

2023 Human Development Report South-South Global Thinkers Network Consultation

Summary of Discussion:

I. Background:

Human Development Report consultations has started conversation on the themes of the upcoming report, with the purpose of seeking input and advice on report content from thematic and regional experts. Consultations inform the process of developing the report and ensure that it speaks to key human development issues for people and policymakers. The partnership between the Human Development Report Office (HDRO), UNOSSC, under the South-South Global Thinkers Network, a global coalition of Think-tank Networks on South-South Cooperation, aims to draw key insights and perspectives from the Global South that will inform the preparation of the upcoming HDR 2023. Events are by invitation only, to spur an open and productive dialogue. To this end, an [e-discussion was hosted on South-South Global Thinkers platform from 15 May – 10 July](#). Followed by a [Virtual consultation held on 6 July 2023](#).

II. Summary of key messages (including online e-discussion)

- The Global South is confronted with interconnected challenges like climate change, demographic aging, international migration, and the digital revolution.
- Innovative and comprehensive solutions are required, which can include better water management, climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, robust health and pension systems, and the digital adaptation of the workforce.
- Structural transformations in these countries should be sustainable, equitable, and considerate of planetary boundaries.
- Reforms in the global development finance and governance structures are essential to enable these transformations and better provision of global public goods.
- South-South cooperation is a vital element in addressing these challenges collectively.
- The incorporation of local knowledge and culture, along with fostering public entrepreneurship, is crucial in these transformative efforts.
- Despite the challenges, there is optimism in the Global South about potential growth in a well-regulated, green world economy with fair carbon pricing and trade rules.
- Political polarization, trust deficit, and short-term economic focus are significant barriers to these reforms, highlighting the need for systemic changes and innovative thinking.
- There is a clear need to tackle macroeconomic issues like recession, inflation, commodity crises, and debt before addressing climate change in developmental agendas.
- Investment in research, knowledge generation, and innovative financing models is necessary for driving institutional innovation and reforms.
- The education and training system often results in low-quality human resources, underlining the importance of tailored responses to the specific circumstances of each country.
- Power imbalances in global governance present significant challenges to the Global South, necessitating reforms to empower these countries and amplify their voices.
- In times of uncertainty, flexible and adaptive cooperation frameworks are crucial to respond to emerging challenges and seize new opportunities.

III. Notes

Discussion 1: Governance Mismatches

- Global South faces intertwined challenges: climate change, demographic ageing, international migration, and digital revolution, necessitating the fortification of democracy to assure social rights and conditions conducive to human development.
- Climate change's impacts, including droughts and extreme temperatures, demand innovative water management and mitigation strategies in the Global South, particularly given their limited resources.
- The rapid demographic ageing in Latin America and other parts of the Global South implies a need for comprehensive health and pension systems to support the elderly population.
- The surge in refugees and immigrants in the Global South, prompted by crises like the one in Venezuela, underscores the urgency to provide robust social protection and security schemes for these vulnerable populations.
- The advent of the digital revolution, with its transformative effect on production processes and work relationships, necessitates forward-looking policies to adapt the workforce to these evolving challenges.
- The global development finance architecture requires reform to facilitate sustainable, equitable, and resilient structural transformations in developing countries.
- Structural economic transformation should respect planetary boundaries, incorporating the imperatives of climate change mitigation and biodiversity preservation.
- A deficit of public entrepreneurship spirit in aid agencies or multilateral financial institutions is a stumbling block for structural transformation, which necessitates fostering a conducive environment for public entrepreneurship.
- Multilateral banks are encouraged to collaborate closely with national governments and stakeholders, ensuring local needs and urgencies are not overshadowed by global priorities during structural transformation.
- The Human Development Report and new financial pacts offer a framework to integrate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and financial strategies. This framework can address immediate and long-term financial issues in the Global South, providing solutions that balance immediate needs with sustainable, inclusive growth paths.
- Despite prevailing financial challenges, Southern leaders express optimism about their future, identifying potential competitive advantages in a green, well-regulated world if carbon pricing and fair trade rules are correctly implemented.
- The fall in the Human Development Index suggests inadequacies in current value production, prompting a project to develop tools and models. These aim to redefine care, estimate family care costs, and aid local governments in consolidating care systems, with the latter set to undergo testing this year to foster societal progression.

