



Economic and Social Council Topic Summaries

Topic A: South-South Cooperation

South-South cooperation (SSC) is the collaboration among countries of the global South in political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and technical domains and can happen at the bilateral, regional, or international level.¹ SSC has continually increased as a phenomenon because not only have States in the Global South garnered more access to resources and pushed back against reliance on industrialized partners, but also because it has become an important avenue for hastening development through information and technology sharing. The first acknowledgment of SSC came in the 1978 *Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries*, which marked a shift from the standard model of only developed States providing development assistance to a more modern paradigm where cooperation can be North-South, South-South, or triangular.² The General Assembly endorsed the *Buenos Aires Plan of Action* with *A/RES/33/134*, which requested United Nations programs, regional bodies, and other relevant actors to take action in facilitating its implementation.³ The United Nations has several entities that support SSC. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, for example, acts as a knowledge hub with advisory and consulting services for those with a stake in South-South cooperation. SSC is also the second focus area of ECOSOC's Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), which will ensure that the topic remains on ECOSOC's agenda for the foreseeable future.⁴

Topic B: The Use of Restorative Justice Systems

Prevention of crime and damage to communities are objectives of any justice system, but the international community has struggled to find ways in which to discourage crime and prevent individuals from repeatedly committing criminal offenses. Restorative justice systems aim to rehabilitate offenders through reconciliation with victims and their communities.⁵ Restorative justice systems can take many forms but often involve a judicial or other authority to facilitating the meeting of the offender with the victim and allowing for compensation of damages through some form of community service.⁶ Through restorative justice, offenders are often rehabilitated and potentially gain useful skills and give back to their community as opposed to only being imprisoned or otherwise punished, which has no external benefit for the community or the victim and may not help the offender to move away from criminal activities. In 2000, ECOSOC adopted *E/RES/2000/14* establishing basic principles on the use of restorative justice programs, and in 2006 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) created a handbook to give assistance to Member States in the implementation of such systems. The handbook also acknowledges the potential pitfalls of restorative justice systems: for victims, it can cause trauma during meetings with the offender; offenders could potentially see the restorative process as an easy way out; and for the criminal justice system itself it can introduce a much higher level of burden.⁷ The international community continues to discuss how to best use restorative justice and minimize its potentially negative aspects.

¹ <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/about/about-sstc/>

² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-buqyoV0jpSMm1OVEZYU2hNTWc/view>

³ <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/33/ares33r134.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/development-cooperation-forum>

⁵ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime_Resolutions/1990-1999/1999/ECOSOC/Resolution_1999-26.pdf

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Topic B: Sustainable Alternative Development

Alternative development refers to promoting economic development and enabling rural farmers who might otherwise grow illicit crops to have economic alternatives, thereby addressing one of the root causes of illicit drug production, namely poverty and the lack of development.⁸ Effective alternative development can improve livelihoods and well-being of people, address poverty, and improve human security.⁹ Alternative development is one of the pillars of the comprehensive drug control strategy used by the UNODC. Along with other United Nations bodies and programs, the UNODC assists small farmers with licit income generation activities to reduce their dependency on income from opium and coca cultivation and supports health, education, basic infrastructure, community development, and food security with special attention to environmental safety.¹⁰ Although there is clear need for sustainable alternative development in many communities that are financially reliant on illicit crop cultivation, Member States and the international community have struggled to support alternative development efforts and to broadly encouraging switching to other crops. Farmers are often hesitant to cultivate a crop that they are unfamiliar with, especially if they have no guarantee that it will ensure the continued well-being of their family. That said, efforts to advance alternative development have been considerable in recent years, although there are still opportunities to improve financial, political, and social support.¹¹

⁸ https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2015/Alternative_Development_Working_Paper_2015.pdf

⁹ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2016/April/alternative-development-and-its-role-in-implementing-the-sustainable-development-goals.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/alternative-development/success-stories.html>

¹¹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2015/Alternative_Development_Working_Paper_2015.pdf