



UNDP's Strategic Plan for 2022-2025: Moderator's Report on a Discussion with Global Think Tanks

This report is a synthesis of a brainstorming discussion that took place between the Administrator and representatives from Global Think Tanks on UNDP's New Strategic Plan (SP) for 2022-2025. Held on November 25th, 2020, this online consultation was jointly organized by the Executive Office of the Administrator and UNDP Seoul Policy Centre. The discussion sought to build on the efforts to establish a knowledge base by engaging a panel of eight external experts:

- **Mr. Debapriya Bhattacharya**, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) & Southern Voice (Dhaka, Bangladesh)
- **Mr. Sachin Chaturvedi**, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) (New Delhi, India)
- **Mr. Paulo Esteves**, BRICS Policy Centre (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
- **Ms. Anna-Katharina Hornidge**, German Development Institute (DIE) (Bonn, Germany)
- **Mr. Xiaoyun Li**, China International Development Research Network (CIDRN) and Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST) (Beijing, China)
- **Mr. Philani Mthembu**, Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) (Johannesburg, South Africa)
- **Ms. Anthea Mulakala**, Asia Foundation (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
- **Ms. Emel Parlar Dal**, Marmara University (Istanbul, Turkey)

This group was selectively comprised of representatives from a diverse range of global think tanks in order to incorporate a broad range of perspectives. To this end, this discussion sought to provide a platform in which the members of this panel could share their unique experiences, applying them to the UNDP context or to the broader framework of international development cooperation.

The flexible discussion format used the following three guiding questions as an initial structure:

1. What is in your view a new evolving narrative for development cooperation and/or UNDP?
2. What might be important elements of a new UNDP strategy in the future?
3. How might UNDP need to change its operational approach? What might be innovations for UNDP's operations?

The present report will provide a non-exhaustive review of the insightful discussions. In doing so, this report aims to provide "extracted views" on some of the main aspects of the discussion. None of the "extracted messages" can be attributed to any of the panellists individually. Similarly, none of the topics or views mentioned reflects UNDP's official position. Rather, the main purpose of this paper is to benefit from the stimulating discussions that took place in a brainstorming format.

1. The next Strategic Plan will be informed by pre-existing narratives while contributing to future narratives at the same time. The weaving and sharpening of narratives is necessary, fundamental and challenging. In this regard, Netflix (as an example of a platform where various different ‘stories’ could be heard in a somewhat vertical - as opposed to horizontal - manner) is an example of what a successful predominate global narrative could resemble.

Accordingly, as a starting point, UNDP could contribute to global narrative building by integrating various narratives into one consistent storyboard. This is important as the interaction between various mega-trends regarding key issues such as climate, demography, and global power-relations is the framework upon which future crises will unfold. In this regard, UNDP could address its current structure in which multiple horizontal narratives, such as poverty, governance, and climate change, are simultaneously conveyed without sufficient reference to one another. This could be done by establishing the clear hierarchy of narratives needed to sharpen contemporary development discourse.

2. Global development in a post-pandemic era could worsen the risks of pre-COVID global challenges: The repetition of failures. UNDP needs to contribute towards identifying these continued repetition risks. The 2007 / 2008 Global Financial Crisis is an illustration of how this crisis needs to be overcome without exacerbating systemic issues such as inequality which perpetuated and worsened in the aftermath of the crisis.

Although crises often lead to a ‘new normal,’ they also highlight pre-existing dysfunctional areas that should no longer be ignored. In the case of COVID-19, the pandemic has emphasized the need for development to be re-conceptualized in a manner that goes beyond trickle-down linear growth. To be specific, it demands to become more human-centric and mindful of planetary boundaries. For this reason, development should be reframed as a comprehensive concept of achieving global public goods.

Going further, the pandemic has accentuated the underlying inequalities in areas such as gender and racial discrimination that exist at all levels of societies. As these inequalities intersect throughout the entire international system, these risks have a significant cascading effect. In this regard, the SDGs are a global risk map on areas of progress that need to be collectively achieved. However, effective policies are rarely promoted actively in reality. A fundamental gap between a global consensus of what needs to be achieved (Agenda 2030 and its SDGs) contrasts with little agreement on how to achieve those goals.

