SOUTH-
NORTH
COMMISSION
ON DEVELOPMENT

Co-Chairs' Summary

Inaugural Meeting of the South-North Commission on Development

Bangkok, 16 and 17 October 2026

Shared prosperity in a changing world. We commend the Brandt Commission for placing shared prosperity and interdependence between the Global South and the Global North firmly on the international agenda nearly five decades ago. Its legacy inspires the new South-North Commission on Development. The world has profoundly changed since the Brandt Commission's report, but its central insight remains valid: prosperity for all is the foundation of peace and international cooperation. Today, more than four in five people live in the Global South, and their economies generate an ever-growing share of global economic output. Yet the lack of decent jobs for young people, high debt burdens, climate change and inequality remain central challenges for prosperity and stability in the Global South and the Global North. Meanwhile, artificial intelligence brings new development opportunities as well as the risk of deepening existing divides.

Mission and objectives. We believe the South-North Commission presents a unique opportunity to foster new trust and new forms of cooperation between the Global South and the Global North, attuned to the realities of today's multipolar world. We are confident that together we can develop proposals that are both visionary and pragmatic. We seek a renewed and effective multilateralism for addressing global development challenges. We will engage closely with other initiatives contributing to the Post-2030 Agenda and to the wider debate on the future of development, in order to join forces and identify synergies. This will enable us to help shape this agenda and to put forward actionable international recommendations with near-term impact.

Three thematic work streams. The first meeting was marked by a very constructive spirit with the objective of co-creating our joint agenda. With this in mind, we discussed the following three thematic work streams among the Commission's members.

1. A different context for development and the need for renewed multilateralism. Development must respond to a new global reality marked by intensifying geopolitical rivalries, fragmentation, violent conflicts, and growing pressure on the rule of law, on free and fair trade and on the rules-based international order. We acknowledge that social contracts have eroded in many parts of the world, as has trust both within societies and between states, while instability and authoritarianism are on the rise.

Against this background, there is an urgent need to renew development-friendly social contracts, both nationally and internationally. We are convinced that development, stability, accountable institutions and the rule of law remain mutually reinforcing. States that ensure fair opportunities, reliable public services and meaningful participation for their citizens can rebuild trust and strengthen national stability. A more effective multilateralism with the UN at its centre can do the same at the international level.

2. Development finance and job creation for young people. We highlighted the need for growth, fair trade and a broad mix of national and international finance instruments to help countries of the Global South create decent jobs, particularly for young people entering the labour market. We stressed the objective of ensuring that digital technologies and artificial intelligence narrow rather than widen inequalities and enhance capabilities and opportunities for young people. We see the need for an international investment framework that balances investor protection with the right of states to regulate in the public interest, including to curb illicit financial flows and create decent jobs. We are concerned that high debt burdens constrain investment

in health, education and resilience in many countries. We therefore discussed the need for more timely and predictable debt treatments, enhanced domestic resource mobilisation and stronger international tax cooperation. We are committed to promoting gender equality in line with the 2030 Agenda.

3. Energy, resources, climate and resilient value chains. We stressed that just energy transitions must expand access to affordable and clean energy, decarbonise economies and create decent jobs. We underlined the importance of transparent and accountable governance of natural resources, including critical raw materials, so that resource wealth translates into local value creation and broad-based development. Building on this, we discussed to what extent international and national legal frameworks could be strengthened to uphold ILO standards and curb the illicit exploitation of resources. We noted that dependence on strategic choke points currently makes supply chains and trade more vulnerable. More decentralised and diversified value chains in line with WTO rules can therefore open up new opportunities for development. We discussed the need for active industrial policy aimed at ensuring that resource-rich countries process and manufacture locally rather than export raw materials without creating decent jobs locally. As global value chains become more decentralised, local producers must be able to join them on fair terms, with access to finance, technology and markets.

The way forward. The Commission will meet four times by the end of 2028, in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. The second meeting will be held in Nairobi in March 2027. An interim update is envisaged to be presented at the Hamburg Sustainability Conference (HSC) in 2027. Draft recommendations will be presented at the HSC in 2028. The final report and recommendations will be published at the end of 2028.

We mandated the Commission's Secretariat to consolidate the Commission’s thematic agenda in consultation with us, based on our deliberations in Bangkok, in order to prepare the three remaining full Commission meetings.

We plan to engage closely with different stakeholders and will accompany the Commission's work with outreach activities throughout its mandate. In addition, experts will support the Commission by providing evidence-based analysis and helping to ensure the practicality of its recommendations.

As Co-Chairs, we express our sincere appreciation to all members of the Commission for their commitment and valuable contributions. We thank our hosts in Bangkok for their generous hospitality, as well as the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund for the opportunity to convene on the margins of their Annual Meetings. We appreciate the independence and support granted to the Commission by the German Federal Government and emphasise the Commission's international ambition.

This summary is issued under our responsibility as Co-Chairs. It reflects our understanding of the discussions among members of the Commission and Co-Chairs in Bangkok.

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