

Global South Development Achievements and Challenges



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Summary

The rise of the Global South is a defining feature of the profound transformation reshaping the world. In recent years, Global South countries have achieved significant progress in their economic and social development. Compared with the beginning of the 21st century, the total economic output of the Global South has grown by approximately 5.4 times, an annual growth of 5.1%, significantly higher than the global average of 3.5%. Industrial development has accelerated, industrialization has kept advancing, and some competitive industries have been fostered. Trade and investment have substantially expanded. Goods exports and imports as well as outward investment have all increased about fivefold. Many emerging economies have increased their investment in research and development, resulting in continuous enhancement of innovation capabilities. Historic achievements have been made in poverty reduction, with over one billion people in the Global South lifted out of extreme poverty. Significant progress has been made in health. The average life expectancy has risen from around 62 years to approximately 70 years. Access to education has been increasingly expanding. The higher education enrollment rate increased from 13% to 38%.

The overall development advances made by the Global South have enabled it to have become a crucial force driving common development and improving global governance. It has increasingly played a significant role in the cause of human progress. The Global South, a key engine of global economic growth, accounts for 85% of the world's population, around 40% of the global economy, 46% of global goods exports, 57% of global foreign direct investment inflows, 45% of global manufacturing output, and approximately 50% of intermediate goods exports. The Global South is also actively engaged in addressing global challenges. Its involvement in the reform of the global governance system enhances the representation and voice of developing countries. In the meantime, it keeps strengthening platforms for solidarity and cooperation among emerging economies and developing countries, such as BRICS. It pushes forward establishing new multilateral development banks and deepening regional cooperation.

The achievements of the Global South are due to an overall peaceful and stable international environment, ongoing economic globalization, and accelerated and diffusing technological innovation on a global scale, and, within Global South countries, a heightened sense of autonomy and commitment to market-based approaches combined with active government macro-regulation.

It should be recognized, however, that the Global South faces new challenges. External shocks have had negative impacts on Global South countries, including a sluggish global economy, broken multilateral trading rules, intensifying global climate risks, and increasing occurrences of regional conflict and instability. Within Global South countries, some face significant gaps in infrastructure, great difficulties in development financing including limited resources and high costs, and inadequate resources in education and healthcare.

Looking ahead, the Global South should continue to actively integrate into global industrial and supply chains, and strengthen dialogue and cooperation with the Global North, promoting the North and the South working together in the same direction. At the same time, the Global South should seize the opportunities, embrace the fundamental trends, and advance solidarity and cooperation among themselves with the vision of a community with a shared future for humanity. The Global South needs to deepen economic and trade cooperation based on the principles of mutual support and complementarity of advantages, expand trade and investment collaboration prospects, step up technology transfer and knowledge sharing, enhance autonomous development capabilities, and advance new developments in the Global South.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	foreign direct investment
G20	Group of Twenty
GDP	gross domestic product
GSRC	Global South Research Center
IBEF	India Brand Equity Foundation
IEA	International Energy Agency
IHLEG	Independent High-Level Expert Group
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
NDB	New Development Bank
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ODI	outward direct investment
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
R&D	research and development
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (Agreement)
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Trade and Development
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Global South Development Achievements and Challenges

The rise of the Global South is a defining feature of the profound transformation reshaping the world, and the modernization of the Global South will be monumental in world history. Since the beginning of the 21st century, owing to a stable and open international environment as well as their own persistent efforts in pursuing development, the Global South has achieved significant progress in enhancing their economic strength and improving people's well-being. The Global South has emerged as a significant force in the global economic landscape and actively participated in addressing global challenges. However, amidst this new period of turbulence and transformation, the Global South also faces challenges including sluggish world economic growth, disruptions to multilateral trading rules, exacerbating climate risks, recurring regional conflicts and turmoil, infrastructure gaps, and insufficient educational and health resources. Looking ahead, Global South countries should strengthen North-South dialogue and cooperation and deepen South-South cooperation based on mutual support and mutual complementarity of advantages, enhance capacity for autonomous development, and work together for a bright future of a community with a shared future for humanity.

1.