For this reason, it will be important to make the long-term consequences the fundamental principal when implementing recovery measures. Such a systemic and long-term perspective was not applied during and after the last global financial crisis.

3. Development cooperation approaches are increasingly part of an overall politicised global context. This applies to both Official Development Assistance (ODA) approaches of OECD countries and South-South Cooperation. Furthermore, development cooperation is entering a landscape where resources are less assured. Thus, there is a strong need of a new and adjusted set of norms and standards for all areas of transnational cooperation – including development cooperation – in support of the Agenda 2030 and Global Public Goods.

COVID-19 seems to accelerate many trends and processes. Development cooperation is increasingly multi-directional, its relevance is often shrinking and the willingness to provide concessional resources could go down. Against this dynamic background, the rationale of development cooperation is today already different from the past and it will further see a rather hostile environment compared to previous times. Considering previous aid and development effectiveness debates over the last two decades it is not clear yet if we are going to experience a new emerging consensus of a main platform (such as OECD donors) or rather a number of approaches based on specific sets of interests.

4. Innovations in development cooperation try to turn away from an entitlement-based philosophy; instead have entrepreneurship-based approaches which make them more fit for the current dynamic context. In this regard many development cooperation institutions are still not dynamic enough.

COVID-19 has contributed to creating a development cooperation landscape that is increasingly using hands-on multi-stakeholder engagements. For example, small IT start-up or local communities might have highly relevant solutions for the pandemic or climate change related challenges. That is, engagements at the state level often involve sub-national forms of cooperation, as well as the contributions of emerging donors from southern contexts. At the same time, engagements increasingly include local communities, youth groups, grassroots activists, think-tanks, and academic institutions. The ability to connect or to “orchestrate” complex stakeholder settings is an advantage and already a lesson learnt from successful COVID-19 crisis management.

Knowledge exchange is becoming even more important. For instance, OECD countries in Europe and North America are in need of quickly referring to innovations and successful approaches from East Asia when searching for appropriate COVID-19 responses. As such, it is crucial to support ecosystems where the role of both, state and non-state actors, are more closely interlinked in the conceptualization and implementation of development programmes.

In particular, private corporations have a high potential for development and development cooperation, pushing it to be more data-driven and result-based. Thus, we should expect a clear advantage in development cooperation when actors move away from entitlement-based towards entrepreneurship-based approaches.

5. UNDP does not fully use its convening power potential. Actors in all countries (developing and developed) need to refocus on long-term dimensions of development. UNDP needs to engage with governments but with all other public and non-public actors as well. In this regard UNDP should increase its visibility as a whole-of-society actor in countries and avoid any kind of systemic pro-government biases.

Whole-of-society approaches for development actors might often lead to controversies and failures. UNDP's practice of avoiding failures may limit the extent to which it can play this role. Indeed, this risk-adverse approach sometimes hinders the formulation of innovative partnerships. Upon addressing such challenges, UNDP's convening power could be used to implement a 'whole-of-society' approach towards various development issues, especially politically sensitive topics such as human rights and collaboration with independent academic partners.

6. The socio-economic consequences of the pandemic have opened a window-of-opportunity for social protection topics – including universal basic income. Such a momentum is a first-time in history chance which needs to have a strong analytical foundation and lobby. UNDP is predestined for such a role.

Against this backdrop, UNDP could lay out the pathway to realize this new agenda by incorporating social protection as a much stronger theme in its work. This can be affirmed as issues such as minimum income which have gathered great momentum, even in developed countries. Such initiatives can be viewed to be a fundamental investment on social cohesion, which is important as countries with higher social cohesion seem to be more likely to succeed in crisis management.

January 29th, 2021

Stephan Klingebiel (with Yasemin Derebasi and Minhyuk Hong)

List of participants (in alphabetical order)

Mr. Sachin Chaturvedi, [Research and Information System for Developing Countries \(RIS\)](#) (New Delhi, India)



Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi is currently Director General at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a New Delhi-based Think-Tank.

