

Driving Change

Purposes and Principles
for Effective Development
Cooperation



Future of
Development
Cooperation
Coalition

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About the Future of Development Cooperation Coalition

The Future of Development Cooperation Coalition was born from high-level discussions at the June 2025 Financing for Development Conference in Sevilla, Spain. The Coalition is an independent, time-bound initiative co-chaired by Yemi Osinbajo and Arancha González Laya, and brings together Commissioners from across government, finance, business, technology, and civil society.

The Coalition has an ambitious agenda to facilitate a process through which countries at all stages of development—and leaders from across public,

private, and civil society sectors—can co-create a bold vision, principles, and practical recommendations for a reimagined development cooperation system that is more effective, efficient, legitimate, fit for the future, and anchored in mutual trust.

The Coalition is supported by a small secretariat and co-hosted by the [Center for Global Development](#) and the [African Center for Economic Transformation](#).

For more about the Coalition: devcoalition.org

Future of Development Cooperation Coalition: Who We Are

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Driving Change

Purposes and Principles for Effective Development Cooperation

This second report of the Future of Development Cooperation Coalition identifies four main purposes of development cooperation and presents a targeted suite of five principles that, taken together, underpin the enduring logic of a reimagined approach to development cooperation. The Coalition's third, and final, report will offer a series of actionable recommendations.

This report benefited from the insights and thoughtful feedback of a wide range of contributors.

Introduction

Development cooperation has helped change the world. Now it must change with it.

At its best, development cooperation has contributed to people living longer, healthier, and more prosperous lives; supported countries beset by natural and manmade disasters; expanded knowledge and opportunity; and enabled nations to jointly address shared challenges. These achievements matter.

But there is now a strong case for change because development cooperation, never an enterprise without flaws, no longer reflects the world it helped create.

Much of the system that governs international relations, trade, security, and development emerged as the embers of World War II still burned. It was a system designed for a world that was poorer, less connected, less technologically dynamic, and with far fewer centers of power.

That world no longer exists.

Countries once defined primarily as recipients of assistance now finance development at home and share capital, knowledge, technology, and expertise abroad. These countries are important investors, negotiators, and partners in cooperation. The multiplicity of relationships and agreements across trade, investment, technology, debt, and aid that can propel or hinder a country's economic, social, and environmental transformation—the core work of development cooperation—is richer and more complex than ever before. Development cooperation is not a monolithic practice or approach; it is multiple, overlapping models operating at once.

Countries and institutions navigate this complex landscape with greater and lesser degrees of agency to make rules, to price risk, to control finance and technology, to define evidence, and to set priorities. A reimagined approach to development cooperation must confront these imbalances with candor rather than resignation.

Complicating matters, the turbulence of the present moment should not be understated.

Geopolitical tensions are high. Long-held norms, alliances, and institutions have been upended. Countries at every level of development have faced successive, often compounding and, at times, seemingly relentless shocks. Trust has become increasingly scarce within, and across, societies and political systems. The number of conflicts around the world is at its highest since World War II. The effects of current technological, demographic, and climatic changes are likely to be as sweeping as they are unpredictable.

About the Coalition

The goal of the Future of Development Cooperation Coalition is to facilitate a process through which countries at all stages of development—and leaders from the public, private, and civil-society sectors—co-create a shared vision, principles, strategies, operations, and compelling narrative for a reimagined approach to development cooperation that is more effective, efficient, and legitimate.

The purposes and operating principles articulated here are essentially the scaffolding for an interconnected approach that will allow long-term change to be realized.

Fiscal pressures remain acute for many low- and middle-income countries. Far too many countries are struggling with unsustainable debt-servicing burdens, and 2025 saw the largest annual decline in official development assistance in history.



Amid this uncertainty lies a profound opportunity to shape what comes next.

The challenge is neither to blindly defend the status quo nor to discard what has worked. It is to preserve what remains essential while building forms of cooperation that reflect the world countries now inhabit—and the shared future they seek to shape.