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

1.1

Substantial Progress in Economic and Social Development

The economic aggregate has expanded rapidly. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) data, calculated in current US dollars, the economic aggregate of Global South countries¹ surged from approximately USD

7.2 trillion in 2000 to over USD 45.8 trillion in 2024, representing an increase of about 5.4 times. Calculated in constant US dollars, the annual economic growth rate of the Global South from 2000 to 2024 was 5.1%, higher than the global average of 3.5% (see Figure 1). Projections indicate that the Global South's growth rate in 2025 will be approximately 3.7%, higher than the 1.4% for developed economies (IMF, 2025).

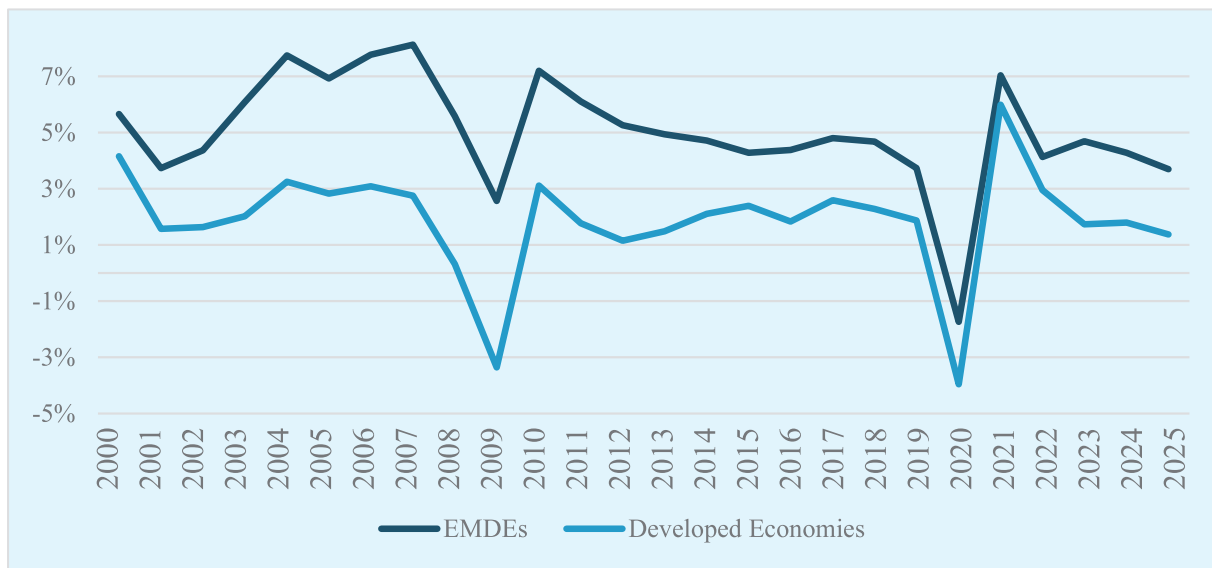


FIGURE 1

Growth Rates of Emerging Market and Developing Economies and Developed Economies (2000-2025)

Source: IMF

¹ The IMF dataset covers emerging market and developing economies. This report defines “the Global South” as the collective of emerging markets and developing economies.

Industrialization has made headway and competitive industries have taken shape.

According to World Bank data, from 2000 to 2023, significant growth occurred across all three sectors in middle- and low-income countries. The output value of the primary industry (in constant US dollars, hereafter the same) increased from approximately USD 1.4 trillion to nearly USD 3.1 trillion, an increase of about 1.2 folds. The output value of the secondary industry grew from about USD 3.4 trillion to approximately USD 11.5 trillion, an increase of roughly 2.4 folds. The output value of tertiary industry rose from around USD 5.1 trillion to about USD 19.6 trillion, an increase of approximately 2.8 folds. Industrial development in emerging markets has made significant strides. China continues to lead technological innovation and industrial deployment in fields such as new energy vehicles, power batteries, and photovoltaics (IEA, 2024), contributing to global green development. Brazil possesses world-leading biofuel technology and is one of the largest biofuel exporters. Over 93% of the country's electricity comes from renewable energy sources (Bioenergy Insight Magazine, 2024). India, leveraging its production research and development capabilities, has become a crucial hub in the global pharmaceutical supply chain, playing a vital role in the high-end generic drugs segment (IBEF, 2023; WTO, 2024b). Global South countries endowed with abundant green critical mineral resources are vigorously developing their processing industries: Indonesia's nickel production reached 1.8 million metric tons in 2023, accounting for approximately half of global output; Chile became the world's second-largest lithium producer in 2023, with an output of about 44,000 metric tons of lithium compounds, representing roughly 30% of global total (U.S. Geological Survey, 2024).

