

**Capacity-building
Talks**

6th UNFCCC Capacity-building Talk

Building capacities
for climate action
through South-South
cooperation

May, 2023



United Nations Climate Change
Capacity-building

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Background

The Capacity-building Talks are a public event series launched by the UNFCCC secretariat in 2020 to facilitate discussion and provision of information among actors and stakeholders involved in capacity-building to support climate action. The talks offer a space to exchange knowledge and share best practices, including with a view to strengthening the focus and work on capacity-building within the UNFCCC process. The event series aims to reach actors involved or interested in climate action related capacity-building efforts. This includes UNFCCC Parties and observers, members of the PCCB network, capacity-building providers, and other interested actors. The talks cater to both novices and experts in the field of capacity-building.

Previous Capacity-building Talks focused on:

1. Monitoring and evaluation of capacity-building (November 2020);
2. Attuning capacity-building efforts to developing countries' needs and priorities (May 2021);
3. Enhancing access to capacity-building (September 2021);
4. Strengthening the capacities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to engage in climate action and seize new opportunities (April 2022);
5. Enabling youth as agent of climate action and implementation (October 2022).

The 6th Talk

Climate change is a global challenge that affects all countries, but its impacts are felt more severely in developing countries, and by specific social groups. The extent of the efforts and cooperation required to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change are significant. South-South cooperation refers to the framework of collaboration between developing countries in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and technological realms. It is a platform for countries, international organizations, civil society, academics and the private sector to exchange knowledge, skills, resources, and successful practices in a variety of fields. The concept of South-South cooperation has emerged as a significant tool for achieving sustainable development, including addressing climate change challenges.

The 6th Capacity-building Talk offered a space to explore challenges and share good practices of climate action capacity-building provided in the framework of South-South cooperation. South-South cooperation can play an important complementary role to North-South cooperation in enhancing capacities in developing countries to implement effective climate action. This had already been highlighted in a joint report by the United Nations Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the UNFCCC secretariat on “Catalysing the Implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions in the Context of the 2030 Agenda through South-South Cooperation”, as well as through a series of reports by the UNFCCC Technology Executive Committee on South-South and triangular cooperation on climate technologies.

Objectives and expected outcomes

The 6th Capacity-building Talk brought together a wide range of stakeholders involved in capacity-building. In addition to providing space for general reflections and perspectives on capacity-building for South-South cooperation, the session will specifically consider the following aspects:

- 1 Showcasing and discussing good practices from various capacity-building initiatives that unlock South-South cooperation for climate action and focus on retaining developing countries' capacities at the individual, institutional and systemic levels.
- 2 Exploring persistent challenges faced by South-South cooperation initiatives that aim to build climate capacities and ways to overcome them.
- 3 Recommendations and opportunities to build synergies and avoid fragmentation in initiatives, including with regard to better engaging key stakeholders, and facilitating their access to capacity-building support.

