



Development cooperation and multilateralism in times of global crises:

Prospects and challenges for cooperation between Republic of Korea and Germany

Workshop summary: “Development cooperation and multilateralism in times of global crises: prospects and challenges for cooperation between Republic of Korea and Germany”

22 June 2022, Ewha Womans University, International Education Building

Organised by *Ewha Womans University Graduate School of International Studies* and *German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)*.

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Introduction

On Wednesday 22 June, an informal workshop was convened at Ewha Womans University in the context of a joint research project between by Ewha and the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS).¹ The project is supported by the National Research Foundation and its German counterpart the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG) and explores synergies between Korean and German development cooperation and their wider multilateral engagement.

The aim of this workshop is to take stock of the current challenging global environment in which both countries seek to promote global sustainable development. Korea and Germany are key actors in this area both due to their strong commitment to the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda, and as export driven developed economies strongly depend on continued global stability and development.

The workshop brought together around 30 participants, some of whom based in Germany and joining virtually for the second part of the meeting. Most participants represented various academic research institutions, complemented by some participants with a policy and practitioners background.

The remainder of this document presents selected main points shared during the workshop, as summarised by the organisers. In keeping with the informal nature of the workshop, this is not meant to constitute a complete summary but rather a highlighting of key topics that may be discussed during the upcoming engagements in the context of this project.

Selected main points

- Developing countries are disproportionately affected by current global crises that are primarily originating from or driven by advanced economies. This is shown in declining ratings on the Human Development Index.
- The crises are among other things caused by and reflected in rising inequality and conflict. Climate change features among the most irreversible crisis that we face.

¹ Until 24 June 2022, IDOS was known as “Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik / German Development Institute”.

- This context should result in a strong demand and driven for more and better cross-border cooperation, yet paradoxically multilateralism finds itself under stress and existential questions are increasingly being raised.
- In this context, the 2030 Agenda and SDGs are de facto no longer a common framework for international cooperation, which is now increasingly dominated by geostrategic agendas. Moreover, on the input side there may be a stronger need to do “more with less” in international development cooperation. Reporting systems for Official Development Assistance (ODA) and climate finance also finds itself under stress.
- Korea and Germany represent key development policy hubs with a joint potential to contribute to international policy discussions on responding to the aforementioned crises and promoting effective multilateralism. A key challenge is that since the global financial and economic crisis of 2008, the momentum of and demand for peer learning in the area of development policy – generally as well as specifically in the OECD – appears to have waned.
- Both countries’ development policy priorities and funding practices show an important degree of convergence, for instance in the area of cooperation with the private sector. In other aspects, such as support to civil society and the degree of focus on Least Developed Countries, considerable divergence can be detected. Both have recently seen changes in government and are thus still in the process of redefining overall policy priorities, which subsequent workshops in this projects may discuss and consider. It was suggested that triangular cooperation between Germany, Korea and shared priority developing countries was a specific issue that could be explored.
- An important shared challenge is that both countries have recently been faced by the sudden end of cooperation relations and associated reversal of development gains in key priority states, which include Afghanistan, Myanmar and most recently Ukraine. Public support to ODA is adjusting in both countries and appears to be plateauing at a medium level of political relevance.
- A specific opportunity for cooperation between Korea and Germany is in the area of climate finance. In this area, Germany is ahead in relative spending that in part was driven by its big domestic environmental movement. Korea in turn I still in the process of mainstreaming climate issues in its cooperation portfolio, yet compared to other OECD states has developed ample experience in adaptation funding. Both countries also provide strong support to international organizations active in climate adaptation and mitigation, including the Korea-based Green Climate Fund. A specific challenge linked to societal support is that climate finance typically should be reported over longer timeframes than development cooperation, as effects take longer to materialize and become visible.
- While both Germany and Korea are frequently regarded as key examples of economic recovery and growth, both face the challenge of sharing its experiences in a manner that adjusts to today’s realities of ensuring long-term sustainable development. Industrial development today no longer means what it meant in the last century.
- Climate finance moreover faces the challenges of a limited period of available evidence, as well as the reporting-driven issue of maladaptation, as expressed in a rebranding or retrofitting of existing development cooperation support as climate finance. As a consequence, much of what is reported as climate finance may be inadequate in terms of the period it covered and the prospects for long-term adjustment and change.