Trade has experienced substantial growth.

According to the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) data, between 2000 and 2024, the total value of merchandise exports and imports of developing economies surged from approximately USD 1.9 trillion and USD 1.8 trillion to about USD 11.1 trillion and USD 10.3 trillion respectively, representing increases of 4.8 folds and 4.7 folds, respectively. The services exports and imports of developing economies increased from approximately USD 0.6 trillion and USD 0.7 trillion in 2005 to approximately USD 2.6 trillion and USD 2.7 trillion in 2024, growing by 3.4 folds and 2.9 folds, respectively.

FDI inflow and outflow has kept growing.

According to UNCTAD, from 2000 to 2023, foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into developing economies grew by nearly three times from around USD 220 billion to over USD 860 billion. Meanwhile, their outward direct investment (ODI) expanded by more than five times from about USD 80 billion to nearly USD 490 billion. The Global South has thus evolved from investment destinations to powerhouses of both FDI attraction and ODI.

Innovation capacity has been continuously strengthened.

In terms of innovation input: According to World Bank data, total research and development (R&D) expenditure as a percentage of GDP in low- and middle-income countries increased from 0.6% in 2000 to 1.9% in 2021. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) data reveals marked growth in China's R&D expenditure as a percentage of the global total, from 4% in 2000 to 26% in 2023 (WIPO, 2024). In terms of innovation output: World Bank data also shows that patent applications originating from low- and middle-income countries grew from approximately 18,000 in 2000 to over 172,000 in 2020, representing an increase of more than eight folds. The global innovation rankings of

several Global South countries have shown significant advancement. According to a WIPO report, between 2013 and 2024, China leapt from 35th to 11th place globally, Turkey advanced from 68th to 37th, India rose from 66th to 39th, and Brazil improved from 64th to 50th (WIPO, 2024).

Poverty reduction has achieved historic success. Since the 1990s, over one billion people globally have been lifted out of extreme poverty, a progress primarily driven by Global South countries. Notably, China lifted nearly 800 million people out of poverty¹, while Vietnam reduced its poverty rate from over 50% to below 5% (World Bank, 2023). Accompanying poverty reduction has been a widespread rise in living standards. Over the past two decades, more than 1.5 billion people in developing economies gained access to electricity for the first time, and billions of people gained access to safe drinking water sources and sanitation facilities (WHO & UNICEF, 2023).

Tremendous progress has been made in health. Data from the World Bank shows that life expectancy at birth in low- and middle-income countries rose from about 62 years in 2000 to around 70 years in 2023. The number of deaths per 1,000 live births decreased from approximately 68 in 2000 to about 33 in 2023. Based on the latest Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Service Coverage Index data from the WHO, which measures access to essential health services, the scores for low-income countries increased by 50% between 2000 and 2021, signifying a marked enhancement in health care access for the Global South population.

Access to education has expanded significantly. Achievements in making basic education

universal are particularly notable. South Asia has achieved near-universal primary education, while Sub-Saharan Africa increased primary education enrollment rate from 60% in 2000 to 80% in recent years. Higher education also developed rapidly. The higher education enrollment rate in low- and middle-income countries nearly tripled from 13% in 2000 to 38% in 2023.

1.2

The Global South as a Vital Force in Promoting Shared Development

The Global South's share in the world economy has significantly increased. IMF data indicates that in current US dollar terms, the Global South's share of the world economy surged from approximately 20% in 2000 to around 40% in 2024. It is estimated that by 2050, three of the world's top four economies will be Global South countries – China, India, and Indonesia – signifying a continuing shift in the world's economic center of gravity southward (Goldman Sachs, 2023).

The Global South is expected to become an important driver for global consumption. The Global South is home to 85% of the world's population. By 2030, the global middle-class population is projected to exceed 5.4 billion, with annual consumption totaling approximately USD 64 trillion. The majority of this growth will originate from the Global South, which will provide sustained momentum for its rising share in the global economy. Nearly 80% of the new middle class in the Global South will come

¹ *Four Decades of Poverty Reduction in China: Drivers, Insights for the World, and the Way Ahead*, a joint study by the Development Research Center of the State Council and the World Bank, indicates that by the World Bank's International Poverty Line of USD 1.9 per person per day, over the past 40 years, China reduced its impoverished population by 800 million, more than 75% of the global total over the period.

from Asia, and 57% of the consumption will be generated in the Asia-Pacific region (Brookings Institution, 2023).

