

South-South and Triangular Cooperation: A New Path for Social Development?

Side Event at the 100th International Labour Conference



14 June 2011 (1pm to 3pm)

Room XI

Draft Concept Note

1. South-South Cooperation: Good practices and successful initiatives in the ILO

South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) is not a new fashion or modality. The idea of cooperation among developing countries originated from the Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung in 1955. This Conference gave rise to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961 and the creation of the Group of 77 (G-77) in 1964, which mainly sponsored South-South Cooperation (SSC) in the 1960's and 1970's.

The United Nations has promoted cooperation since 1959 when the terminology "technical assistance" was replaced by "technical cooperation". However, it was first approached in a strategic framework for the United Nations when the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1978, which adopted the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

The General Assembly took significant steps towards implementing these recommendations, and one of them was to replace the High-Level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (HLC/TCDC) into High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation in 2004.

Although SSTC has been highlighted as part of global development cooperation since the 1970's, it has only recently become a deep new trend and grown more visible in the new phase of development of the world economy.

Broadly and briefly, the following three transitions have contributed to the growing importance of SSTC. First, the major tectonic shift in geo-economics and geo-politics has been associated with the emergence not only but mainly of China, Brazil and India as major players in the world economy along with other G 20 countries. Second, development thinking has been shifted away from conventional one-size-fits-all thinking. This transition can be demonstrated in two ways. Third, there is an increasing self-assurance in the South to define home-grown policies.

Based on the Nairobi Outcome Document (2009), South-South Cooperation (SSC) is a modality of cooperation that encourages solidarity among peoples and countries of the South to support each other in the attainment of internationally agreed development goals while sharing horizontal approaches. The ILO has undertaken over 100 initiatives using the SSC modality to address specific topics such as child labour, social security, gender, green jobs, employment-intensive investment, and the strengthening of employers' and workers' organizations. This round table will be an opportunity to have snapshots of good practices in SSC in three segments, devoted to (1) India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) cooperation; (2) Experience stemming from LDCs in the light of LDC-IV follow-up (Istanbul, May 2011); (3) an announcement by China on new approaches to SSC in the field of decent work. Participation of workers' and employers' organizations along with government representatives is foreseen in this side event.

Some of the criteria for identifying good practices would be the establishment of horizontal “relations” of cooperation based on principles of equality, non-discrimination and international solidarity. Another issue the ILO is looking into is replicability: Can this practice be replicated, with appropriate country-relevant modifications, in other countries or regions? Does it possess underlying principles and methods that can be adopted by other countries or working bodies?

2. Format

The event will be tripartite and focus on good practices in promoting South-South Cooperation. The event will be composed of three segments, as follows:

1) IBSA and Decent Work:

The India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) trilateral development initiative has been a major driver of SSC and exchange. In November 2010, a Declaration of Intentions between the Governments of these countries (at the ministerial level) was signed to promote SSC to support the Decent Work Agenda and the creation of an SSC programme in the ILO. The IBSA-ILO Declaration builds on the commitments expressed by India, Brazil and South Africa at previous IBSA Summits to promote cooperation as an important tool for achieving social and economic development. Workers’ and employer’ representatives in the three countries have also intensified the sharing of experience in the fields of combating child labour, social protection and youth employment.

The panellists from the three Governments will concentrate on progress and future initiatives related to this Declaration and efforts by IBSA to promote decent work. On the other hand, workers’ organisations will showcase the Global Labour University.

Global Labour University: Good practice in working with South-South and triangular cooperation (IBSA + Germany) to strengthen the capacity of workers’ organizations will be showcased.

The Global Labour University (GLU) provides advanced education infrastructures that develop the knowledge capacity of trade unionists from across the global South. The GLU network offers Master’s Programmes in Labour Policies, Globalization, Development, Economic Policy and Social Economy. These unique global programmes are jointly developed by universities and workers’ organizations from around the world and target candidates who have experience with labour and social movements, and who are willing to assist organizations in these fields to engage more effectively in social dialogue, public debate, and policy implementation. The programmes offer a multicultural and multiregional environment, with students and lecturers coming from developing, transition and industrialized countries. The courses take place in Johannesburg (South Africa) at the University of Witwatersrand (WITS) , in Campinas (Brazil) at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), in Mumbai (India) at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), and in Kassel/Berlin (Germany) at the University of Kassel and the Berlin School of Economics and Law. The GLU is a new approach to strengthening the intellectual and strategic capacity of workers organisations and to establish much stronger working relationships between trade unions, the ILO, and the scientific community. It strengthens trade union capacity and competence to promote the values of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and enable workers’ organizations to engage more effectively in social dialogue on social and economic policy issues like employment, social protection, and the implementation of international labour standards.

The Round table would have a workers’ organization featuring the GLU at the IBSA round table, as a

good example and practical case of IBSA triangular cooperation in action.

II) Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

The second segment of the Side Event is related to LDCs and horizontal cooperation. LDCs have made progress in socio-economic fields but remain suppressed by poverty and malnutrition, high unemployment, conflict, food and energy crises and the financial crisis. Thus, more global support is needed for LDCs in the form of traditional donors, complemented by South-South Cooperation. The potential of SSC for LDCs was raised at the recent LDC-IV Conference in Istanbul where ILO participated in a South-South Development Round Table to showcase announcements of concrete plans for the successful transfer and scaling-up of initiatives for increasing the productive capacities of LDCs through effective and efficient South-South, triangular and public-private partnerships.

Tourism is a means to growth and development and a key way for developing and least developed countries to strengthen their economies. In this regard, it is essential to raise awareness and share experience and information about the role of tourism in poverty alleviation, in particular through lessons learnt and best practices adopted by other countries in, for example, providing income, livelihood security and decent work through tourism for poor and vulnerable populations.

As part of the UN Steering Committee on Tourism for Development (ILO, ITC, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNWTO, WTO), the ILO further participated in a Special Event on tourism for sustainable development and poverty reduction, which assembled representatives from LDCs, including 15 Ministers of Tourism, various UN agencies and donor countries to debate the contribution of tourism to sustainable development. The event discussed strategic insights on major challenges and advice on the way forward for tourism and poverty reduction in LDCs. The Steering Committee's objective is to engage in an efficient manner towards a new decade of international support for sustainable tourism development for the least developed countries (2011-2020). The gathering, which is the first public appearance of the UN Steering Committee on Tourism for Development, reflects the increasing relevance of tourism in the development agenda and represents a clear commitment by the UN system in making tourism work for development.

The Round table would have a representative from an LDC and an employers' organization to share experience and best practices when addressing challenges and concerns for the reduction of poverty through tourism.

III) China and South-South Cooperation

China is now the second largest economy in the world, having overtaken Japan in 2010. The Chinese Cooperation Agency and the China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE)/ Ministry of Commerce attended the South-South Expo of the United Nations in ILO Geneva and have expressed support for SSC in the ILO's programme and budget and signaled future cooperation in working with the ILO on SSC. The Government of China has been actively supporting South-South activities in the United Nations through its South-South Unit hosted by UNDP. The 2010 Shanghai Expo was another opportunity for China to share experience with the UN system, and the ILO in particular on skills development initiatives. A high-level representative of the Chinese Government will announce its future cooperation with the ILO.