German South-North Commission seeks strong partnerships for a multipolar world

Reem Alabali Radovan

Olaf Scholz

Laura Chinchilla

The National June 30, 2026

The world is undergoing a profound transformation. Over the last decade, countries of the Global South have generated more than two thirds of economic growth worldwide.

The G20 – a forum of the largest and most influential economies in the world – has been chaired successively by Indonesia, India, Brazil and South Africa. And emerging economies have become driving forces for the global energy transition.

These developments all point to the same reality: we are entering an increasingly multipolar era. An era in which new centres of influence are emerging and power is becoming more dispersed.

At the same time, the challenges we face as a global community are increasingly shared.

No country alone can succeed in fostering prosperity, reducing poverty, safeguarding the natural foundations of life, or strengthening peace and security. There is only one way to address these challenges: through strong international co-operation.

South-North partnerships

It is in this spirit that the German government is launching a new South-North Commission on Development at today's Hamburg Sustainability Conference (HSC). Bringing together voices from the Global South and the Global North, the commission aims to contribute to a more co-operative and inclusive international order.

And this order needs more Global South representatives at the table. Many of the rules and institutions that shape today's economic and political order were designed in a different era – often before many countries of the Global South had even gained independence.

As a result, decision-making power, access to finance and influence over global agendas continue to reflect historical imbalances that no longer correspond to today's realities.

We believe this must change. A stable and co-operative international order can endure only if all countries have a fair opportunity to shape the decisions that affect their future.

This is in the shared interest of the Global South and Global North alike. Without fair and balanced international co-operation, there will be no lasting progress – either in the South or in the North.

Legacy and future

This conviction is at the heart of the new South-North Commission. It builds on the legacy of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues – better known as the North-South or the Brandt Commission – which ran from 1977 to 1980 under the chairmanship of former German chancellor Willy Brandt.

It spelt out a principle that remains strikingly relevant today: “The challenge for the next decades will not be met by an adversary system of winners and losers – North versus South or East versus West – but only by one founded on human solidarity and international co-operation among all.”

The new South-North Commission draws inspiration from this historic legacy, with its focus firmly on the future. It seeks to foster a new dialogue on the defining structural questions of our time: what could a genuinely co-operative and effective international order for the 21st century look like? What framework can succeed the Sustainable Development Goals? And how must our institutions and partnerships evolve to turn these ambitions into reality?

Answering these questions requires an integrated approach that brings together issues too often treated in isolation – from development finance and climate action to trade, conflict prevention and resilience.

Renew multilateralism

The commission is independent and will convene influential voices from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe, with a majority of its members from the Global South.

Up to 20 commissioners from various sectors will work together to develop a set of recommendations, culminating in a report to be presented by the end of 2028.

These proposals will feed into ongoing international reform efforts – from the UN and the multilateral development banks to the international financial architecture – and will help to shape the post-2030 agenda.

We see the profound transformations of our time not only as a source of uncertainty, but also as an opportunity. The new multipolar world offers a unique chance to renew multilateral co-operation – with an effective UN at its core – and build robust, more

equitable partnerships between South and North. Because the future of the international order will not be determined by any single country or region. It will be shaped by our collective ability to build trust, agree on fair rules and develop joint solutions to shared challenges – including the most fundamental of all, which is building and preserving peace. With the South-North Commission, we seek to contribute to that effort – and to a world in which co-operation prevails over division, and partnership over rivalry.

Reem Alabali Radovan is Germany's Federal Minister for Economic Co-operation and Development. Olaf Scholz is a former German Federal Chancellor. Laura Chinchilla, is a former President of Costa Rica.

The latter two are co-chairs of the South-North Commission.