The share of Global South in global trade has risen significantly. According to UNCTAD, the share of developing economies in global merchandise exports increased from approximately 30% in 2000 to about 46% in 2024, while their share of global merchandise imports rose from around 27% to about 42% over the same period. The share of developing economies’ service exports in the global total rose from approximately 21% in 2005 to nearly 30% in 2024, and that of services imports from around 27% in 2005 to about 32% in 2024. At present, South-South goods exports already account for 25.5% of the global total.

The Global South has taken up a larger share in cross-border investment. The share

of developing economies in global FDI inflows rose from around 16% in 2000 to approximately 57% in 2024; their share of global outward FDI increased from about 7% to roughly 31% during this period (see Figure 2). As the attractiveness of Global South markets to foreign capital continues to grow and the impetus for outward investment from the Global South strengthens, its position as both a major capital destination and source is projected to further rise.

The role of Global South in global industrial and supply chains has become increasingly pivotal. Taking manufacturing output value as an example, data from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) shows that the share of developing economies in global manufacturing gross output value has surged from approximately 20% in 2000 to nearly 45% in 2024. Their share in global exports of intermediate goods also increased

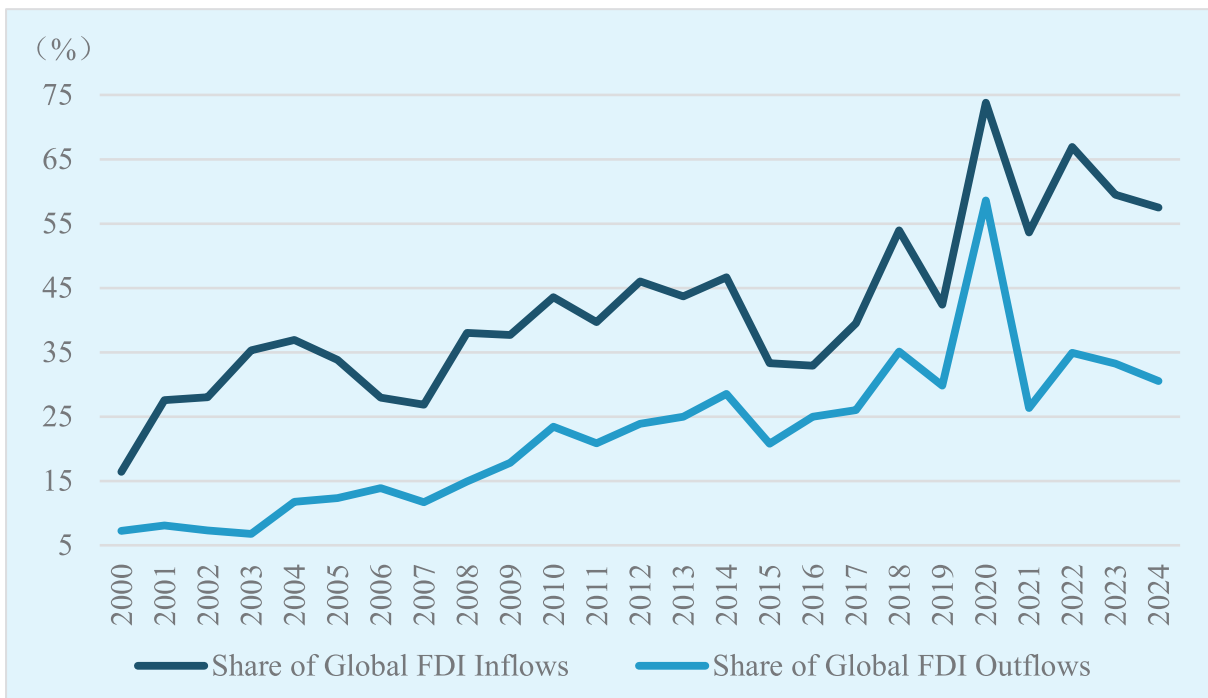


FIGURE 2

Share of Developing Economies in Global FDI Inflows and ODI Outflows (2000-2024)

Source: UNCTAD

from about 26% in 2002 to around 50% in 2022 (UNCTAD, 2023), while their share in exports of medium- and high-technology manufactured goods has steadily grown (WTO, 2024a). Several Global South countries, particularly emerging markets, are transitioning from low value-added industries towards higher value-added sectors such as green energy, information technology, and biotechnology. By 2022, the BRICS countries accounted for nearly or over 40% of global output value in medium- and high-technology industries like electrical equipment, chemicals, computers, and machinery equipment (UNIDO, 2024) (see Table 1). This provides other Global South countries with high-quality, cost-effective intermediate products and thereby enhances industrial complementarity.

