

THE ROLE OF MONGOLIA TO FULFILL SDGs IN NORTHEAST ASIA

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Abstract

Mongolia has increasingly positioned itself as a pivotal partner in Northeast Asia (NEA), engaging in collaborative projects aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which stresses the importance of international partnerships to achieve sustainable progress. Therefore, there is a need to examine Mongolia's cooperative history with Northeast Asian countries, including China, Japan, ROK, DPRK, and Russia, emphasizing scientific, humanitarian, and cultural exchanges that support Mongolia's Sustainable Development Vision 2030 (SDV) and "Vision 2050" objectives. Also, "SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals"¹, underscores the essential role of international cooperation in achieving sustainable progress. As a landlocked country situated between two global powers, Russia and China, Mongolia recognizes the importance of working with regional partners to address economic and environmental challenges effectively. Given its geographic positioning and historical inclination toward diplomacy, Mongolia is uniquely suited to act as a mediator and connector in Northeast Asia, fostering cross-border projects that advance economic, social, and environmental goals. By highlighting Mongolia's efforts to bridge relationships between NEA nations, this study underlines the critical role of SDG 17 in Mongolia's long-term vision for regional sustainability and economic resilience.

Keywords: International Political Economy, International Relations, National Security.

JEL Classification Codes: Q01 P43 O53 H70 H83

1. THE WAY OF IMPLEMENTING THE SDGs THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

During the Northeast Asian multi-stakeholder Forum on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), under the theme "*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*" held on September 2018 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's Chief Cabinet Secretariat, G. Zandanshatar said:

"We are keen to share experiences, so that we can learn from each other's achievements and challenges in implementing the Global Goals, support each other in the SDGs progress and foster mutual cooperation on

*the Regional Roadmap to the SDGs"*²

This Forum sought to share progress and map next steps to achieving the Global Agenda 2030. Recognizing this, the Forum focuses on six of the 17 SDGs, namely, quality education (Goal 4), decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), reduced inequalities (Goal 10), climate action (Goal 13), and peace and justice (Goal 16) as well as ways of implementing the SDGs through partnerships (Goal 17).

Also, during the Forum, Beate Trankmann, UN Resident Coordinator in Mongolia, who is co-hosting the Forum, mentioned:

"Mongolia has shown its commitment to the Global

¹ It includes: 17.1 Mobilize resources to improve domestic revenue collection 17.2 Implement all development assistance commitments 17.3 Mobilize financial resources for developing countries 17.4 Assist developing countries in attaining debt sustainability 17.5 Invest in least developed countries 17.6 Knowledge sharing and cooperation for access to science, technology and innovation 17.7 Promote sustainable technologies to developing countries 17.8 Strengthen the science, technology and innovation capacity for least developed countries 17.9 Enhance SDG capacity in developing countries 17.10 Promote a universal trading system under the WTO 17.11 Increase the exports of developing countries 17.12 Remove trade barriers for least developed countries 17.13 Enhance global macroeconomic stability 17.14 Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development 17.15 Respect national leadership to implement policies for the sustainable development goals 17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development 17.17 Encourage effective partnerships 17.18 Enhance availability of reliable data 17.19 Further develop measurements of progress. SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and TARGETS, <https://csud.climate.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/SDG-Targets.pdf>

² North East Asian Forum on Sustainable Development Goals takes place in Ulaanbaatar, <https://www.undp.org/mongolia/press-releases/north-east-asian-forum-sustainable-development-goals-takes-place-ulaanbaatar>

Development Agenda 2030, by becoming an early adopter of the SDGs through formulating its own Sustainable Development Vision 2030 back in 2016. The need of the hour now is to increasingly translate the vision and its goals into concrete and well-aligned government policies and budgets, while ensuring that public investments target social and environmental sectors..."