Those who believe in development cooperation should make that case unapologetically.

Development cooperation should reflect the ambition and priorities of people, governments, and the private sector—working together—to save lives, make societies more resilient, create jobs, and shape a world more in balance with its natural environment. Effective development cooperation recognizes a simple reality: Progress within countries and progress across them are increasingly intertwined.

In laying out the key purposes of development cooperation and the operating principles that should drive such efforts, this report recognizes that this is

not the first, and likely not the last, attempt to define principles for effective development cooperation. Many principles advanced over previous decades remain valid. The harder question is why they have so often failed to change behavior or have been adhered to only when convenient.

The problem has generally not been a lack of insight. It has been the incentives, institutional interests, weak accountability, unequal levels of influence, limited capability, and political pressures that reinforce established practices even when they are suboptimal.

Making these operating principles reality will require deliberate strategies: assigning responsibility, changing incentives, strengthening accountability, and building coalitions capable of sustaining pressure for implementation. Progress will not depend on every actor moving at once. It can begin with countries, institutions, civil society organizations, and businesses willing to demonstrate that a different approach is both possible and more effective, creating momentum for others to follow.

What Is Development Cooperation and What Are Its Purposes?

At its core, development cooperation is the voluntary interchange between multiple parties across multiple sectors to identify where their interests overlap and to act together for the well-being, prosperity, and security of people, economies, and our shared planet. It enables countries and other actors to find common ground and pursue shared development objectives while also advancing their own priorities, even when there are political, ideological, or economic differences. It is thus about much more than transferring finance, and finance for development is far broader than just aid.

The Coalition's first report—*The Development Balance Sheet: Rethinking Development Cooperation from the Ground Up*—made the case that any discussion of development cooperation must have the ambitions, capacities, and needs of low- and middle-income countries front and center, recognizing that countries at all income levels are the agents of their own sustainable development.

Development cooperation is nested within the broader currents of international cooperation and is deeply impacted by broader geopolitical and security trends. Foreign policy and security priorities have always shaped development cooperation, as has the recognition that broad social and economic progress have inherent value. Effective development cooperation must engage honestly with both motivations.

To align around principles for a reimagined approach, it is essential to have a shared view of the *purposes* of development cooperation. This seemingly simple question is far more complex than it might appear, because the process of social, economic, and environmental progress touches on almost every aspect of human activity. Yet failing to answer why actors engage in development cooperation can lead to

fragmentation, incoherence of vision and approaches, weak accountability, and erosion of trust among all involved.

For development cooperation to command lasting support, its benefits to all parties must be clear. These benefits need not be narrowly transactional nor immediate, but they must be tangible. They may include, for example, shared stability; universal solidarity in times of crisis; greater access to markets, technology, and knowledge; the growth of new markets; and greater resilience to cross-border threats. Effective development cooperation must acknowledge the domestic incentives that shape countries' choices, the competitive systems within which they interact, and the myriad of forces that shape how benefits are distributed.

Development cooperation includes the full range of actors and resources—financial and nonfinancial—that help countries accelerate sustainable development, spanning governments and public institutions, civil society organizations and community leadership, and private-sector investment and innovation. It also encompasses the policies, norms, and behaviors that shape how these actors work together.

The Coalition proposes that development cooperation help achieve the following **four interlocking purposes**. The motivating rationale for engaging in development cooperation may differ across the purposes. There is a moral interest, underpinned by solidarity and compassion, in helping the poorest, most fragile and climate-vulnerable people and countries. There is a strong strategic interest, often reflecting shared interests, in cooperation around economic



transformation, advancing knowledge and innovation, and tackling common problems and opportunities.