Meeting Information

Hosted by the
UNFCCC Secretariat

Date



17 May

Time



14:00-15:30 CET

Venue



Virtual-MS Teams

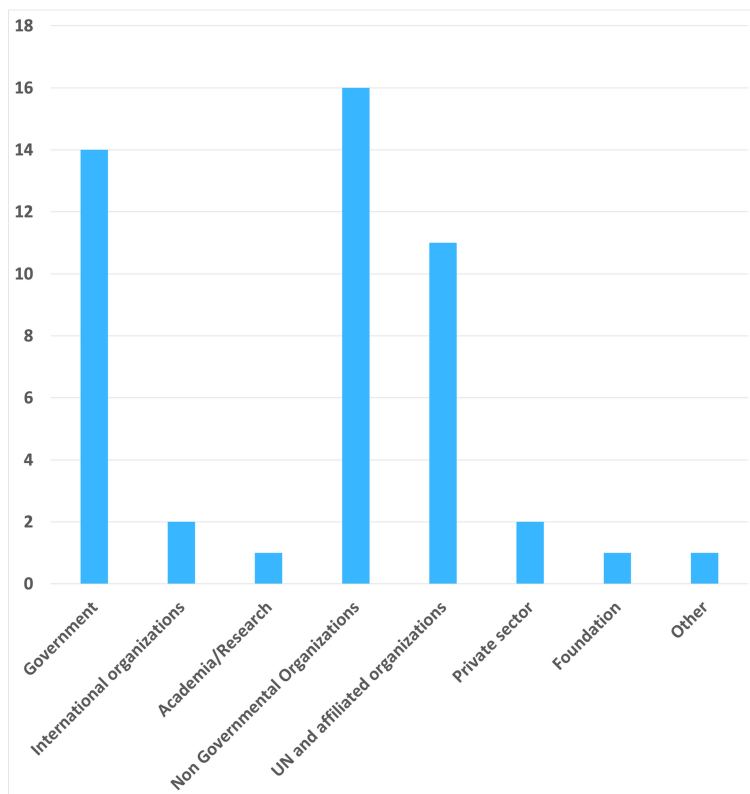
Attended by



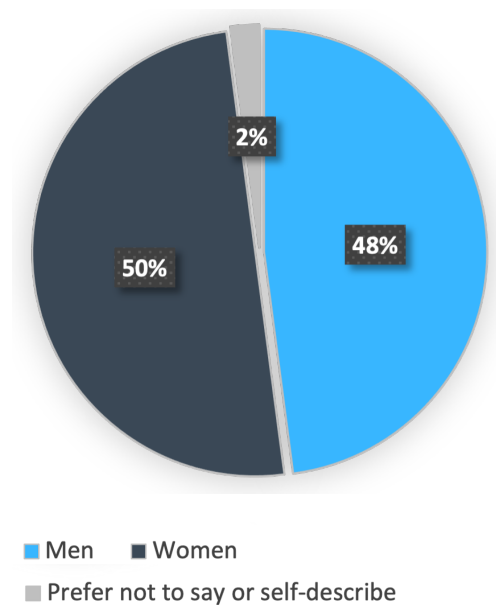
48 participants

Participants' information

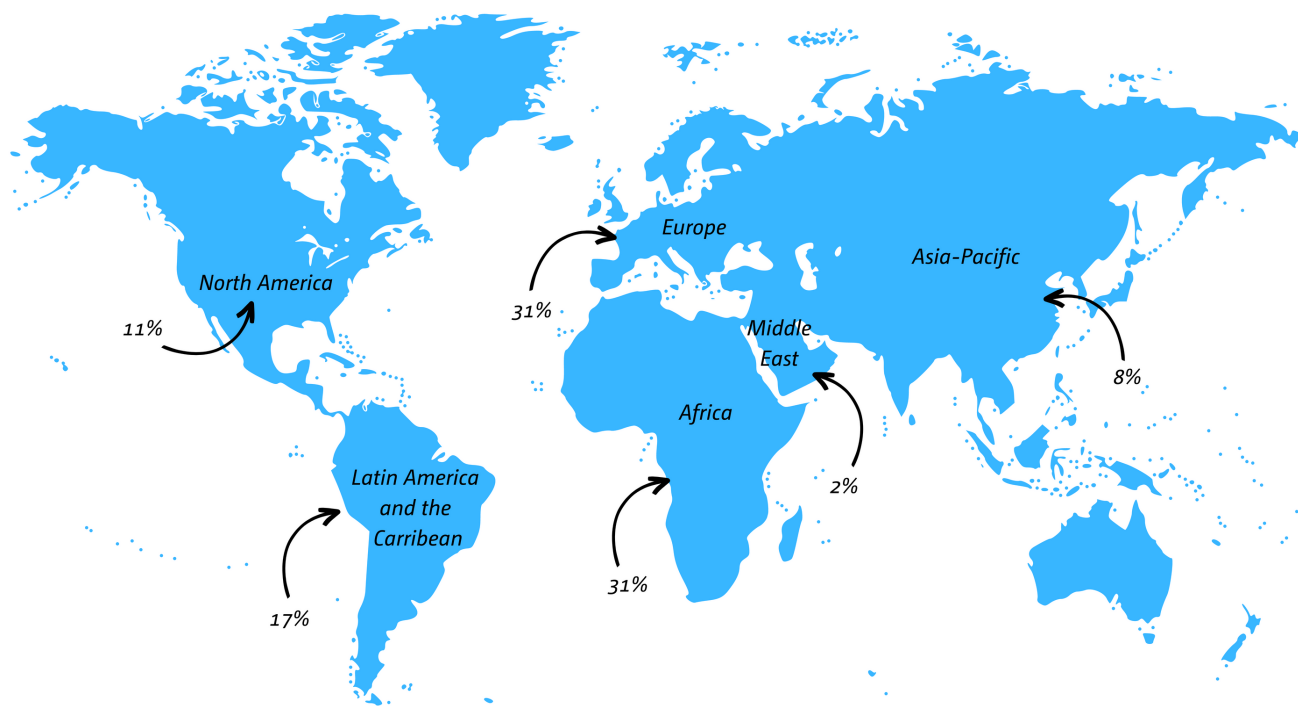
Type of institutions:



Gender Balance:



Located in:



Audience poll

At the beginning of the meeting, during the ice breaker session, participants were given the opportunity to describe in a few words or short sentences what "capacity-building" in the context of South-South cooperation means to them. The word cloud below epitomizes their responses.