As he mentioned, in February 2016, the 19th Resolution of the State Great Hural of Mongolia approved the "Mongolia Sustainable Development Vision 2030" in accordance with the agenda. (The concept will be implemented in three stages--2016-2020, 2021-2025 and 2026-2030) With this Vision 2030, Mongolia will become a country with many economic sectors, dominated by the middle and wealthy middle class in the social sphere, ecological balance, and a stable democratic government. Based on this, our country aims to become a country with "middle income" and "wealthy middle class" or to build a society where the words "middle" and "average" are the basis of development.

Also, on the "Governance for Sustainable Development" chapter of this document, highlighted that Mongolia will: "**Actively participate in international cooperation, aimed at achieving the SDGs**".³

Put forward the goal of "strengthening and improving the institutional system," and for this purpose, amend the "Law of Mongolia on Development Policy Planning" in 1995, establish a central state administrative organization responsible for development policy planning, and update the functions of ministries. (The Sustainable Development Goals sub-committee with the task of monitoring implementation was established in 2017 under the Social Policy, Education and Science Standing Committee of the Parliament. Also, in 2019, it was necessary to establish a 'Think-tank' policy research institute under the state administrative organization responsible for development policy) In the article 7 – "Development Concept of Mongolia", the concept:

"Shall take into consideration the goals, objectives, and outcomes directed towards ensuring the Concept of National Security, the Concept of Foreign Policy and sustainable economic, social and environmental development and inclusive growth, in conformity with recourses and financial recourses, and based on a

Development Model".⁴

Within the framework of this Development concept, "Mongolia's 21st Century Sustainable Development Policy" was adopted by the resolution of the Government of Mongolia on 27 of May 1998. In which, "the first part of the program included summary of status of politics, socio-economy and environment of that time period; the second part identified the trends of sustainable development, objectives and priority strategies of Mongolia and the third part described specific objectives and implementation approaches on socio-economy, natural resources and environmental protection."⁵

"Comprehensive National Development Policy" based on the Millennium Development Goals was adopted by the resolution of the State Great Hural on February 2008. This Policy was a "fundamental policy paper of Mongolia set the following objectives: protect and strengthen Mongolia's sovereignty; ensure sustainable development of science, technology and environment, strengthening intellectual development and human capacity; create knowledge based economy sustained by high technology; to develop the country to be a middle income country through prioritizing environmentally friendly production and services", "ensure development of pure national and advanced technology through supporting scientific organizations and private sector through "intensive development of export-oriented, private sector-led, high technology driven manufacturing and services, with particular focus on information, communication development, promoting bio and nano-technology."⁶ In this policy paper, the regional development trends are summarized as follows:

- *"Asia is emerging to become an important global development epicenter in addition to America and Europe, and this process is gaining momentum with rapidly developing economies and growing populations of India and China and attracting due attention of the world.*
- *Countries in Asia are becoming more integrated in terms of their trade and economic relations; in addition to the evolving process of creating a common Asian bonds market, discussions are underway with regard to establishing an Asian Monetary Fund and introducing a single Asian currency."*⁷

Also, these trends could be summarized as:

- Countries would accelerate their development if they can take

³ Mongolia Sustainable Development Vision 2030 <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/mon184386.pdf>, page 33

⁴ Same above, page 41

⁵ Mongolia's 21st Century Sustainable Development Policy https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/dsd/dsd_aofw_ni/ni_pdfs/NationalReports/mongolia/Full_text.pdf, page 7

⁶ MDGs based Comprehensive National Development Policy https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/dsd/dsd_aofw_ni/ni_pdfs/NationalReports/mongolia/Full_text.pdf, page 31

due advantage of globalization.

- Opportunities would be increased for reducing unemployment and poverty through joint efforts with a primary focus placed on human development.
- Development gaps within countries would be eliminated.
- In addition to promoting environmentally friendly development, the capacity to prevent natural disasters would be enhanced.
- Opportunities would be increased for accelerating the development of new technologies, including information, communication, bio and nanotechnology, robotics and space technology.
- Substantial investments would be made in developing science and technology, and their achievements shall be introduced into manufacturing and service sectors promoting their efficiency.
- **Development of regional cooperation** and free trade, as well as region-wide service and production shall be promoted.⁸

On the national security issue, the main strategic objectives are:

“...Expand international cooperation aimed at safeguarding against natural disasters and preventing the spread of various contagious diseases...Revise laws and regulations governing the implementation of the national security policy and other related activities in line with the objectives of the MDGs-based Comprehensive National Development Strategy of Mongolia.”

