

Focus Session 30: South-South Cooperation from a Regional Perspective April 16th, 2014

Panelists:

- Mr. Juan Manuel Valle, Executive Director of the Mexican Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AMEXCID), President of the Project of Integration and Development of Mesoamerica (PM).
- Mr. Anthony Mothae Maruping, Commissioner for Economic Affairs of the African Union (AUC).
- Ms. Carissa Etienne, Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).
- Mr. Suleiman J. Al-Herbish, Director General of the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID).
- Ms. Cristina Xalma, Researcher of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB).
- Mr. Benjamin Mwape, Youth Delegate, Restless Development-Zambia.

Commentators:

- Mr. Gerson Martínez, Minister of Public Works of The Republic of El Salvador.
- Ms. Elayne Whyte, Executive Director of the Project of Integration and Development of Mesoamerica.

Moderator:

- Mr. Joseph Warungu, Knight International Journalism Fellow.

Key messages:

The objective of the session was to discuss South-South Cooperation (SSC) from the perspective of regional organizations, specifically about the governance schemes they have put into practice to set their cooperation agendas and about their coordination criteria.

Mr. Juan Manuel Valle welcomed the panelists and attendants to the Focus Session. He talked on behalf of the PM, a regional mechanism responsible of articulating cooperation among the countries that are part of the Mesoamerican region by generating public goods. He explained that the cooperation within the PM derives from presidential mandates related to a portfolio of eight projects of regional interest, i.e., energy, transport, telecommunications, competitiveness and trade facilitation, health, housing, environment and natural disasters. He added that due to its functional structure, the PM provides a unique mechanism where high-level political decisions translate to technical efforts and therefore generates regional public goods. To achieve optimum results the PM is permanently searching strategic partners that can contribute to the work in the region; the current partners of the PM include organizations from America, Asia and Europe.

He underscored that the PM portfolio is consistent with six of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to health, environment, extreme hunger and poverty eradication and global partnerships for development. Regarding the Post-2015 development agenda, its design clearly requires consensus from governments and civil society, to create a collective vision that leaders take into account. Organizations like the PM can provide the space to build regional consensus and to make instrumental contributions to the implementation of such an agenda by adapting the experiences and proven solutions of development partners to local contexts.

Mr. Anthony Mothae Maruping began his participation stating that SSC has a central role in Africa, e.g., the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD), an African Union strategic framework for socio-economic development. He described NEPAD as an intervention, spearheaded by African leaders, to

address critical challenges facing the continent: poverty, development and Africa's marginalization internationally. Among the programmes and projects NEPAD manages, he highlighted the *Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa* (PIDA), the *Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme* (CAADP), and the *Strategy for Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa* (AIDA).

He mentioned that cooperation initiatives are also important at the sub-regional level (e.g. the *Southern African Customs Union*), especially within the Regional Economic Communities. He also gave some examples of SSC with extra-regional actors like the African Union's partnerships with Arab States, India, China, and South-America. Mr. Maruping explained that the modalities of African SSC involve government-to-government initiatives but also include the private sector and civil society organizations.

Regarding the agenda Post-2015, he talked about the adoption by the Assembly of the African Union on January 2014, of the *Common African Position Document on the Post 2015 Development Agenda*, which is based on the aspirations expressed by a wide spectrum of African stakeholders during a series of consultations. He emphasized that this Common Position is coherent with Africa's Agenda 2063. Finally, Mr. Maruping stated that Africa does not want to patron "helpless people" anymore, but build partnerships based on co-responsibility.

Ms. Carissa Etienne said that the region of the Americas has an extensive experience in SSC and that PAHO itself was formed in 1902 in response to a perceived need to jointly work to deal with the threat of infectious diseases. Since then, PAHO has accompanied member states to deliver technical cooperation, to bid on as broker, to help them to define plans, to implement and monitor projects. Some of the values PAHO was built on are solidarity, respect, equity, Pan-Americanism and the right to health. Ever since PAHO's inception, member states have cooperated to address common health goals, therefore, the programmes are designed around a shared agenda and they usually involve civil society organizations and other development partners. She said that the number of cooperation projects in the region augmented after the Millennium Declaration in 2000, when there was a substantial increase of health initiatives oriented to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Ms. Etienne listed some examples of successful cooperation projects her organization has had, e.g., the *Expanded Programme of Immunization* (PAHO's flagship programme), the *Revolving Fund for the Purchase of Vaccines, Syringes, and Other Related Supplies*, the *Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV&AIDS* (PANCAP), *Salud Mesoamérica 2015 Initiative* (SM2015), and the *South American Health Council* (SSC). She considered these programmes are significant experiences that have taught important lessons to the actors involved, but most importantly that have had major impacts on health indicators in the region; therefore, they should be analyzed and shared with the rest of the world.