Summary of the discussions



Paula Ellinger





Impulsouth /
Fundación Avina

Scene-setting presentation

The 6th Capacity-building Talk opened with a scene-setting presentation during which Paula Ellinger, climate action director at Fundación Avina and coordinator of Impulsouth explained the objectives, approach and lessons learned by the organization over the past two and half years. Impulsouth, which stands for "impulse from the South," is an alliance of organizations working collaboratively to enhance climate action in developing countries by increasing the knowledge and capacities to enhance climate action and strengthening the engagement of young people and mostly women. The initiative, funded by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) from Canada, is being implemented in six countries across Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The presentation highlighted the importance of South-South collaboration and its role in increasing knowledge and capacities for climate action. One of the key aspects emphasized was the involvement of new agents for action, particularly young individuals, with a focus on empowering women. Through research, training, and promotion of cooperation, Impulsouth seeks to facilitate climate action and capacity-building in these regions.

Paula outlined four key areas Impulsouth focuses on:

-  First, the initiative is assessing capacity needs and gaps by collaborating with research institutions in the six countries in which it operates (Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Madagascar, Niger, Uganda and Zambia). This involves examining the impacts, vulnerabilities, and risks of climate change in each country and developing a common methodology for assessment.
-  Second, Impulsouth provides training for young professionals, focusing on climate governance and incorporating case studies from the participating countries.
-  The third area of focus is the Solution Lab, an extension of the virtual training program. It serves as a platform for participants to develop solutions for climate action, with selected ideas receiving seed funding, mentorship, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities.
-  Lastly, Impulsouth engages in global governance by collaborating with partners to address fundamental issues related to climate action through events, workshops, and submissions to the UNFCCC process.

Furthermore, several lessons learned from Impulsouth's experience were shared. Paula highlighted the value of the South-South cooperation approach, which brings together fragmented perspectives and strengthens positions on specific topics. She also stressed out that despite limited resources, a program that fosters cooperation generates interest and inspires stakeholders and partners, as it provides a space to exchange ideas on how other countries and other sectors are dealing with similar challenges. Additionally, the presentation emphasized the emergence of networks and solutions that would not have been possible without cross-country exchanges and learning. The importance of trust-building and transparency in identifying key partners genuinely willing to cooperate was also mentioned. Practical challenges such as language barriers, time zone differences, and internet accessibility were acknowledged as potential barriers to cooperation that need to be addressed. Overall, Impulsouth's presentation emphasized the significance of the organization work in building capacities for climate action through South-South cooperation, especially by facilitating knowledge sharing among countries from the global South.

Panel Discussion

Panel moderator



Moritz Weigel
UNFCCC

Panelists



Muriel Obon
United Nations Office
for South-South
Cooperation



Paulina Zambrano
Grupo Faro

The discussion centered around the understanding of South-South cooperation and its distinctions from North-South cooperation in the context of climate action. The participants explored the good practices of South-South cooperation that contribute to capacity-building and retention for effective climate action. Three common characteristics emerged from these good practices: strategic objectives with clear beginnings and ends, a holistic and integrated approach, and transparency within and between organizations involved in South-South cooperation. The attendees also shared their experiences and identified several challenges faced by South-South cooperation in building capacities for climate action, including balancing economic growth with environmental protection, the resource constraints for implementing projects especially the access to finance, the coordination among different stakeholders, the level of political stability and the monitoring and assessment of project effectiveness.

South-South cooperation versus North-South cooperation: different and complementary approaches

The panelists defined South-South cooperation as characterized by partners, such as academia and experts, engaging in international cooperation to enable knowledge exchange and collaboration. It emphasizes the importance of capacity-building to effectively create cooperation and advance the South-South cooperation agenda. It creates a horizontal and creative platform that recognizes mutual benefits and supports the international efforts of countries and stakeholders.