About the implementation of foreign policy, the main strategic objectives are:

*“...Attach priority importance to maintaining mutually beneficial, balanced relations with the two neighboring countries. Pursue a policy of gaining access to the markets of these countries while receiving the preferences enjoyed by developing and landlocked countries...Pursue a policy of maintaining comprehensive partnership relations with the United States of America, **Japan** and the European Union... Expand Mongolia’s relations with India, **the Republic of Korea**, and ASEAN countries and work towards further developing...Attach priority to joining the negotiations to advance mutually linked **cooperation processes in Northeast Asia and East Asia**, and strengthen the country’s position in these regions.”⁹*

In 2019, the Government of Mongolia has released its “Voluntary National Report - VNR” and according to the

conclusion of the implementation of the VNR-2019, the positive attitude was mentioned like “Mongolia is one of the first countries to officially express the implementation of the SDGs” and that it belongs to the category of countries with a high level of human development. In addition, it was defined as:

*“a country with **no conflicts in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, and religion**, a relatively young population, a peaceful internal and external political situation, as well as abundant mineral resources and a vast territory located between two great neighbors, which are considered to be the largest markets in the world.”*

However, it admitted that looking back at the experience since the implementation of the SDGs, there is a need to change and improve the country's development strategy with a new approach. Therefore, regarding on strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development, the following actions:

- **Ensuring multi-stakeholders’ participation and partnerships.** Inadequate awareness and knowledge about development policies and the absence of a legal environment can be impediments for policy implementation, monitoring, accountability and transparency. Transparency of information not only helps better monitoring but also contributes to raising awareness among the public.
- **The importance of managing private investment, foreign direct investment (FDI), is crucial in the implementation of SDGs.** While it is important to localize innovative technologies within the partnership framework, there is still a limited environment conducive for knowledge exchange, including in newer areas such as artificial intelligence, big data, and other scientific innovations.
- **It is necessary to ensure better alignment between financing and long-term development policy goals and to improve efficiency of spending and monitoring.** Recently, a Development Financing Assessment was carried out, but no specific financial mechanisms linked to sustainable development has been introduced yet. There are many opportunities to mobilize additional funding for the implementation of SDGs, but these are not fully utilized and capacity remains weak.¹⁰

In Mongolia, the Vision 2050 national development strategy, which adopted in 2020 and SDGs are deeply interconnected, with Vision 2050 serving as a long-term framework that aims to align the country’s development with global sustainability

⁷ State Great Hural (Parliament) of Mongolia Resolution, 2015 https://extranet.who.int/countryplanningcycles/sites/default/files/planning_cycle_repository/mongolia/nds_approved_eng_1.pdf

⁸ Same above, page 2-3

⁹ Same above, page 30

principles. The Vision 2050's nine pillars supported more general development features that align with the SDGs. Mongolia must properly reach the SDG targets by 2030 in order to accomplish the Vision 2050 objectives. Stated differently, 2030 will mark the halfway point in realizing Vision 2050. Both private and state-owned enterprises have critical roles in helping the country achieve these goals.

In 2021, the United Nations Mission in Mongolia and the Government of Mongolia cooperated to develop the "UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework," in other words, the strategic program for the next 5 years to be implemented by the United Nations in Mongolia in 2023-2027. This program was formulated based on multiple consultations with the Government, the Parliament, civil society, private sector, banking sector, development partners, and the UN system (represented by resident and non-resident entities). And the Government of Mongolia determined that this strategic program will be an important support for the implementation of Mongolia's long-term development policy document "Vision 2050" in coordination with the "Sustainable Development Program 2030."

In this document:

"... Climate change and air pollution are key factors that threaten sustainable development in Mongolia. Quality and equity outcomes of investment in human capital (health and nutrition, education and skills, and social protection) are uneven. Despite progress towards social inclusion, many population groups remain excluded or are at risk of being excluded..."

