

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW: MID TERM REVIEW OF UNOSSC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (2018-21)

The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) is the focal point for the promotion and the facilitation of South-South and triangular cooperation for development, on a global and on a United Nations system-wide basis. UNOSSC was established to promote, coordinate and support South-South and triangular cooperation globally and within the United Nations system. Hosted by UNDP since 1974, although also working with other UN agencies and entities, UNOSSC was established by the UN General Assembly with a mandate to advocate for and coordinate South-South and triangular cooperation. UNOSSC receives policy directives and guidance through the General Assembly and through its subsidiary body, the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation.

UNOSSC works in mainstreaming South-South cooperation across the UN system and works to support countries' efforts to manage, design and implement South-South cooperation policies and initiatives through the identification, sharing and transfer of successful Southern-generated development solutions. For these processes and activities, it engages a wide range of partners, including Member States, UN entities, multilateral bodies as well as the private-sector and civil society organizations at different levels.

On April 2018<sup>1</sup> a Strategic Framework was adopted for the years 2018-2021. This strategic framework was designed to guide the work of the UNOSSC for this period as to support efforts of Member States for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through South-South alliances and partnerships. Building on the UNOSSC previous framework (for 2014-2017), UNOSSC is charged with supporting intergovernmental processes that set policies to further advance South-South cooperation across the United Nations system, catalysing greater research and analysis to inform SS policies and programmes, as well as forging partnerships and mobilizing resources. The overarching goal of UNOSSC under the current Strategic Framework is to support Member States' efforts *“to achieve the eradication of poverty in all its forms and to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment so as to achieve the 2030 Agenda through enhanced South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation”*.

UNOSSC has focused its work under the Strategic Framework (2018-2021), on three tactical outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Strengthened multilateral policymaking processes to advance Southern interests and development agenda, and enhanced coherence and coordination of United Nations support.
- Outcome 2: Capacities of Member States, the United Nations system and other partners in South-South and triangular cooperation strengthened through enhanced generation and sharing of knowledge and access to high-quality advisory services.
- Outcome 3: South-South and triangular cooperation partnership initiatives and demand driven programmes facilitated to address sustainable development needs of developing countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic Framework of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, 2018-2021 Update on results achieved by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation in 2019. PPT Presentation.

The Office works, furthermore, in three areas:

- i) supporting intergovernmental processes that set policies to further advance South-South cooperation across the United Nations system,
- ii) catalysing greater research and analysis to inform SS policies and programmes, and
- iii) forging partnerships, demand-driven programmes, and mobilizing resources including Trust Funds.

Collaborating with a wide array of partners, including Member States and UN Agencies, UNOSSC completes its mandate and delivers services through its Headquarters in New York and three Regional Offices in Addis Abba (Africa), Istanbul (Arab States, Europe and the CIS) and Bangkok (Asia and the Pacific).

This mid-term review has found that expected outputs and outcomes have progressed thus far to a large degree in the implementation of Strategic Framework 2018 - 2020. They have contributed to the UNOSSC mandate implementation significantly to promote the principles of South-South cooperation. Progress thus far has been in several areas of policy momentum and specific promotion of SSC through programmes and trust fund management, partnerships generation, as well as knowledge management and exchange of information regarding SSC.

UNOSSC, throughout the period of implementation of the first tranche of the SF 2018 -2021 has been part as well as an agent of significant political momentum for the promotion of South – South Cooperation and (albeit to a lesser degree) of Triangular cooperation. This has been impelled by and with several policy related developments, such as the BAPA + 40 conference, system – wide strategy and similar outputs either fostered or enhanced by UNOSSC.

There has been information exchange, conceptual debates, and knowledge management through different methods, mechanisms and events has been impelled and promoted. UNOSSC carries out activities and fosters processes to strengthen knowledge sharing, capacity building and technical assistance between countries. It facilitates the documentation and sharing of experiences, practices or pathways, approaches and tools for South-South cooperation that can help countries to realize their shared aspirations for achieving sustainable and equitable development. Several initiatives are implemented under this umbrella classification, such as the recently developed knowledge sharing and partnership-brokering platform called the South-South Galaxy. Furthermore, the Global South-South Development Expo (GSSD Expo), an annual event organized by the UNOSSC in close coordination with host government and institutions, has taken place.

The Office has managed and sustained implementation of trust funds that support collaboration and piloting of South-South initiatives: the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation (PGTF); the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation (UNFSSC); the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund); and the India-UN Development Partnership Fund.

UNOSSC's regional offices (in Africa, in the Arab States, Europe and the CIS region, and in Asia and the Pacific) have carried out several key initiatives, engaging in building capacity for regional and national partners in a decentralised manner, promoting innovation and knowledge-based interventions, providing technical support and policy advice to member states in the regions where they operate and partnering with regionally – based institutions.

For the above, the Office worked in very close and in accord with member states and political groupings within the UN. It has serviced intergovernmental groupings, and has provided services to the General Assembly and to its subsidiary body, the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. Regarding the specific expectation that SS and TrC would be further mainstreamed system – wide within the UN, there has been conceptual and concrete support by or through UNOSSC to do this. Given the above, therefore, the guidance role as the UNOSSC as a focal point to promote and heighten SS and TrC throughout the UN system has been enhanced in recent years.