The Four Purposes

1. End needless deprivation; protect people in crisis
2. Accelerate economic transformation
3. Advance the common good
4. Amplify knowledge and innovation

Purpose 1: End needless deprivation; protect people in crisis

Extreme poverty is not inevitable. In an age of unprecedented wealth, knowledge, and technological capability, no one should lack adequate food, clean water, sanitation, shelter, basic healthcare, or education. At the same time, people affected by conflict, violence, disaster, and displacement need protection and lifesaving support, particularly where national systems are overwhelmed or absent. Development cooperation must respond urgently to both imperatives, working with people and communities facing the greatest poverty, vulnerability, and exclusion to define needs and solutions, and to direct resources and capabilities as appropriate.

Many low- and middle-income countries have cut poverty dramatically through inclusive growth and effective poverty relief programs. But hundreds of millions of people across the world—across every region—remain vulnerable. The causes vary: conflict and political crises; disasters and climate impacts; misgovernance; and the systematic exclusion of people from the economic, social, and political lives of their own countries.

Peace and security are a cornerstone of development. Yet insecurity, conflict, and war have pushed millions deeper into poverty, exclusion, and displacement. The numbers of refugees and internally displaced people are at record highs, numerous countries and subregions remain trapped in cycles of conflict, and violence against women and girls remains too pervasive. The World Bank estimates that by 2030, 60 percent of the extreme poor will live in countries affected by

fragility, conflict, and violence—a risk only deepened by the effects of climate change.¹

Humanitarian assistance remains a vital focal point of development cooperation. But development cooperation must do more than respond after crisis strikes. It should prioritize conflict prevention and strengthen the state and societal capabilities needed to protect civic space, human rights, and the rule of law; manage tensions peacefully; and prevent, prepare for, and respond to future shocks. And while development cooperation can be a powerful tool in all of those respects, it is not a substitute for durable peace and power-sharing agreements negotiated and maintained at the political level.

Purpose 2: Accelerate economic transformation

Economic transformation—a sustained process through which economies diversify their production and export structures; reallocate resources toward higher-productivity activities; upgrade technological and organizational capabilities; and translate these changes into better jobs, higher incomes, and improved well-being—is the foundation for resilient and inclusive development.

Ideally, development cooperation helps connect country-led plans with the full range of resources, knowledge, partnerships, and global economic structures they require to accelerate and deepen such transformations. Making smart policy choices, investing in people, embracing the rule of law and accountability, harnessing innovation, promoting social cohesion, preserving the natural environment, and staying open to partnership and commerce have all been key elements in countries that have successfully transformed.

Low- and middle-income countries must chart their own path, guided by different assets, liabilities, and political economy realities. Priorities will vary, but almost all countries strive to thrive and prosper, have agency over their prospects, secure inclusive growth, be resilient to shocks, and offer future generations equality of

1 World Bank Group Scorecard, “Better Lives for People in Fragility, Conflict, and Violence: Results Narrative,” accessed September 19, 2026, <https://scorecard.worldbank.org/en/narratives/better-lives-for-people-in-fragility-conflict-and-violence/results-narrative>.

opportunity—including women and girls, who continue to face significant barriers to full economic, social, and political participation.

Countries' transformation depends on cooperation—within countries, across regions and institutions, and between peers. However, countries' efforts to develop are unfolding amid growing global volatility: climate impacts, trade disruptions, fast-moving technological changes, multiple and conflicting orthodoxies about what a successful growth pathway is, and shifting alliances. Greater connectivity has made inequality within and across countries more visible and more frustrating—particularly for youth facing uncertain employment prospects. Countries must balance short-term imperatives with long-term strategic investments, set priorities, and sequence reforms carefully. Because reforms typically front-load costs and back-load benefits, development cooperation has a vital role in helping countries bridge the gap between the two when needed.

Purpose 3: Advance the common good

No country is an island. In today's interconnected world, development cooperation is a powerful tool—both to promote the common good and to tackle challenges that cross borders through collective action at the regional and global levels.

