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Op-ed

THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY INITIATIVES: SAFEGUARDING OUR GLOBAL VILLAGE

By Daryl Swanepoel

Until recently the world was fast becoming an interconnected global village. The Cold War was becoming a distant memory. The East-West divide, not so much an ideological constraint, but more of a geographical consideration. But then came Covid-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war. In the blink of an eye, the old divisions were being re-established.

Great strides have been made towards interconnecting the global architecture to focus on the greater coordination of development and security to the benefit of all mankind, as opposed to the benefit of individual nations, often skewed in favour of the developed world. But within the new emerging multipolar world, development and security cooperation needs to adapt. The role of multilateralism in achieving such coordination should not be underestimated. Neither should initiatives such as the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative.

The Global Development Initiative (GDI) was put forward to the United Nations by China's President, Xi Jinping, in September 2021. In addressing the General Assembly, he raised the initiative in his speech titled "Bolstering Confidence and Jointly Overcoming Difficulties to Build a Better World". It is intended to support the seventeen 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN), which envisage a "global development partnership" to promote a "stronger, greener and healthier" world.

Since then, 32 practical measures for cooperation have been identified and more than one hundred countries and international organisations have indicated their support therefore, 68 of which have joined the Group of Friends of the GDI at the UN.

Going forward, the GDI will have six main functions. Firstly, it will remain committed to development as a priority, and focus on the implementation of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda. It will also remain committed to results-orientated actions and a project-led approach in promoting policy dialogue, experience sharing, capacity building, and practical cooperation.

The GDI will encourage extensive participation, with the UN as an important partner for cooperation and with the Group of Friends of the GDI as the main driver. It will increase efforts to pool resources, encourage donor participation in cooperative projects, and better leverage the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund and the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund. The Initiative will strengthen comprehensive GDI cooperation across all 17 SDGs in order to ensure the timely achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Lastly, and perhaps most urgently, it will focus on addressing the pressing key issues of poverty alleviation, food and energy security, as well as overcoming the disruption to industrial and supply chains.

In a nutshell, the GDI provides renewed impetus to the implementation of the UN's 2030 Agenda by revitalising the global development partnership, mobilising international development resources, deepening development cooperation, bridging the North-South gap, and aiming for stronger, greener, and healthier global development.

The Global Security Initiative (GSI) was also proposed by President Xi. It calls on countries to adjust to the changing international environment "in the spirit of solidarity". It proposes that the complex and intertwined security challenges ought to be addressed with a "win-win mindset".

The GSI pinpoints an exhaustive list of priorities towards cooperation, including actively participating in the formulation of a New Agenda for Peace, as well as the other initiatives put forward on the UN's "Our Common Agenda". It will also help to coordinate healthier interactions among major countries in order to build peaceful coexistence, overall stability, and balanced development.

Upholding the consensus that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought" and seeing to the full implementation of the resolution "Promoting International Cooperation on Peaceful Uses in the Context of International Security", which was adopted by the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, will be a weighty priority.

So too will be encouraging the political settlement of international and regional disputes, while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. In addition, the GSI will focus on shoring up the maritime dialogue and practical cooperation to combat maritime differences, and to work together to tackle transnational crimes at sea.

The Global Security Initiative also backs the World Health Organization in its efforts aimed at global public health, and in coordinating and mobilising global resources to jointly respond to global infectious diseases. Safeguarding global food and energy security is also a primary concern.

Lastly, the GSI will see to the effective implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and support the cooperation among countries in addressing climate change.

The GSI proposes a number of platforms and mechanisms to carry out the hefty objectives. These include engaging in wide-ranging discussions within all organs of the UN, leveraging the roles of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS cooperation, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, and other relevant mechanisms, and holding of high-level conferences on global security.

It also undertakes to buttress international peace and security fora, such as the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum, the Middle East Security Forum, the Beijing Xiangshan Forum, and the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang). And, with a view to "improving the governance capacity in the domain of non-traditional security", it suggests the building of more international platforms and mechanisms for exchange and cooperation on tackling security challenges in such areas as counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, biosecurity, and emerging technologies.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, the world has changed. A new multipolar world is emerging, which is counter-productive to what is envisaged within the Global Development and Global Security Initiatives. This negative trajectory must be countered in the interest of economic and human development. The dialogue must be synchronised, structured, and aligned with the UN goals.

If the ideals of these initiatives are to be advanced, it will require a departure from posturing diplomacy to engaged diplomacy. No easy feat within the current constrained global geopolitical setting. That said, the more rational thinkers do see the need for bridging the divide between the world's superpowers for the sake of the global village. These thinkers just need to be given a more pronounced voice!

Daryl Swanepoel is the Chief Executive Officer of the South African-based Inclusive Society Institute. This article is an extract from the Institute's paper titled "Navigating China-Africa Cooperation within a globally constrained geopolitical environment", which was prepared to support its contribution at the recent 12th meeting of the China-Africa Think Thanks Forum held in Jinhua, China.