South-South cooperation is seen as complementary to North-South cooperation and South-North cooperation. It brings new and tangible climate ambitions and solutions, offering a transfer of knowledge and technology among countries with similar backgrounds. This sharing of knowledge occurs in a friendly context, fostering learning opportunities that can inform the development of long-term strategies such as Nationally Determined Contributions and other documents.

While South-South cooperation focuses on knowledge sharing, there are instances where implementation may require financial aid. This is where North-South cooperation becomes important, as it can provide financing opportunities that come from the North. There are differences between countries in the North and South, such as financing availability, and North-South cooperation brings value in addressing these disparities.

There is room to explore further collaboration within the context of triangular cooperation in areas such as technology needs and human resource training. However, it is crucial to ensure that the perspective and ownership remain in the global South. In this regard, one challenge to consider is the potential loss of knowledge when consultancies bring expertise to countries in the global South, but that knowledge does not necessarily remain within those countries. Retaining knowledge and building local capacity are essential for sustained climate action.

Ultimately, to complement and learn from each other, South-South and North-South approaches can benefit from sharing experiences, best practices, and lessons learned. North-South cooperation can provide financial resources and technical expertise, while South-South cooperation offers contextual knowledge and solutions that are more relevant to the specific challenges and conditions faced by developing countries.

In summary, South-South cooperation and North-South cooperation have distinct characteristics and contributions to building and retaining capacities for effective climate action. By leveraging the strengths of both approaches, countries can benefit from a diverse range of expertise, resources, and perspectives to address climate challenges more comprehensively and sustainably.

Good practices of South-South cooperation for climate action

One effective practice is for organizations working on South-South cooperation to become centers of knowledge, for instance, by producing flagship reports that compile good practices from various regions according to the Sustainable Development Goals. These reports serve as valuable publications for partners, showcasing how the SDGs interconnect and enable capacity-building in different sectors within South-South cooperation. They highlight the potential for triggering development at a broader scale.

Collaboration with UN agencies, such as UNFCCC and UN Habitat, as well as academic institutions, in developing knowledge products is another beneficial practice. This collaboration ensures the integration of expertise and resources, enhancing the quality and impact of capacity-building initiatives. Cooperation on climate technologies, particularly those related to the water sector, is also valuable for building and retaining capacity for climate action. Sharing technological advancements and best practices enables countries to adopt and implement effective solutions more efficiently.

The mandate of coordinating South-South cooperation can rely on the knowledge and expertise of UN agencies. Leveraging their experience in emergency responses, health responses, bio-based solutions, urban planning and management, sustainable transport, renewable energy, and other areas contributes to the success of South-South cooperation initiatives. The management of trust funds specifically dedicated to South-South cooperation that contribute to climate action is a positive practice. These funds can support projects such as rehabilitating hospitals to enhance resilience to climate change or developing hydraulic systems for better access to water in rural communities.

Engaging citizens of the global south through capacity-building projects is another effective approach to strengthen knowledge sharing. Capturing captivating reports focused on urban planning, waste and water management, and other relevant areas facilitates knowledge sharing and learning. Existing platforms like the "South-South galaxy", which create profiles of institutions in a virtual galaxy, digitally connecting organizations and individuals, further enhance knowledge exchange.

Furthermore, acknowledging that South-South cooperation is not limited to official cooperation between governments is important. Leveraging non-official cooperation between ministries, NGOs, and civil society organizations to develop frameworks and establish specific targets applicable within legal frameworks strengthens capacity-building efforts. The support and transparency of national governments are crucial for achieving larger impacts on projects. When projects are backed by the national government and transparency is ensured, they are more likely to succeed and create significant outcomes.

Although new initiatives reported in the South-South cooperation database may not be directly related to climate change but instead focus on social development, they can still contribute positively to capacity-building efforts. Governments should assess and consider the potential benefits of these initiatives over time. Lastly, addressing the issue of people leaving their positions after receiving training and capacity-building is essential. This retention challenge should be addressed to prevent a gap in expertise and knowledge transfer, ensuring that investments in capacity-building have a lasting impact.

Common characteristics of good practices

Looking at the common characteristics of good practices enables identifying recurrent structuring patterns for good practices.

A first common characteristic is attached to the strategic and well-defined objectives. These practices have a clear and logical beginning and end, allowing for monitoring and evaluation of their impact on South-South cooperation. They are designed with specific goals enabling a focused approach to capacity-building for climate action.