Development cooperation works best when it is viewed not as a short-term transaction but as a way for everyone involved to gain from shared interests and values. It has already delivered the eradication of smallpox, the creation of pandemic and famine early warning systems, and the delivery of relief to those most in need.

Done well, development cooperation creates value for all participants—shared prosperity, stability, innovation, and resilience. It is a practical recognition that mutual interests can align in powerful ways both within and across borders. And even where interests diverge, the gains—stronger economies, healthier populations, more resilient and peaceful societies, safer new technologies—spill over far beyond any national border or single interest group. This is particularly true in conflict prevention, an area that suffers from

chronic underinvestment despite its obvious benefits, which almost always stretch across borders and often entire regions.

Global and regional challenges demand development cooperation. Climate mitigation and adaptation, combating deadly disease outbreaks, coping with conflicts and forced displacement, and governing artificial intelligence safely—none of these can be addressed in isolation.

Purpose 4: Amplify knowledge and innovation

Development cooperation has an often-overlooked role: catalyzing and scaling the creation and sharing of knowledge and innovation that form the backbone of economic transformation, social well-being, and sound climate action. While some view knowledge and innovation as largely a means to achieve the other purposes articulated here, low- and middle-income countries make a persuasive case that this should be seen as a purpose in its own right.

Trade, investment, migration, scientific and industrial partnership, and aid can boost shared expertise and insight and help fuel innovation. Firms that enter export markets innovate more, which improves their domestic products. Migrants bring ideas and knowledge with them and carry innovations home. Major scientific breakthroughs often come from multicountry teams and partnerships. Research and development funded through assistance programs tackles problems the private sector has largely ignored, despite their considerable impact, and collects and shares insights on what works and what does not.

Knowledge and innovation flow in every direction, at all stages of countries' development: Microcredit was invented in Bangladesh, mobile money was scaled and commercialized in Kenya, and both have spread globally. Knowledge and innovation are not only a pathway to scaled outcomes but the backbone of a development cooperation system in which all individuals and countries ultimately have agency for their collective futures.

What Operating Principles Can Help Drive Change?

Some principles of development cooperation are universal. Effective development cooperation requires countries to have a clear domestic vision, political commitment, and the capability to translate policies and plans into results. It also requires all partners to accept responsibility for their choices and for delivering results; use data and evidence to guide decisions and evaluate progress; and recognize that development is an inherently political endeavor, not simply a technocratic one. These principles apply, in different ways, to governments, bilateral and multilateral institutions, providers of finance, businesses, philanthropies, and civil society. Countries have responsibilities, external partners have responsibilities, and some responsibilities must be shared.

Achieving these requirements is harder where countries face the highly corrosive forces of conflict, fragility, poor governance, social division, corruption, unsustainable debt, or environmental crisis—but the requirements are no less important. Their application will of course differ across contexts.

Against this backdrop, the principles address five interconnected questions: whether rules and practice create a fair playing field; who sets development priorities and takes responsibility; whether capital is used effectively; how different risks are understood, reduced, and managed; and whether cooperation applies a systems approach and helps build capabilities that endure. They move from the conditions surrounding cooperation, through leadership and resources, to the ultimate test of whether cooperation leaves behind stronger systems.

The Five Operating Principles

1. Rebalance the playing field
2. Embrace country-led accountability
3. Make capital work better
4. Measure and reduce risk
5. Address systems, not silos

Principle 1: Rebalance the playing field

International rules and markets naturally reflect negotiated choices and deeply vested interests. Where this playing field systematically limits countries' opportunities or agency, development cooperation should work to change the underlying rules—not merely compensate for their effects.