1.2.2. Active Participation in Addressing Global Challenges

The Global South engages in the reform of the global governance system and jointly responds to global challenges. To overcome the global financial crisis of 2008, the Group of Twenty (G20) was officially upgraded to leaders' summit, providing Global South countries more opportunities in participating in global economic governance. From 2022 to 2025, BRICS countries successively held the G20 Presidency, calling for an open, inclusive, and non-discriminatory environment for international economic cooperation. The African Union (AU) also formally joined the G20. In multilateral trade, the Global South has upheld the rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core. The XVII BRICS Summit in July 2025 adopted the Rio de Janeiro Declaration, reiterating BRICS's

TABLE 1

Manufacturing Output from BRICS Countries as a Proportion of Global Production (2022)

Manufacturing Sector	BRICS Countries
Basic Metals	60.5%
Electrical Equipment	56.2%
Other Non-Metallic Mineral Products	48.5%
Chemicals and Chemical Products	42.4%
Computers, Electronic and Optical Products	40.3%
Machinery and Equipment	39.1%
Coke and Refined Petroleum Products	38.7%
Motor Vehicles, Trailers and Semi-Trailers	36.9%

Note: BRICS countries in this table are Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates.

Source: Compiled by the author based on UNIDO (2024).

support for an open, transparent, fair, inclusive, equitable, non-discriminatory, consensus-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core. International financial cooperation involves steadily increasing the voice and representation of developing countries, advancing the World Bank Shareholding Review and the IMF quota adjustments, and refining the global financial safety net via currency swaps to fend off external shocks. In the ecological and environmental sphere, the host countries of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2022-2025 were all developing countries, demonstrating the greater role of the host countries and all developing countries at large. The need has been heightened to adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and ensure full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The Global South has continued to establish and improve multilateral governance mechanisms led by Global South countries and strengthen regional cooperation. Since its first leaders' meeting in 2009, the BRICS cooperation mechanism has evolved into a vital Global South platform for dialogue and collaboration. In 2024, the BRICS mechanism achieved a historic expansion by admitting more representative Global South countries, injecting new momentum into the reform and improvement of the global governance system. In regional integration: The Global South has promoted in-depth implementation of economic and trade cooperation frameworks such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). In international financial cooperation: The Global South has driven the establishment of multilateral financial institutions such as the New Development Bank

(NDB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which have grown into emerging forces within the international financial system. It has also advanced multilateral financial arrangements such as the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization to reinforce the regional financial safety net.

1.3

Key Factors Behind the Development Achievements of the Global South

The international environment is generally peaceful and stable. The world has in general enjoyed peace and stability for decades, and peace, development, cooperation, and mutual benefit have become the prevailing trend, fostering a favorable international environment for the development of the Global South.

Economic globalization continues to advance. Economic globalization, serving as an effective pathway to maximize global resource allocation efficiency, has been a vital driver of development worldwide, including for the Global South. The new century ushered in a new wave of globalization; until the 2008 global financial crisis, global trade growth consistently outpaced global economic growth. According to WTO data, the value of global trade surged from USD 7.9 trillion in 2000 to USD 30.4 trillion in 2023, achieving an average annual growth rate of 6% (WTO, 2024c). The Global South actively participated in this wave, integrating into the international division of labor based on their comparative advantages and reaping the benefits of globalization. Despite recent shocks stemming from unilateralism and protectionism, economic globalization remains an irreversible

historical trend.

Global technological innovation and diffusion are accelerating. Technological innovation has accelerated markedly, and a cluster of cutting-edge technologies have emerged in succession. Rapid cost decline and widespread diffusion have made technologies economically viable, providing the Global South with a feasible path to leverage its late-mover advantage and drive economic growth with lower costs, faster speed, and appropriate technologies. Some Global South countries have attracted foreign direct investment, facilitating inward technology transfer and diffusion. Through technology absorption and secondary innovation, they have spurred industrial development.