He works on issues related to development economics, involving development finance, SDGs and South-South Cooperation, apart from trade, investment and innovation linkages with special focus on WTO. He is also Member, Board of Governors, Reserve Bank of India. He has been invited to be Senior International Associate with the Rising Powers in International Development programme, based at IDS.

Dr. Chaturvedi has served as a Visiting Professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and has also worked as consultant to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, World Bank, UN-ESCAP, UNESCO, OECD, the Commonwealth Secretariat, IUCN, and to the Government of India's Department of Biotechnology and the Ministry of Environment and Forests, among other organizations.

Mr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, [Centre for Policy Dialogue \(CPD\)](#) & Southern Voice (Dhaka, Bangladesh)



Dr Debapriya (Deb) Bhattacharya, a macroeconomist and public policy analyst, is a Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka, where he was its first Executive Director.

Dr. Bhattacharya did his Masters and PhD in Economics from the Plekhanov Institute of National Economy, Moscow. Later did his post-doctoral research at Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford. He was a Senior Fulbright Fellow at the Center for Global Development (CGD), Washington DC. Currently, he is a member of the United Nations' Committee for Development Policy (CDP). Earlier, he was a Senior Research Fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

Dr. Bhattacharya had been a former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to WTO and UN Offices in Geneva and Vienna, President of UNCTAD Governing Board, Special Advisor on LDCs to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Coordinator of LDC Group of countries in the UN System in Geneva.

Mr. Paulo Esteves, [BRICS Policy Centre](#) (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)



Paulo Esteves is Director of the BRICS Policy Center, Socio-Environmental Platform Coordinator, LACID Coordinator, and GSUM Researcher.

He holds a degree in History from the Federal University of Minas Gerais, a master's degree and a PhD in Political Science from IUPERJ. In 2008 he held post PhD studies at the University of Copenhagen. He is a professor at the Institute of International Relations of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro. In 2010 he published the book "The Convergence between Humanitarian Practices and International Security".

He has experience as a consultant for the United Nations Development Programs, from the Government of the State of Minas Gerais. He is a founding member of the Brazilian Association of International Relations of which he was director between 2005 and 2009. He is an elected member of the executive committee "International Political Sociology," section of the International Studies Association. Currently, he conducts research on the

convergence of the fields of International Security, Humanitarianism and Development and on the participation of Brazil, medium powers, and peripheral countries in the new international security architecture.

Ms. Anna-Katharina Hornidge, [German Development Institute \(DIE\)](#) (Bonn, Germany)



Prof. Anna-Katharina Hornidge is Director of the German Development Institute and professor for Global Sustainable Development at the University of Bonn. Before joining DIE in March 2020, she held the chair position for "Social Sciences in the Marine Tropics" at the University of Bremen (UB) and head of department "Social Sciences" and the research group "Development and Knowledge Sociology" at the Leibniz Center for Tropical Marine Ecology (ZMT). In addition, she acts as an expert advisor in several advisory boards at national, EU and UN level. Prof. Hornidge studied Southeast Asian Studies at the universities of Bonn and Singapore (NUS) and received a PhD in Sociology at the universities of Berlin (TU Berlin) and Singapore (NUS).

Prof. Hornidge's research mainly focuses on the social construction of knowledges, science, and technology studies. She is also working on natural resources governance and sustainability future studies. Her regional focus is on Southeast and Central Asia and Eastern Africa.

Mr. Stephan Klingebiel, [UNDP Seoul Policy Centre \(USPC\)](#) (Seoul, Republic of Korea) (Moderator)



Dr. Stephan Klingebiel is Director of UNDP's Global Policy Centre in Seoul, Republic of Korea. Before joining the Centre, he served as the Chair of the Research Programme "International and Transnational Cooperation" of the German Development Institute (Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik / DIE). He was Founding Director (2007 – 2011) of KfW Development Bank office in Kigali, Rwanda dealing with development cooperation topics. Before he joined DIE in 1993, he was researcher at the University of Duisburg (Institute for Development and Peace).