- The legitimacy of the existing rules-based order has been significantly eroded, and there is no agreement about what an improved system might look like. The lack of agreed “rules of the road” poses risks for almost all countries, but none more so than low- and middle-income countries, which are often the least resilient.
- The contested state of global rules and norms only makes it more difficult for all countries to address collective challenges and issues such as peace and security, climate change, health security, and artificial intelligence.
- Although the international financial and economic architecture has evolved significantly over time, rulemaking, institutional governance, capital, and technology remain unevenly distributed. Rebalancing will not occur simply because the case for it is persuasive. Recent experience with trade negotiations, multinational taxation, and sovereign-debt restructuring shows that reform remains challenging. Progress requires sustained pressure, a shared vision, stronger representation of affected countries, and coalitions capable of changing specific rules and incentives.
- Data and evidence can draw out explicitly where the global playing field is tilted against particular countries or groups of countries, recognizing the heterogeneity, for example, of low- and middle-income countries. Priority should be given to identifying the rules with the greatest consequences and the institutions with the authority to change them. Some obvious areas to explore for such a rebalancing of the playing field include trade,



the cost of capital, climate, debt, subsidies, illicit financial flows, and rules and incentives around taxation of multinational corporations.

- Directly addressing imbalances rather than treating their symptoms would make the system of international rules and norms more modern, durable, and likely to meet the needs of both today and tomorrow for countries across the entire development spectrum. This includes making sure standards are transparent and clear, which promotes both competition and innovation.

Principle 2: Embrace country-led accountability

Governments, with engagement from the whole of society, must lead their own development and be accountable to their people for their choices and the results that follow. External partners must support country-defined priorities, account for their own conduct, and resist imposing plans shaped elsewhere.

- All countries have primary responsibility for their development. Strategic clarity about national goals enables countries to weigh difficult trade-offs, sequence reforms, and identify which partnerships genuinely advance their priorities.
- Country leadership and country accountability are two sides of the same coin. Leadership without accountability for delivering impact for people and communities is inconsistent with sustainable, inclusive development. Predatory behavior, corruption, and lack of respect for the rule of law undermine the legitimacy of both public- and private-sector leaders. Working with legitimate and accountable local institutions while strengthening pathways toward more capable and representative governance is particularly important where government is absent, weak, or contested.
- Country leadership requires a whole-of-society approach. National plans gain legitimacy when citizens, local governments, businesses, and young leaders participate meaningfully in decisions—not simply in consultations after priorities have been set. Decisions and resources should generally be located as close as practicable to the people affected, while recognizing that subsidiarity

will operate differently across political and constitutional contexts.

- Country leadership does not require partners to align uncritically with national plans. Countries and partners should be candid about interests, comparative advantages, safeguards, and limits. Both must be willing to reject financing, projects, or conditions that are misaligned with agreed priorities or unlikely to produce lasting value. Too often, outside actors have pursued agendas that are poorly aligned with national plans or avoided the hard work of coordination, leading to development efforts that are fragmented and duplicative.
- Effective partnerships should reduce fragmentation, duplication, and transaction costs while maintaining accountability. Countries need the capability and discipline to coordinate partners, and partners must be accountable for the burdens their financing, procurement, and reporting practices impose. Success should be judged by outcomes against top-line objectives, not by the activities attributed to an individual provider, investor, or project.

Principle 3: Make capital work better

The objective is not simply to mobilize more money, but to use the right capital, on the right terms, for the right purposes. Cost, maturity, currency, structure, risk, and contribution to domestic capability matter as much as volume.

- Development cooperation ideally starts from a country's own balance sheet with end goals that include asset building and liabilities management, the effective deployment of long-term capital, and the ability to fund core government services through domestic financing. In countries with very low incomes, severe debt distress, limited fiscal space, or institutions damaged by conflict, grants and highly concessional finance remain indispensable.
- Unlocking the power of financial capital requires getting macro, social, economic, climate, and political fundamentals right. A strong public sector that makes smart public investments in infrastructure and human capital and upholds a fair, capable, and predictable legal system paves the way for a thriving private sector. Spending wisely is as important as mobilizing



capital, and a lack of strategic and well-informed investment choices will deliver lackluster performance.

