooperation of the Institute of New Structural Economics (INSE) at Peking University, China Present paper on: **South-South Cooperation on technology and digital transformation through establishment of Science and Technology Park under the Belt and Road Initiative**

9:10	**Dr. Vaqar Ahmed**, Joint Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan
	Present paper on: **Digital Trade Integration: Role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation**
9:20	**Open Discussion (Q&A)**
9:40	**Wrap up and closing**