CLOSING REMARKS BY NAVID HANIF, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ECOSOC SUPPORT AND COORDINATION, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, UNITED NATIONS

Conference of South-South Cooperation Partners

New Delhi, 16 April 2013

Excellency, Ambassador Shyam Saran,
Excellency, Mr. Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty,
Dr. Biswajit Dhar,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have now come to the end of this important dialogue of Southern partners. For the first time, the South-South development cooperation partners from both governments and academia have come together to discuss issues of common concern and interest. Importantly, this dialogue is truly self-driven and self-supported by the partners themselves.

On behalf of the Under Secretary-General of DESA, Mr. WU Hongbo, I would like to extend the sincere gratitude of the department to the Government of India and the Research and Information System for Developing Countries for the initiative and leadership in organizing and supporting this dialogue. I would also particularly like to extend special thanks to Sachin and his able team who spared no efforts to make this dialogue so well-organized and productive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past day and a half, a broad consensus has begun to emerge on the key principles of South-South cooperation, the issues that need to be addressed, and the next steps in advancing this important process.

There is a strong recognition that South-South development cooperation emanates from a distinct historical context which explains its voluntary
nature. In this regard, it was also emphasized that the growth experienced in South-South development cooperation should not weaken the commitments and responsibilities of developed countries in promoting development in developing countries.

Guided by this historical context and principles, and driven by Southern providers themselves, I would like to highlight several issues that need to be addressed to advance the South-South cooperation agenda, from my perspective.

Firstly, the rapid growth in South-South cooperation requires greater efforts by Southern partners at arriving at a common and acceptable definition of the term “South-South development cooperation”. This is essential, in my view, if we want to make both policy dialogue and norm-setting in this area more productive.

Secondly, good practices in South-South development cooperation should be further studied and disseminated with a view to informing the global development agenda. For example, the speed and quality of delivery, cost-efficiency, focus on what partner countries want and what they can do best as well as non-interference in domestic affairs, have been frequently mentioned as particular strengths of South-South development cooperation – strengths which Northern partners could emulate.

Thirdly, evidence-based analysis needs to be strengthened by the Southern partners with a view to facilitating peer learning in policy-making and more effective delivery tools and evaluation methods. Think tanks and academia can play a major role in this regard.

Fourthly, there is a strong drive for Southern partners to strengthen their collaboration and coordination in key global development discussions, including the post-2015 development agenda. An institutional setup that allows for the formulation of joint position and action therefore needs to be considered in the broader context of strengthening South-South cooperation.

Fifthly, the support of multilateral institutions to South-South cooperation needs to be mainstreamed in their strategy and delivery mechanisms. In this regard, Southern partners should better articulate their expectations about the role of multilaterals and the reform/institutional strengthening required.
Ultimately, South-South development cooperation should evolve within its own paradigm. The development of frameworks or standards with a view to ensuring better impact and sustainability of South-South development cooperation are an essential part of this process. But, they must be developed by Southern partners themselves rather than imposed on them from the outside.

Let me now turn to the way forward.

All of you agreed that this dialogue should continue beyond general discussions with a view to yielding tangible outputs and results.

You have mentioned a few concrete deliverables that can emerge from this process, for example, best practices applicable to global development cooperation, frameworks and methodologies to evaluate South-South development cooperation, joint positions of Southern partners in their engagement in the post-2015 development agenda process and further strengthening of institutional options to enable collective action.

You have also strongly emphasized that this process should be one that is inclusive of all Southern partners.

Therefore, before I close my remarks, I would like to highlight a few concrete steps planned as a follow-up to this Conference of Southern partners. Firstly, UNDESA is organizing a meeting of Director-Generals of Southern partners in Ethiopia on 7 June, which will take place back-to-back with the High-level Symposium of the UN Development Cooperation Forum. The meeting of Directors-General is expected to carry forward many of the ideas and proposals that have emerged here in Delhi and set in motion concrete actions. Secondly, I would like to mention that there is some interest in organizing a second follow-up dialogue of Southern partners later this year. And, thirdly, the issue of South-South development cooperation can be expected to feature prominently in the 2014 DCF.

These follow-up meetings share a common objective, namely to provide a platform for Southern partners to begin a more systematic and regular exchange on issues of common concern with a view to influencing global policy-making and norm-setting on development cooperation issues, more effectively. In that sense, I believe this conference in Delhi may be seen as a starting point of an important process. I am confident that the specific
institutional arrangements and frameworks necessary for its success will develop organically through this intensified dialogue of Southern partners.

Most importantly, you - the Southern partners – need to own this process. In this effort, I want to assure you that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs stands ready to support you in the best possible manner.

Thank you.