Discussion 2: Investing in one another.

- Global public goods hold a significant role in tying together diverse development forces across the world. These goods are undergoing transformations, with changes in the landscape of provision and governance structure. However, new challenges are emerging, including increasing financing deficits

and a lack of innovation.

- Governance failures and geopolitical influences have detrimental effects on the provision of global public goods. Modern socio-political issues such as populism, nationalism, protectionism, and globalization create significant obstacles, challenging global consensus and commitment to these public goods.
- Several suggestions have been put forward to address these issues. These include broadening and innovating financing channels for global public goods, reforming the Global Development Cooperation mechanism, innovating incentive mechanisms for private sectors, and developing a new common conceptual framework for global public goods.
- For human development to be sustainable and meaningful, it must be inclusive, empowering, and respectful of local knowledge and culture. This includes dignifying local communities' knowledge and cultural practices.
- Community media has a crucial role in fostering sustainable development by ensuring the free flow of information, which is vital for democratic processes. It can also help in facilitating cross-culture communication and amplifying marginalized voices, thus fostering inclusion and diversity.
- Political polarization, declining political trust, and lack of clear prospects for change are among the significant challenges in Latin America. The suggested response involves prioritizing health, education, economic diversification, and support for local governments. Additionally, strengthening civil society platforms and ensuring state support is vital.
- The discourse on uncertainties and criticalities suggests a need to tackle macroeconomic issues like recession, inflation, commodity crises, and debt before addressing climate change in developmental agendas. This includes issues related to climate financing and a call for collective debt negotiation for southern countries.
- The climate insensitivity of financial institutions towards climate-vulnerable countries has come under criticism. The call to action involves reimagining the global financial system to be more responsive to climate change impacts and to be able to react more quickly to bail out indebted countries or those severely affected by climate change.
- As an oil-dependent country, Azerbaijan is vulnerable to economic shocks. After the pandemic, the country faced multiple health and economic challenges causing the human development index to drop. The long-standing conflict with Armenia poses another significant challenge, consuming a large portion of the government budget.

Summary of the online discussion with the South-South Global Thinkers network

- During the pandemic, policies aimed solely at reducing COVID-19 resulted in increased poverty.
- Political parties, formed based on interests, often fail to represent, protect rights, and empower people.
- Political appointees lacking merit-based civil service experience tend to have a weaker understanding of sector challenges and public sector practices.
- Small economies often lack policy institution capacity, with political parties being a major factor in governance quality.
- Many countries in the Global South prioritize short-term economic gains over long-term sustainability, often lacking the capacity for large-scale changes.

- Addressing political polarization requires systemic change, innovative thinking, and strong cooperation at all levels.
- The international community has not fully regarded the 2030 Agenda as a global development consensus. Global leadership should promote global solidarity rather than global segmentation.
- Field supported actions applying a new approach of social system design can be useful to address issues raised in the discussion.
- To effectively navigate towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, implementation must consider unique regional contexts and challenges.
- Human pressures on the planet often lead to inappropriate actions or unexpected effects.
- South-South cooperation, constrained by numerous factors such as high demographic growth and low levels of digitalization, plays a crucial role in tackling common challenges.
- Development strategies should consider factors like conflict prevention, understanding local conditions, and innovative financing strategies with co-responsibility mechanisms.
- Disinformation about climate change can lead to inaction, highlighting the need for institutional innovation, which includes enhancing inclusivity and promoting transparency.
- The education and training system often results in low-quality human resources, further emphasizing the need for tailored responses to specific circumstances of countries.
- Power imbalances in global governance pose significant challenges to the Global South, requiring reforms to empower and amplify their voices.
- Investment in research and knowledge generation is crucial for institutional innovation, as is exploring innovative financing models.
- Fostering a culture of cooperation requires recognizing the interdependence of nations, which can mobilize collective action.
- South-South cooperation promotes a spirit of solidarity, enabling countries to learn from each other and jointly address complex issues.
- In times of uncertainty, flexible and adaptive cooperation frameworks are crucial to respond to emerging challenges and seize new opportunities.