Identified good practices also adopt a holistic and integrated approach. They emphasize the integration of climate change considerations into other offices of national governments. This holistic approach recognizes the interconnected nature of climate action and the need for cooperation across different sectors. It highlights how South-South cooperation can provide support and make a difference by addressing multiple dimensions of climate challenges.

Furthermore, underlined good practices showcase transparency and collaboration as two fundamental elements for climate action. Transparency is emphasized both between and within organizations and institutions involved in South-South cooperation. Open communication and collaboration foster trust and effective partnerships. The practices involve building teams that enable cooperation throughout the project, ensuring co-development of agendas and strategies at a multinational level.

Other notable characteristics mentioned by panelists include flexibility in adapting to emerging needs, understanding and adapting to differences among countries in the global South, and the potential for projects to become broader and more inclusive through a triangular approach that invites all partners to engage. Additionally, the practices emphasize a bottom-up approach that engages local practices and indigenous knowledge and prioritize co-design through horizontal partnerships that build trust and effectiveness. Lastly, immediate benefits and replicability in adaptation technologies are demonstrated, showcasing the practical relevance and potential for wider application of the practices.

Challenges for South-South cooperation on capacity-building for climate action

Based on their experience, panelists highlighted several main challenges that South-South cooperation on capacity-building for climate action is facing.

One major challenge is the need to balance economic growth with environmental protection, particularly in relation to the commitments made under the Paris Agreement. This requires significant financing, and the capacity to effectively manage and utilize this finance. Beyond the lack of financial resources, their limited access also restricts the capacities of stakeholders to take action to tackle climate change. Without adequate financial resources, capacity-building efforts are severely hindered. However, at the same time, building capacity is also essential for accessing and effectively utilizing finance. This creates a loop where capacity and finance are interdependent.

Another challenge is the limited capacity of countries to implement climate action projects and programs. Resource constraints, both in terms of financial and human resources, hinder their ability to effectively carry out capacity-building initiatives.

Political instability within environmental offices can create additional challenges for South-South cooperation and limit their scope of action. It is important to have stable and supportive governance structures in place to facilitate effective cooperation.

Lastly, monitoring, assessing, and learning about the effectiveness of processes and projects is crucial. Adapting and making the most of the available resources requires a robust system for evaluating the impact and outcomes of capacity-building initiatives.

Overall, addressing these challenges will be essential for the success of South-South cooperation on capacity-building for climate action, enabling countries to strengthen their resilience and contribute effectively to global efforts to combat climate change.

Open Plenary Discussion

During the open plenary discussion, participants actively engaged with the panelists and asked questions on a number of topics.

Impulsouth future perspectives

Impulsouth is actively considering expanding its reach to more countries and regions in the future. The selection criteria for defining the locations from the first stage involved a methodology that considers countries' capacity-building needs and their expressed interest and political commitment to cooperation. While the initial phase was only targeted at 6 countries and focused on analyzing positions and documents presented by countries to the convention, Impulsouth acknowledges the importance of being more inclusive in the future, and they are open to considering other methodologies and increase the number of countries, subject to further funding. Collaboration with the UNFCCC, and particularly with the PCCB Network is also a vital aspect of Impulsouth's work, that the initiative seeks to continue.

As Impulsouth explores future expansion and continuation of its work, they are open to engaging with close partners and hosting workshops to facilitate discussions. The goal is to further amplify the initiative's impact by bringing its experience to different countries and regions. In this regard, Impulsouth welcomes interested parties to connect and explore collaboration possibilities.

United Nations Office for South-South cooperation (UNOSSC)

The office works closely with Director Generals of cooperation in member states, particularly in Latin America, where the phenomenon of middle-income countries transitioning from being recipients to becoming contributors is notable. Graduating from least developed countries to middle-income status can bring both development opportunities and challenges, including reduced funding from traditional North-South cooperation. UNOSSC recognizes these challenges and aims to bridge the gap through triangular cooperation, emphasizing the importance of mutual benefits and cooperation that makes sense for all partners involved.

Triangular cooperation, in particular, has gained traction in Latin America, with conversations taking place between the region and the European Union. The concept of triangular cooperation involves leveraging the expertise and resources of multiple countries, including those in the global south, to collectively address climate change and other challenges. By promoting knowledge-sharing, experiences, and best practices, UNOSSC aims to empower countries, particularly those at the forefront of climate change impacts, to not only receive cooperation but also contribute as providers of knowledge and solutions.

