

STATEMENT BY B. ELIAS SHONIYIN, DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS, REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, AT THE SECOND HIGH-LEVEL
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION
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Mr. President;

Excellencies,

We gather here today to take stock of the gains and challenges of exerting south-south and triangular cooperation, as a viable tool for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, forty years after the historic adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action.

I bring you greetings from His Excellency Dr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, who has expressed his regrets for his inability to participate in this important discourse

Since the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action in 1978 which underpins the evolution of technical cooperation among developing countries, International Cooperation is today witnessing a new trend in international development, from dominated “north-south cooperation to increasingly, “South-South Cooperation”.

This effort was reinforced by the Accra Agenda for Action, preceded by the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, further asserting the critical relevance of the mode of cooperation.

These frameworks have at their core, “ownership”; and have invariably laid the foundation for enhanced cooperation between countries which are inextricably linked, to promote sustainable and inclusive growth. South-South cooperation presents the platforms for the sharing of experiences, and often compliments traditional development partners.

Today, the world bears witness to heightened cooperation among countries that share many similar characteristics. The dynamism of emerging donors, which include a wide range of countries, have quintupled the contribution of emerging donors to the development aid envelop in the last ten years.

Overall, they account for an estimated 11-15 percent of global aid flows from donor countries, and are expected to contribute about 20 percent of total donor funding globally by 2020. Beyond development assistance, South-South cooperation today has hugely affected the private sector, through instruments such as, investment flows, trade, technological transfers, knowledge exchanges, as well as concessional loans, vital for ensuring sustainable development.

From a regional perspective, south-south cooperation can be a major tool for political consolidation, peace and security, and social and economic development; including cross-border investment and trade. South-south cooperation mechanisms have been utilized to boost trade among African countries – with the goal of reducing transaction cost, eliminate trade barriers, and deepen integration, through the African Continental Free Trade Area. This mode of cooperation within a south-south context presents enormous opportunities in solving problems that African states on their own have not been able to resolve; for example, joint border patrol and exchange of surveillance, peace-keeping operations, security cooperation, forest management, etc.

Practical exploration of potential opportunities should be enhanced within the south-south context, such as the establishment of a reliable air-travel link between Latin America and West Africa. Linking the closest geographical proximity between the two continents will deepen economic and social cooperation within the south-south context.

Coming from a country that has experienced a protracted civil conflict which ended sixteen years ago, the successful utilization of south-south mechanisms projects the important contribution of West African and regional governments, which has now established a stable and secure future for Liberia and the West African Sub-region as a whole.

Countries in the region did not only support the United Nations system in triangular cooperation to ensure the cessation of violence in Liberia, but they also played active role in the reconstruction and development of post-conflict Liberia; sharing synergies and providing technical assistance in many areas.

Excellencies, while stressing the imposing potential of the SDGs in conveying meanings of great promise and hope for human betterment, limitation of fully leveraging the opportunities of south-south cooperation would be an unforgivable failing of our time. Targets in the SDGs framework can never be achieved in the absence of clear and implementable modalities that promote enhanced cooperation among developing countries, through the south-south mechanisms.

In a hybrid alignment with south-south and north-south cooperation, the Government of Liberia in last October launched its five-year development framework, the “Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development”, which highlights urgent and intentional interventions to be

taken by relevant stakeholders to addressing poverty and inspiring national transformation and hope.

Within the South-South context, developing countries are encouraged to take bold steps that include recognizing the increasing role emerging and non-traditional donors can play in development cooperation. I therefore encourage global partners in development and member states to boldly seize new opportunities, and to commit to new global partnership that promotes economic and social transformations that accelerate inclusive and shared prosperity.

In conclusion, let me extend profound appreciation to the organizers of this conference for this ingenious initiative that brings together leaders in south-south and triangular cooperation, and have mobilized the international community around this noble objective. Celebrating forty years of cooperation around this theme has engendered hope across the developing world, specially, the poor and marginalized.

Thank you!