The achievements and progress in implementation of the Strategic Framework [ 2018 – 2021 ] can be associated to a series of contributing causal factors, the main ones being:

- *Leadership*, in particular as it relates to contributions for preparation and coming to fruition of the BAPA + 40 Conference and related events and ensuing system – wide policy. Specific, knowledgeable and dedicated engagement in political processes by staff and by leadership have been the main contributing factor to obtaining these outcomes. The role of the Office as facilitator was underscored by skills that brought together not only divergent points of view but also managed to foment innovation in the debate regarding South-South Cooperation as well as Triangular Cooperation.
- *Proactive engagement by staff* in the many activities, projects, and different areas of work of the Office has been one of the contributing factors for achievements. Engagement by staff with several partners outside the Office to implement activities and processes has also been a highly valued asset, creating positive synergies with several partners (within and outside the UN System).
- *Ability to bring different points of view* from a wider community of different stakeholders to the discussions, developments, and debates that the Office endorses or promotes. This entails bringing in not only different member states, UN entities and multilateral organizations but also harnessing the participation of multiple types of stakeholders [think tanks, CSOs, NGOs, financial institutions, etc.].
- *Capacity to play a brokering role* in the different processes that the Office endorses or promotes. Not only in the political and policy discussion processes but also in the knowledge managing, knowledge sharing and exchange procedures that the UNOSSC implements or participates in. This is aided by a capacity to create a space where different parties construct partnerships.
- *Confidence and trust by several partners*. For instance, by those members states closely linked to trust funds in different capacities, when consigning to the Office the management of concrete mechanisms and resources to implement projects that showcase South-South Cooperation.

Furthermore, trust from governments and groupings from the Global South mainly, was also cemented in the biennial being analysed. Furthermore, and a change experienced mainly in the biennial being analysed, the Office's inclusion and engagement of non – traditional stakeholders in the debate on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (such as developed countries and traditional ODA donors, non – state actors, etc.) has also generated an environment of trust from many of these stakeholders vis – a – vis UNOSSC.

- *Uniquely positioned to promote efforts at integrating three layers of action in SS and TrC:* global, regional, and national (albeit with different degrees of insertion or success). Ability and unique positioning to integrate the different layers of action mentioned within the UN system – wide reform and the “delivery as one” viewpoint.

A series of hindering factors have also been identified that have deterred further sustainable achievements within SF [ 2018 – 2021] and, if unchecked, could encumber achievements in the second phase of implementation of the Framework (until December 2021) as well in the next UNOSSC Strategic Framework. The most salient hindering factors are as follows:

- *Shortage of robust sustainable financing* to aid and channel the achievement of expected outcomes of the SF 2018 – 2021, to consolidate the Office's work in support of efforts of Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as to support intergovernmental processes that set policies for advancing South-South and Triangular cooperation across the United Nations system.
- *Insufficient staffing with long term employment agreements* within UNOSSC to properly carry out its mandate, in particular taking into consideration new demands, new visibility of South-South and Triangular Cooperation, as well as needs to further advance the development agenda (SDGs) within a SS and TrC framework. This is evident in several realms of the Office (for instance, in staffing with technical, conceptual, managerial duties and partnerships and communication teams, inter alia).
- *Un - integrated institutional structure* that affects the capacity and institutional effectiveness of UNOSSC to deliver and achieve institutional effectiveness in a unified and cohesive manner.
- *Unclear and / or uncertain partnership agreements* with stakeholders and some parties within the UN system – wide network and with particular agencies and other partners to actively harness synergies between the parties, as well as imprecise resources (staffing and financial) to properly implement partnerships and partnership agreements.

The period being assessed ( 2018 – 2020 ) in this exercise has been a demanding yet eventful and important period for UNOSSC. The period has as underpinnings a series of achievements that open the door for opportunities but also for risks and challenges. Opportunities, risks and challenges not only in seeking outcomes and results in the period that is left for the implementation of the current Strategic Framework but also for future work beyond that. In the search of being a step ahead of risks and challenges, UNOSSC and associated partners from different institutions will benefit from self –

examinations of where the Office goes from here both at the conceptual and at the practical levels. This is key for the design of the next strategic framework. For instance, the Office has been keystone in BAPA + 40 and has helped in brokering a UN system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation which, once approved and operational, could be a substantial game changer. There should engaged in examinations of how its role within the UN system changes in accordance to these and what opportunities and challenges these present. Additionally, UNOSSC has engendered a number of associations through specific processes such as the trust funds, partnership agreements, knowledge management and information exchange developments, brokering of knowledge and alliances. Further to the above, the Office ought to implement operational and institutional changes to reduce whatever risks and challenges present themselves by leaping at opportunities so that it does not become outmoded or superseded by system – wide as well as global changes. For instance, to address opportunities that include generating mechanisms to manage knowledge and demonstrate the value added of South – South and Triangular cooperation in concrete terms while applying the principles and concepts this type of cooperation embraces.

The COVID – 19 pandemic and the ensuing social and economic crisis being experienced across the globe pose further risks and challenges but also opportunities for SS and TrC. As stated in the recent progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals Report of the UN Secretary-General, while this crisis is *“imperilling progress towards the Goals, it also makes their achievement all the more urgent and necessary”*. This report points that it is essential to protect the gains achieved and search for transformative recovery from COVID-19 as risks of future crises are reduced inclusive sustainable development is brought closer. For this to come to fruition there is a requirement of *“leadership, foresight, innovation, finance and collaboration among all governments and all stakeholders*. “It is within this framework that the UNOSSC can carve its future.