The emphasis on self-determined development paths is increased. Global South countries adhere to fundamental economic principles like comparative advantage and economies of scale, formulate strategies in light of their specific national conditions such as resource endowments, geographical characteristics, and development stages, nurture new competitive edges in a dynamic manner, and propel sustained industrial upgrading. The success of East Asian and Southeast Asian countries, alongside other regions forging their own distinct paths, inspires more Global South countries to pursue independent development. Several Global South countries implement long-term industrialization strategies rooted in their unique conditions and with rational sequencing, which contributes to the steady rise of both industrial value-added and its global share among developing economies and yields progress in localized production. For instance, Malaysia successfully attracted substantial foreign investment into its electronics sector through policies such as establishing free industrial zones and offering tax incentives. This transformed its economy from one reliant

on primary exports like rubber and tin into a global powerhouse for semiconductor assembly, testing and electronics manufacturing. Similarly, Gulf countries like the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are vigorously investing in world-class ports, aviation hubs, and financial centers, developing tourism and high-tech industries to drive economic diversification.

A proactive government role is guided by market principles. Many Global South countries respect the decisive role of market mechanisms in resource allocation and adhere to market-oriented reforms. Simultaneously, they actively leverage the government's crucial role in increasing public investment, optimizing the business environment, building infrastructure, and formulating and implementing effective industrial policies. This approach effectively addresses challenges common to developing economies, such as their later start and more pronounced market failures.

2.

THE GLOBAL SOUTH FACES NEW CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Over the past decades, the Global South has made remarkable development progress. However, as the world enters a new period defined by turbulence and transformation, countries in the Global South are facing new constraints and challenges in advancing sustainable development.

2.1

Sluggish World Economy

In recent years, the global economy has maintained moderate to low growth. According to the IMF, the world economy grew by 3.3% in 2024, down 0.2 percentage points from 2023, and lower than the average rate of 3.7% in 2000-2019 (IMF, 2025). The IMF has estimated that global GDP growth will remain at 3.3% in 2025 and 2026. The World Bank (2025a) predicted that the global average growth rate in the 2020s is likely to be the slowest of any decade since the 1960s, and the growth prospects for developing countries are at their weakest since 2000.

2.2

Disruptions to the Multilateral Trading System and International Rules

Unilateralism and protectionism are resurging, and trade restrictive measures have proliferated.

According to the World Bank (2025b), new global trade-restrictive measures introduced in 2024 were five times the annual average between 2010 and 2019, and in the first half of 2025 alone, the number of newly introduced measures already approximated that recorded in the entire previous year. A certain developed country has unilaterally imposed high tariffs and resorted to coercive and bullying tactics, severely undermining the WTO-centered and rule-based multilateral trading system. Some developing countries have stated that “damaged multilateral trading rules will have adverse impact on Global South countries, especially small and medium-sized ones,” and “trade sticks harm multilateral rules and affect countries’ policy autonomy.” Meanwhile, a certain developed country’s unilateral actions and withdrawal from international organizations and agreements severely undermines the international system with the UN at its core and the international order underpinned by international law, and weakens the authority and efficacy of multilateral mechanisms, and poses greater challenges for developing countries in safeguarding their interests and right to development. Moreover,

some developed countries have failed to deliver on their development financing pledges and even slashed their foreign aid budgets. Global development resources are thus projected to decrease (see Figure 3). It is estimated that official development assistance (ODA) from member

countries of the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) accounted for only 0.33% of their gross national income in 2024, far below the commitment of 0.7% (OECD, 2024). That will constrain growth in developing countries.