His research and university teaching focuses on innovations for transnational cooperation, political economy of aid, aid & development effectiveness, global public goods, rising powers, and governance issues in sub-Saharan Africa. As a guest researcher he developed close links with the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law (CDDRL) at Stanford University and the College of Humanities and Development Studies at the China Agricultural University (CAU) in Beijing. Stephan Klingebiel is Senior Lecturer at the University of Marburg and he was a regular Visiting Professor at Stanford University (2011-2019; BOSP, Cape Town).

Mr. Xiaoyun Li, China International Development Research Network (CIDRN) and [Network of Southern Think Tanks \(NeST\)](#) (Beijing, China)



Li Xiaoyun is Chief Senior Advisor at the International Poverty Reduction Centre in China, and Director of OECD/China-DAC Study Group. Furthermore, Mr. Xiaoyun is Chair of NeST as well as Chair of China International Development Research network. He is a distinguished Professor and Founding Dean of College of Humanities and Development Studies, and Dean of School of Public and Policy Studies, Director of Research Centre for International Development at China Agricultural University.

Mr. Xiaoyun's work covers development intervention, gender and development, poverty reduction, climate change, international development aid, China's foreign aid, China and Africa, Africa's agricultural development.

Mr. Philani Mthembu, [Institute for Global Dialogue \(IGD\)](#) (Johannesburg, South Africa)



Philani Mthembu is the Executive Director at Institute for Global Dialogue. Prior to joining the Institute for Global Dialogue associated with Unisa, Philani Mthembu pursued a joint doctoral programme (Dr. rer. pol.) with the Graduate School of Global Politics, Freie Universität Berlin (Germany), and the School of International Studies at Renmin University, Beijing (China); he conducted his field research at the latter. The focus of his dissertation was on the rise of emerging powers as sources of development cooperation in Africa.

During his time abroad, he co-founded the Berlin Forum on Global Politics (BFoGP), a non-profit organisation dedicated to the promotion of academic, expert, and public understanding of global politics. He is an alumnus of the Managing Global Governance Programme established by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, designed for young professionals from emerging economies. As an expert, he has actively participated in various international conferences, symposia, and workshops related to global politics. He received his MA in International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Ms. Anthea Mulakala, [Asia Foundation](#) (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)



Anthea Mulakala is the Senior Director for International Development Cooperation at The Asia Foundation. In this capacity she leads the Foundation's work on Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation. She served as country representative in Malaysia from 2007 to 2014. Since 2010 she has concurrently led the Foundation's engagement on development effectiveness and aid policy. She has been overseeing programs in Asia since 1991.

Prior to joining the Foundation, she worked for the World Bank in support of Indonesian decentralization, for South Asia Partnership, strengthening NGO capacity in Sri Lanka, and advising on gender-based issues to their offices across South Asia, and for the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) as team leader of a large Government of Bangladesh and multi-donor health project consortium, and subsequently as DFID's Reconciliation and Development advisor in Sri Lanka.

Ms. Emel Parlar Dal, [Marmara University](#) (Istanbul, Turkey)



Emel Parlar Dal is professor at Marmara University's Department of International Relations. She received her PhD degree on International Relations from Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle University. She conducted research at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva during the 2010-2011 academic year thanks to Swiss Government scholarship.

In 2013 she was an academic visitor at St. Anthony's College Middle East Centre, Oxford University. During 2015-2016 she worked as the coordinator of a TUBITAK-SOBAG research project on the contribution of Turkey and the BRICS to global governance. Her most recent works are Middle Powers in Global Governance: The Rise of Turkey.

Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator of [UNDP](#), (Brazil, Germany)



Achim Steiner is a global leader in sustainable development and international cooperation. He lived and worked in many countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas championing economic development, sustainability and equity, and has been a vocal advocate for the SDGs. Steiner was elected by the UN General Assembly in 2017 to head UN Development Programme (UNDP).

Prior to UNDP he was the Director of the Oxford Martin School and previously led the UN Environment Programme. He was also Director General of International Union for the Conservation of Nature; and the Secretary General of the World Commission on Dams. His awards include the Adam Smith Prize for Environmental Economic Policy and the Tällberg Foundation Leadership Award for Principles Pragmatism.