- The private sector can offer large pools of capital, as well as expertise, innovation, and discipline. But private finance will not automatically flow to the places or activities with the greatest development value. Public policy and development finance should help build investable markets and pipelines; use instruments such as equity, guarantees, and insurance where appropriate; and make sure that mobilization strengthens rather than bypasses domestic institutions and firms.
- Starting with domestic financial assets and leveraging external assets as a complement strengthens country leadership and accountability. The ability to leverage domestic assets will vary across country contexts, with lack of fiscal space, significant debt burdens, or collapsed economies limiting options in many fragile and conflict-affected low-income countries. Where possible, finding levers to responsibly deploy revenues from taxes as well as institutional pools of capital from sources including commercial banks, pension funds, insurance, public development banks, and sovereign wealth funds is an important first step.
- Regional financial integration can help deepen markets, absorb shocks, facilitate cross-border investment, and reduce dependence on external financing. Focusing on the quality, structure, risk-bearing capacity, and domestic anchoring of capital is as important as, if not more important than, chasing volumes of external capital. External capital should enable rather than displace local capital, creating markets for the long term.
- Debt must be judged by what it finances, its price and structure, and whether repayment leaves governments able to invest in people and productive capacity. Unsustainable debt weakens both development prospects and countries' ability to negotiate balanced partnerships.
- Financial resources are most powerful when they are combined or sequenced deliberately, drawing on sources with different mandates, time horizons, risk appetites, and expectations of return. Reducing the fragmentation in the financial architecture will

facilitate different kinds of capital, working together, to achieve scale. For some countries and activities, grant funding and concessional finance continue to be essential as a foundational layer.

Principle 4: Measure and reduce risk

Different risks require different responses. Development cooperation should help countries identify risks early, prevent or reduce those that can be avoided, manage those that cannot, and build resilience to withstand shocks.

- Development progress is not linear. Climate shocks, conflict, pandemics, financial instability, technological disruption, and geopolitical change can undo decades of hard-fought progress in days. These risks differ in their causes, consequences, and possible solutions: They should not be collapsed into a single model of risk and return.
- A commonality across most risks, however, is that the most vulnerable people, communities, and countries are far more exposed, while having fewer resources to prevent, manage, or mitigate them. Women and girls, the elderly, and children, as well as displaced persons, often face disproportionate exposure. Risk analysis should therefore examine not only the probability of a shock but who is exposed, who has the capacity to respond, and who ultimately bears the cost.
- Resilience should be built into development cooperation from the outset, through stronger institutions, early-warning systems, social protection, climate adaptation, contingency financing, and instruments such as debt-suspension clauses and appropriate insurance. Conflict prevention and social cohesion are also investments in resilience.
- Avoidable risks should be reduced. Unavoidable risks should be shared. And remaining risks should be managed. Governments, international institutions, businesses, civil society, and communities have different capabilities and responsibilities, and they all need to embrace a more deliberate approach to managing risk to avoid repeated cycles of crisis and backlash.
- More accurate risk assessment will also likely help drive more collective action, for example, in the



environmental space. Understanding the true costs and risks of climate change, degradation of shared resources such as oceans, and unlimited production of plastics—to name just a few—would make clear the benefits of collaborative action and help drive a push toward more circular economies.

- Excessive or disproportionate risk aversion, especially in relation to market risk, can be damaging by suppressing innovation, delaying action, and limiting impact.
- Transparent data, realistic risk assessment, independent evaluation, and mutual accountability are essential. Evidence should be openly examined and used to adapt decisions, challenge distorted risk perceptions, and learn from failure.

Principle 5: Address systems, not silos

Development cooperation should be organized around the lasting systems and capabilities countries need—not around short-term projects, funding cycles, or institutional silos. Every intervention should be judged by whether it contributes to country-led transformation and leaves people and institutions better able to solve the next problem.