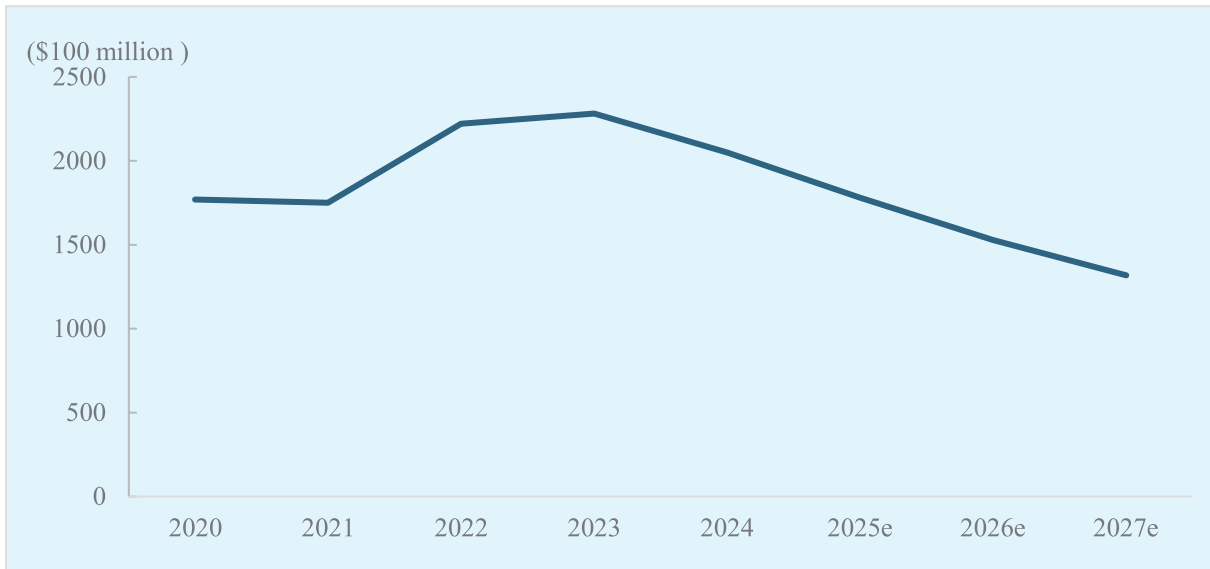


FIGURE 3

OECD DAC Member Countries’ ODA Commitments since COVID-19 Outbreak (in USD 100 million)

Source: OECD DAC database and OECD’s June 2025 policy brief “Cuts in official development assistance: OECD projections for 2025 and the near term”; data for 2024 is the actual number; data for 2025-2027 are midpoints of the forecast range.

2.3 Escalating Climate Risks

In recent years, climate change has intensified the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Many regions have experienced unprecedented natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and wildfires. These resulted in heavy losses for Global South countries, particularly in the least developed and small island developing states. According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO, 2025), on average, African

countries are losing 2% to 5% of GDP. In sub-Saharan Africa, the cost of adaptation is estimated to be between USD 30-50 billion annually over the next decade, or 2%-3% of the region’s GDP. Intensifying climate risks not only cause economic losses but also endanger food security. In 2024, extreme weather events left 96.1 million people in 18 countries in a state of severe food insecurity, and southern Africa was hit the hardest (FAO, 2025). Between 1970 to 2021, extreme weather, climate and water-related events caused over 2 million deaths, of which 90% were in developing countries (WMO, 2025).

2.4

Regional Conflicts and Instability

According to the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), the year of 2024 witnessed the highest number of armed conflicts in nearly 80 years, with 61 conflicts across 36 countries—28 in Africa, 17 in Asia, and 10 in the Middle East (PRIO, 2024). Frequent outbreaks of conflicts disrupt global trade, investment, and industrial chains and supply chains, raise economic operating costs, and affect corporate investment intentions and the global economic outlook, and these generate greater impact on low-income vulnerable countries.

2.5

Major Infrastructure Gaps

Many Global South countries face considerable gaps in areas such as transportation, energy, communications, and basic utilities. This increases local production and operating costs, constrains productivity and efficiency gains, and prevents the countries from in-depth engagement in global economic activities. Globally, there are still 675 million people who lack access to electricity, 2.2 billion who lack safe drinking water (UN, 2024), and 1 billion people who live more than 2 kilometers away from an all-weather road (World Bank, 2024), and the majority of them live in Global South countries. Fixed broadband accounted for over 80% of global internet traffic in 2023, yet in low-income countries, only one in 100 people had fixed broadband access (ITU, 2023). Additionally, there is also a substantial infrastructure financing gap in Global South countries. UNCTAD estimates show that annually, developing countries face a funding shortfall of USD 2.2 trillion in energy,

and USD 400 billion in communications and transportation infrastructure. Since 2020, developing countries face two to four times higher interest rates compared to developed countries, which has further obstructed Global South countries' infrastructure improvement efforts.