The panelists highlighted the opportunities for better collaboration between the private sector, NGOs, and UN entities on climate change issues. They mentioned the United Nations' initiatives, such as the Global Compact, which is a platform where companies agree on principles related to environmental sustainability and development. This offers a path for the private sector to directly engage in commitments and enter the developing world. The private sector's involvement is crucial, especially regarding technology and adaptation to climate change. It holds a wealth of knowledge that can help address climate risks and close knowledge gaps. Particularly, triangular cooperation, involving the private sector, NGOs, and UN entities, offers great potential for successful adaptation policies and actions at different levels.

Nevertheless, engaging the private sector can be challenging, considering accountability and due diligence issues. Yet, most UN entities have private sector engagement strategies in place to address these challenges and facilitate collaboration. The South-South Galaxy platform was also mentioned as a global platform for knowledge sharing and matchmaking. It offers opportunities for finding partners and expressing interest in cooperation within specific industries or areas.

Overall, the private sector's collaboration is seen as key to scaling up climate action and capacity-building. The UN system promotes private sector engagement and provides platforms and strategies to facilitate partnerships and collaboration between the private sector, NGOs, and UN entities.

Key take-aways

Towards the end of the meeting, participants communicated their key takeaways. They emphasized the importance of ownership, especially of the cooperation process and opportunities for triangular cooperation through South-South cooperation. Attendees also stressed the fundamental role to be played by all stakeholders and the need for them to coordinate their efforts and for co-developing agendas and methodologies. The table below presents their responses.



What is next?

At the 7th meeting of the Paris Committee on Capacity-building, a UNFCCC constituted body dedicated to the issue of climate-related capacity-building, members agreed upon the thematic days for the 5th Capacity-building Hub which will be hosted by the PCCB at COP 28. One day will be dedicated to South-South Capacity-building and will focus on exploring challenges and share good practices in relation to capacity-building efforts for climate action under the framework of South-South cooperation. The 5th Capacity-building Hub will therefore offer a space to further delve into the discussions held during the 6th Capacity-building Talk on sharing good practices, exploring persistent challenges as well as opportunities to build synergies in initiatives related to building capacities for climate action through South-South cooperation.

The seventh edition of the Capacity-building talks is envisaged to take place in the second half of 2023. Registration for this event will be published in due course on the capacity-building talks main page and registration information will also be shared through the UNFCCC capacity-building mailing list.

Scene-setting presenter



Paula Ellinger
Impulsouth /
Fundación Avina

Paula Ellinger is director for Climate Action and part of the executive team of Fundación Avina. She has over a decade of experience facilitating processes to enhance capacities and collaboration among local organizations, national governments and research institutions from the southern hemisphere. Currently, she coordinates Impulsouth.org, an initiative driving south-south cooperation and building capacities of young professionals from 6 countries. Paula is co-chair of the Expert Peer Review Group of the UN Race to Zero campaign, as well as member of the board of directors of Agora Partnerships and of the technical committee of the Climate Finance Group of Latin American and the Caribbean (GFLAC).

Panelists

Paulina Zambrano is an Economist from the Pontifical University of Ecuador and MSc. Urban Economic Development in the Development Urban Planning of University College London, specialized in urban studies, participatory planning, monetary and financial policies and climate finances. She has worked in economic research and analysis in public institutions such as the Central Bank and the Anti-trust national office. She then worked at the city level in municipal budgeting, urban planning especially regarding local development strategies, participatory planning. In Faro, Paulina has led the research regarding climate change national and international financing, about the national architecture for climate financing and developing tools for reducing the knowledge for the generation of projects for climate change. She has also directed research on Sustainable Development Goals monitoring and mechanisms to foster its compliances and promote transparency. In the last year Paulina has researched and developed recommendations for public policy for risk reduction.



Paulina Zambrano
Grupo Faro



Muriel Obon
United Nations Office
for South-South
Cooperation

Muriel Obon is an international development specialist, with over 17 years of policy advisory, coordination, strategic communications, and advocacy experience in international organizations. Solid development work in various United Nations departments, agencies and programmes at the country level and headquarters (regional and global), in Chile, Mexico, India, and at the United Nations Headquarters, New York. She is an expert in international development issues, particularly those related to the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, environmental sustainability and climate change, sustainable urban development and South-South and Triangular cooperation.

