

## **Conference of Southern Providers of Development Cooperation South-South Cooperation: Issues and Emerging Challenges**

### **Press release**

**New Delhi, 14 April** –Southern partners in development cooperation from Africa, the Arab Region, Latin America and Asia are meeting in New Delhi today and tomorrow to initiate a new dialogue on how to strengthen South-South Cooperation. The event is organized by the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), with support from the Government of India.

“The Conference of Southern Providers: Issues and Emerging Challenges” was jointly opened by Mr. Ranjan Mathai, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, India and Mr. WU Hongbo, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. It comes at a timely moment, with the marked growth in South-South cooperation and the ongoing consultations on a global development agenda for the post-2015 period.

In his opening statement Mr. Mathai highlighted that the assistance which developing countries offer to other developing countries should therefore continue to remain voluntary and free from externally imposed norms drawn from North-South Cooperation. Simply put, whereas North-South cooperation is a historic responsibility, South-South cooperation is a voluntary partnership. The fact that the traditional donor community often underplays this distinction does not diminish its validity.

While explaining the Indian development cooperation programme Mr. Mathai mentioned that over the last decade or so, 150 Lines of Credit totalling over US\$ 9.5 billion have been allocated, financing a wide range of projects from drinking water schemes to power plants to technology parks and railway infrastructure in developing countries and Africa and elsewhere.

On another note, Mr. Mathai emphasised that the excessive emphasis being placed on South-South Cooperation as a crucial pillar of the development agenda should be resisted. There is need to reinforce the argument that while South-South Cooperation and the voluntary efforts of developing countries such as India would continue to play an important role, it would be a travesty to project them as the principal new component of a redefined Global Partnership for the new Agenda. South-South Cooperation has to be accompanied by a significant enhancement of North-South aid flows, not their diminution. Mr. Mathai also added that “we were disappointed with the content of the recently released Bali Communiqué of the UN Secretary General’s High Level Panel on the post-2015 Development Agenda. It is quite astonishing that, even as the crucial importance of ODA for many developing countries is being reiterated at various high-level fora, this document does not contain a single mention of ODA. We need to register the note of caution that if the recommendations of the Panel are to make meaningful contribution to

evolving a new Development Agenda, they should reflect in equal measure the concerns of both the developing and the developed world. We should be careful not to dissipate the political consensus reached in the Rio+20 Outcome.”

“India has long played a pivotal role in pioneering and promoting South-South cooperation. There is fertile ground to begin this new dialogue among South-South cooperation partners”, observed Under-Secretary-General Wu. While recognizing that, “The past 60 years – and especially the last ten – have witnessed fundamental transformation of South-South cooperation”, he also pointed out that it is still far from realizing its full potential. The Under Secretary-General called for concrete efforts to boost and support South-South cooperation.

Southern partners will use the conference to discuss the fundamental principles and modalities of South-South Cooperation and to explore where the most persistent gaps lie, both analytical and institutional. Participants will generate recommendations on how to address these gaps and challenges to pave the way toward stronger impact and an improved perception of their work from the public and other stakeholders. The outcomes of the conference should also help facilitate the input of Southern partners to the global dialogue on development and for better coordination among southern providers.

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