2.6

Insufficient Educational and Health Resources

Sound education systems and health services constitute a critical basis for human capital improvements. However, some Global South countries still face considerable challenges in education and public health. Regarding education, while basic education coverage has improved, some countries still struggle with limited access to quality education, high dropout rates, and skills mismatch with labor market demand. While low-income and high-income countries have comparable numbers of school-age children, the former accounted for only 0.45% of the USD5.8 trillion global education expenditure in 2022, whereas high-income countries accounted for 64% (UNESCO, 2024). This translates into a 142-fold gap between the two country groups. In terms of healthcare: many Global South countries still grapple with inadequate coverage and affordability of basic health services and heavy disease burdens. In 2022, high-income countries reported a per capita health expenditure of USD 3,731, 87 times higher than low-income countries (WHO, 2024). According to the WHO's annual report (2025), residents in poor regions face more and higher health risks, as well as poorer life expectancy and healthy life expectancy outcomes. Low-income countries and lower-middle-income countries account for 94% of all maternal deaths worldwide.

2.7

Some Global South Countries Are Less Resilient to Risks

Some Global South countries are vulnerable to risks in the context of rising unilateralism and protectionism and decreasing development resources due to growing inward-looking trends in some developed countries, compounded by shortcomings in terms of governance, capital, and technology, such as policy instability, imperfect business environments, and inadequate domestic resource mobilization.

Looking ahead, to better leverage development potential and address challenges, Global South countries can continue actively integrating into global industrial and supply chains, strengthen dialogue and cooperation with the Global North. They can also seize opportunities, embrace the fundamental trends, deepen South-South cooperation based on mutual support and complementarity of advantages, and keep enhancing their capacity for autonomous development, and strive for common development.

Strengthen North-South dialogue and cooperation. Global South countries can enhance communication and collaboration with developed countries, jointly adhere to the correct direction of economic globalization, place development at the center of the international agenda, and create a favorable environment for win-win development. Strive for developed countries to fulfill their official commitments on ODA and climate finance, increase the provision of development resources, focusing on boosting the Global South's capacity for autonomous development.

Seize opportunities to deepen South-South cooperation. Global South countries can tap into their national and regional potential, and foster the formation of regional industrial division

of labour based on comparative advantage and economies of scale and further unleash the potential for cooperation. They can enhance trade liberalization and facilitation and expand the space for trade and investment cooperation among themselves. They need to strengthen technology and knowledge sharing on a mutually beneficial basis and jointly create an open ecosystem for technological innovation. The Global South countries can promote economically viable green and low-carbon solutions. They can also support emerging multilateral and regional development banks such as NDB and AIIB to strengthen multilateral development financing cooperation, closely follow the development needs of the Global South, and provide more high-quality, low-cost, and sustainable development financing.

Bolster capacity for autonomous development. Global South countries can proactively explore development paths suited to their national conditions by leveraging their resource endowments and comparative advantages, advancing industrialization following a reasonable sequence, and fostering new competitive advantages in a dynamic manner. They can develop internationally competitive industries through deep participation in global value chains and continuous industrial upgrading. Meanwhile, they can maintain policy autonomy and political stability, and continuously improve policy environments conducive to attracting cross-border investments, particularly productive investment. They can also effectively mobilize domestic and international resources, and strengthen the building-up of capacities in domestic production, fiscal systems and financial markets.

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Introduction to the Global South Research Center

The Global South Research Center (GSRC) was announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Conference Marking the 70th Anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in June 2024, and formally launched in March 2025.

The GSRC is an international research platform involving experts and scholars from South and North countries and international organizations. The GSRC's primary responsibilities are to consolidate research resources from around the world, particularly from Global South countries and relevant international and regional organizations, and to carry out research, consultation, and exchange activities concerning key and major issues related to the development and cooperation of the Global South.

The GSRC establishes a Council, chaired by the Minister of the Development Research Center of the State Council (DRC) Lu Hao. The Secretariat of the Council is hosted at the Center for International Knowledge on Development (CIKD).

Council of the GSRC

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Chairman of the GSRC Council

VICE CHAIRPERSON

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SECRETARY GENERAL

Wang Jinzhao	Executive Vice President of Center for International Knowledge on Development, Secretary General of the GSRC Council
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