About the implementation of SDG 17:

"Mongolia faces high and rising public debt and a challenging fiscal situation. As noted earlier, public debt as at the end of 2021 stood at 92 percent of GDP. There has been significant drop in FDI as the country is perceived by investors to be a high-risk destination. As a landlocked country, Mongolia partners in a number of regional infrastructure and trade initiatives including CAREC, China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, and Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement. The country is well-positioned to strengthen its cooperation with non-traditional donors and stakeholders and develop a robust south-south and triangular cooperation strategy. Potential of digitalization for boosting digital trade and

*providing services is not fully leveraged. Incomplete SDG nationalization, integration and internalization in policy making, non-availability and use of disaggregated data for evidence-based decision-making on SDGs implementation, monitoring and reporting are major challenges as is lack of coordination and policy coherence and integration."*¹¹

In 2021, Mongolia ranked 92nd out of 189 countries in the world in terms of human development, 102nd out of 142 countries in terms of economic competitiveness, and 81st out of 190 countries in the world in terms of business environment. Also, the decline in the price of mining raw materials, which is a feature of Mongolia, is accompanied by an economic recession, resulting in a decrease in the state budget and an increase in debt burden, which is a major challenge. In other words, it indicates that the overall economic growth is highly dependent on exports. In particular, more than 70% of foreign direct investment and more than 90% of total exports are made up of mineral resources and the mining sector alone.

Parliament and Cabinet, in cooperation with the United Nations, organized the first Sustainable Development Goals – High-Level Forum in Mongolia on October 4, 2021. Panel discussions included "Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals in Mongolia: Approval of National Indicators and Target Levels by Parliament and Intensifying the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals During the Pandemic: The Role and Participation of the Private Sector. Activities that need further attention to intensify SDG implementation were identified, ways to overcome the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerate economic recovery were discussed, and opinions were exchanged."¹²

Mongolia presented its second VNR in 2023. Regarding on strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development, the document pointed out that, "Ensuring equal rules for international trade and harnessing science, technology, innovation and internet-based information and communication technologies will create opportunities to achieve SDG 17."¹³ Specifically:

- The share of total budget revenue in GDP, which was reduced by the COVID-19 pandemic, increased to a higher level in 2021 than before the pandemic.
- Fluctuations in the share of tax revenues in the expenditures of the national budget were strongly impacted by the COVID-19

¹⁰ Mongolia Voluntary National Review Report 2019, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23342MONGOLIA_VOLUNTARY_NATIONAL_REVIEW_REPORT_2019.pdf, page 36-37

¹¹ The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2023-2027) https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-09/unsdcf_2023-2027_english_version.pdf

¹² Mongolia Voluntary National Review 2023, <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2023/VNR%202023%20Mongolia%20Report.pdf>, page 25

¹³ Same above, page 69-73

pandemic.

- In order to ensure stable macroeconomic development, it is important to attract foreign private and public sector financing and to deepen the partnership for development.
- Increasing foreign currency debt further increases the vulnerability to external shocks such as commodity price fluctuations.
- Increasing access to the Internet will lay the foundation for strengthening the capacity of science, technology and innovation.
- Mongolia's exports are overly dependent on a single country and a single sector.
- The fourth five-year program for the development of the statistical sector is currently being implemented and ex.

According to the “Top five risks” identified by the Executive Opinion Survey (EOS) in 2025, Mongolia is facing: 1) Labor and/or talent shortage, 2) Energy supply shortage, 3) Pollution (air, water, soil), 4) Poverty and inequality (wealth, income), 5) Extreme weather¹⁴. Therefore, how can Mongolia cooperate with other countries in the region to overcome these risks?