- Development cooperation must move from transfer to transformation. Finance, technology, knowledge, and training matter when they strengthen institutions, markets, human capability, and public systems over time—not when they create repeated dependence on external expertise. Projects unconnected to national priorities or wider systems may deliver activities, but they rarely produce transformation.
- Systems change requires a clear understanding of local political, historical, economic, and cultural realities: how power is distributed, which incentives shape behavior, how decisions are made, and where accountability lies. Programs should be conflict sensitive, strengthen social cohesion, and avoid reinforcing exclusion or fragility.
- Individual projects and programs should contribute to explicit, long-term system outcomes and be designed with realistic time horizons, pathways

to scale, and plans for institutional and financial sustainability. Success should be measured by what capability remains, what institutions or markets function better, and whether countries can deliver at scale and respond more effectively to future challenges.

- Human capability is the foundation of every durable system, and more capable institutions and systems drive economic transformation. Excluding significant proportions of any population from the mainstream of economic, political, and social life will result in less dynamic economies, higher risks of fragility, and tremendous unrealized opportunity. Broadening land tenure rights; improving educational quality; and helping traditionally marginalized communities, including women, gain access to the financial sector are systemwide approaches that help drive broader social and economic transformation. Land rights, education quality, financial inclusion, and equal access to institutions and markets are not peripheral social concerns—they are central to how systems function.
- Technology should strengthen systems rather than create new dependencies. Adoption should begin with a clear use case and account for infrastructure, skills, governance, data ownership, and long-term maintenance. Artificial intelligence requires international standards and domestic capability if its benefits are to be broadly shared.
- Natural systems are economic systems. Land, water, and biodiversity underpin the global economy and human well-being, and must be valued, governed, and used in ways that preserve their ability to support future generations.
- No single sector can build a durable system alone. Government-to-government, business-to-business, people-to-people, and region-to-region cooperation all matter. Sustained relationships among public institutions, businesses, civil society, communities, scientists, researchers, and individuals connect public authority, private initiative, local knowledge, and social trust—and sustain progress beyond any single intervention.

Toward Cooperation That Works

A wide range of internal and external partnerships—cutting across all sectors and spanning finance, governance, knowledge, technology, and beyond—are essential to the success of all countries. These partnerships must be forged on trust, transparency, respect, and an appreciation for mutual benefit.

Today, strategic rivalry and competition increasingly shape relations between countries. Yet attempts to restrict the flow of ideas and people, ill-advised barriers to trade and investment, and geopolitical jockeying risk weakening growth and development across countries at every income level. Cooperation cannot be taken for granted: Countries enter international relationships with different interests and priorities. But competition and cooperation are not mutually exclusive, and national self-interest need not preclude collective action where interests overlap.

Across the Coalition’s consultations, participants consistently expressed a desire for more rapid progress and sustained cooperation, alongside a renewed push for mutually beneficial solutions and fairer systems. They also pointed to the need for constructive, pragmatic cooperation taking place at the country level—important work that rarely garners headlines.

The Coalition’s next, and final, report, supported by a series of research papers on topics central to development cooperation, will translate these

purposes and operating principles into a series of actionable recommendations. Those recommendations will identify where behavior, incentives, and institutional practice must change—and which actors are best positioned to carry that change forward.

The current moment is a perilous one. But it is also one of profound opportunity—one that calls for genuine optimism and audacity of purpose, tempered by realism about the challenge of the change process ahead. The principles offer neither a universal blueprint nor an assumption that every actor will move together. Instead, they should be seen as providing a practical lens to apply to different forms of cooperation in a plural and contested world.

Alignment among like-minded actors is only the beginning. Implementation will require countries and institutions willing to act, coalitions capable of sustaining pressure, and accountability for whether commitments alter practice. Indeed, the ultimate test is not whether these purposes and operating principles attract agreement. It is whether they change mind-sets and behavior—and whether cooperation leaves countries and people better off.



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