Mr. Suleiman J. Al-Herbish spoke on behalf of the Coordination Group (CG), an alliance consisting of ten development institutions, most of which are fully owned and funded by Arab countries. Since the CG considers that SSC goes beyond financial transfers it has added to its traditional aid programmes, products for trade development and the promotion of domestic and foreign investments and works with the commercial sector to tap its knowledge and its capacity to mobilize domestic savings for the benefit of economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Mr. Al-Herbish said that the CG is committed to regional cooperation in Economics, Science and Technology, Environment and Social and Cultural Affairs. Thus, an extensive agenda has been established and results are emerging. For example, trade between South American and Arab countries has grown 300% in three years. The Arab African cooperation is even more intensive. A formal 5-year joint plan of action (2011-2106) was agreed in 2010. The Plan incorporates programmes and projects, including those of the NEPAD.

As to the way forward, the view of the CG is that countries and institutions of the South need to strengthen their place in the global drive for development effectiveness and contribute to partnerships such as the GPEDC and the post-2015 agenda. The Coordination Group is planning an active role in these processes. The group is planning with its Partner countries a stock taking seminar in Jeddah in June 2014 on the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Development Bank, and a round table of the major actors of SSC to be organized by OFID early in 2016.

Ms. Cristina Xalma talked about the *Annual Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America* as an instance of SSC among Ibero-American countries. In 2007, the Presidents instructed the Ibero-American General Secretariat to elaborate a report on SSC in the region. This mandate involved a discussion about the conceptual and methodological framework, the political principles that must guide SSC in Ibero-America, e.g., horizontality, equity, reciprocity and mutual benefit, and the indicators to measure performance of SSC. The result was a report based on 3 sections: i) systematization of SSC by modalities (bilateral, regional and triangular), ii) a political reflection about the SSC in Ibero-America, iii) participation of the Ibero-American countries in the global Official Development Assistance (ODA).

This exercise was also useful to identify some challenges that prompted the creation of the Ibero-American Programme for the Strengthening of South-South Cooperation whose initial objective was to support cooperation offices and technical cooperation units, through diverse means like training, systematization of experiences, and acting as a political forum for discussion.

Regarding the MDG'S and the Post-2015 Development Agenda Ibero-American countries deem it necessary to change the classification criteria for assigning ODA; instead of the income-based criteria, it would be more effective to implement an approach that take into account domestic structural gaps. In addition, it will be important to strengthen South-South and Triangular Cooperation, not as a substitute for but rather as a complement to North-South cooperation.

Mr. Benjamin Mwape stated that in order to talk about improving development effectiveness it is critical to include the youth in the discussion. Since half of the world's population are young people, and a significant number of this young people live in developing countries, we cannot approach SSC without significantly engaging youngsters in the process. Mr. Mwape, talked about the Restless Development's programmes, like "The Big Idea", an initiative whose objective is to mobilize young people, equip them with knowledge, data and technology so that they can make a standout contribution to social accountability at a local, national and global level.

He also talked about an exchange programme between Zambia and Uganda that has engaged the private sector to recruit young people as interns and train them as emerging entrepreneurs. He said these are remarkable examples of the use of the so frequently underutilized potential energy of the youth. Regarding SSC and the youth, he said that a lot has been achieved in information sharing, in part, because this generation has grown in an information age where knowledge sharing is central; however, there is a lot to do in technology exchange and trade. Finally, Mr. Mwape said that to take advantage of the potential of young people it is necessary to stop treating them as target or beneficiaries and start thinking of them as partners and leaders in SSC plans and policies.

Mr. Gerson Martínez underscored that SSC must be based on the principles of co-responsibility, horizontality, respect and solidarity. It must be human being-centered, aligned with sustainable development and take advantage of traditional cooperation mechanisms among public entities, but also promote public-private partnerships. Regarding the Post-2015 Development Agenda, he considered it is necessary to take advantage of the redefinitions that are taking place within international organizations so that SSC strengthens its integral vision especially in the fields of climate change and risk management and prevention. It will also be important to make use of scale economies to render SSC more efficient.

Ms. Elayne Whyte stated that it is necessary to improve the effectiveness of SSC projects in terms of implementation, monitoring, report and evaluation. For that purpose, it will be necessary to keep using traditional cooperation mechanisms such as credits, public resources, non-reimbursable cooperation funds, but also public-private partnerships. She added that even when we are working from a regional perspective we have to focus in the people and open up channels to listen to what the people have to say about these topics. She mentioned the Central American Electrical Interconnection System (SIEPAC) and the Mesoamerican Social Housing Programme as two examples of successful SSC initiatives in the region.