Moderator



Moritz Weigel
UNFCCC

Moritz Weigel leads the Technology Support and Implementation Unit at the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat. He started his career in international development in 2004 by founding a consulting company to promote renewable energy technology transfer from China to Ethiopia. Since 2008 he has been working for UNDP, UNEP, UNFCCC, UNIDO, UNOSSC and the UN Executive Office of the Secretary-General as civil servant or senior consultant on climate change related matters, including on South-South and triangular cooperation. From 2016-2023, he also served as the Managing Director of an independent advisory firm focusing on China-Africa relations and sustainable development in African countries, particularly in the areas of industrialization, infrastructure and energy.

Mr. Weigel has conducted extensive research and carried out projects on South-South and triangular cooperation on climate change in China, Ethiopia, Ghana and Zambia. He was the lead author of UNDP's global study on China's South-South cooperation on climate change and of publications by the UNFCCC Technology Executive Committee on South-South and triangular cooperation on climate change adaptation and mitigation. Moritz Weigel holds a Master's Degree in Economics, Political Science and Modern China Studies from the University of Cologne, Germany and the University of Shandong, China and is a Certified Expert in Nationally Determined Contributions Financing.

Programme

Welcome & Introduction

- Simone Albus, Capacity-building Subdivision, UNFCCC secretariat
- Vincent Lefebvre, Capacity-building Subdivision, UNFCCC secretariat

Scene-setting presentation

- Paula Ellinger, Impulsouth coordinator / Fundaciòn Avina Director for Climate Action

Panel Discussion

Moderated by Moritz Weigel, UNFCCC

- Muriel Obon, Programme and Event Management, United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)
- Paulina Zambrano, Sustainable Development and Cities Specialist, Grupo Faro

Open Plenary Discussion

Moderated by Moritz Weigel, UNFCCC

This moderated open discussion session invited participants to join the discussion, either by requesting the floor or through the chat.

Closing and next steps

- Vincent Lefebvre, Capacity-building Subdivision, UNFCCC secretariat
- Alejandro Kilpatrick, Capacity-building Subdivision, UNFCCC secretariat

Useful links

- [South-South Galaxy: the knowledge-sharing and partnership brokering online platform for South-South and triangular cooperation \(UNOSSC\).](#)
- [South-South Global Thinkers: The Global Coalition of think Tank Networks for South-South Cooperation \(UNOSSC\).](#)
- [Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development Publications Series \(UNOSSC\).](#)
 - [Promotional video](#)
- Publications related to South-South Cooperation on Climate Action
 - [“South-South and Triangular Cooperation on the Bioeconomy” \(UNOSSC-CBGE, 2019\).](#)
 - [“Potential of South-South and triangular cooperation on climate technologies for advancing implementation of NDCs and NAPs” \(UNOSSC-UNFCCC-TEC, 2018\).](#)
 - [South-South and Triangular Cooperation on Climate Technologies – Regional Perspectives” \(UNFCCC-TEC-UNOSSC- IAI, 2018\).](#)
 - [“Catalyzing the Implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions in the Context of the 2030 Agenda through South-South Cooperation” \(UNFCCC-UNOSSC, 2017\).](#)
 - [“Climate Partnerships for a Sustainable Future: An initial overview of South-South Cooperation on climate change in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty” \(UNOSSC-South Centre, 2017\).](#)
 - [Other UNFCCC-TEC-UNOSSC publications on South-South and Triangular Cooperation \(2016-2018\).](#)

**Capacity-building
Talks**

Contact details

UN Campus
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Webpage: [Capacity-building Talks page](#)



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Climate Change

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Useful links

- Publications on City-to-City South-South and Triangular cooperation for Climate Action
 - [Innovative Experiences of Cities on Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action through South-South and Triangular Cooperation \(UNOSSC-UN-Habitat, 2021\)](#)
 - [City-to-City Partnerships and South-South and Triangular Cooperation on Sustainable Urban Development: addressing climate change and fostering sustainable development \(UNOSSC-IAI, 2019\)](#)
 - [Promotional video](#)
- UNOSSC webinars on South-South and Triangular cooperation for Climate Action
 - [Innovative Experiences of Cities on Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action through South-South and Triangular Cooperation \(2021\)](#)
 - [Fostering South-South and Triangular Cooperation on Nature-Based Solutions for a Low-Emission & Climate-Resilient Recovery \(2020\)](#)
 - For more information about the scene-setting presentation and the Impulsouth organization, go to: <https://impulsouth.org/> where all information of this project is uploaded.



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