2. MONGOLIA'S REGIONAL COOPERATION IN NORTHEAST ASIA AND ITS ALIGNMENT WITH SDG 17

Mongolia's commitment to scientific cooperation with Northeast Asian partners reflects its dedication to knowledge sharing, capacity building, and innovation in critical fields. Such collaborations have been instrumental in addressing key issues, from sustainable energy to technological advancement, that align closely with Mongolia's Vision 2050 and SDG 17 goals. Vision 2050 framework integrates the SDGs into its long-term development strategy, providing a comprehensive roadmap for sustainable growth and regional collaboration. By aligning its national policies with the SDGs, Mongolia aims to create a more resilient and inclusive society while fostering sustainable economic development. So, Vision 2050 framework emphasizes critical areas such as economic diversification, environmental protection, and social equity, which are essential for achieving the SDGs. The emphasis on regional cooperation in renewable energy and environmental protection underlines Mongolia's commitment to SDG 17, promoting cross-border partnerships that leverage shared resources and expertise for sustainable development.

From this perspective, Mongolia has developed strong ties

with Northeast Asian nations over recent decades, especially through initiatives focused on science, humanitarian assistance, and cultural exchange. These partnerships not only address shared regional concerns but also underscore SDG 17's emphasis on collaborative, multilateral solutions to complex issues. For Mongolia, these partnerships are fundamental to its sustainable development trajectory, contributing to its broader vision for socioeconomic stability and regional integration. Therefore, it is essential to delve into Mongolia's partnerships with Northeast Asia neighbors such as China, Japan, ROK, DPRK, and Russia, examining how these alliances are structured to support sustainable development and what future possibilities they may hold.

So, Mongolia's engagement with SDG 17 emphasizes the country's dedication to pursuing shared goals through joint efforts, solidifying its role in facilitating peace, stability, and sustainable development within the region. Additionally, by building on historical relationships and expanding its diplomatic reach, Mongolia continues to leverage its strategic location to act as a bridge between East and West, advancing both national and regional sustainability objectives.

2.1 The Trilateral Cooperation between Mongolia, Russia and China

Mongolia's focus on renewable energy development aligns with its goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to a low-carbon economy. Collaborating with Northeast Asian nations on renewable energy projects, such as wind and solar energy initiatives, can enhance energy security while contributing to global climate goals. By leveraging its abundant renewable resources, Mongolia not only supports its own energy needs but also positions itself as a key player in regional energy cooperation, reinforcing the principles of SDG 7 and SDG 13.

UNs Secretary-General Antonio Guterres mentioned about the importance of the Sustainable energy for all, as follows:

*“We must also take on climate disinformation. Together with Brazil and UNESCO, the United Nations is launching the Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate change. We will work with researchers and partners to strengthen action against climate disinformation”.*¹⁵

And one of its objectives of this initiative is **doubling the global share of renewable energy** by 2030. Mongolia aims for 30% renewable energy capacity by 2030, reflecting the country's

¹⁴ The Global Risks Report 2025, 20th Edition Insight report, World Economic Forum https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2025.pdf, page 88

¹⁵ Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/information-integrity>

commitment to transitioning to a low-carbon, green economy. On March 2013, Ministry of Energy of Mongolia signed the MOU between Energy Charter Secretariat (ECS), Energy Economics Institute of the ROK (KEEI), Energy Systems Institute of the Russian Federation (ESI) and Japan Renewable Energy Foundation (IREF).¹⁶ But, from the political and security issues, the renewable energy cooperation in Northeast Asia continues to expand.

On September 2014, a trilateral meeting was held between President of Mongolia Ts.Elbegdorj, President of the Russian Federation V.Putin and President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping in Dushanbe. At the meeting, parties discussed to coordinate Mongolian "Steppe Road" project with Chinese "New Silk Road" and other relevant projects of Russian Federation. During this summit:

- President Ts.Elbegdorj: *"Mongolia deems itself a shortest and key transit infrastructure for Russia by the means of exit from Europe to Asia and for China as an outlet from Asia to Europe."*
- President Xi Jinping: *"China and Russia have already established 750 MW of 500 kilovolt power transmission network. We are currently studying the feasibility of building a transnational power grid. Furthermore, the discussion of establishing a three-party power plant is open and Mongolia's participation in the China-Russia energy cooperation is ready to be discussed."*
- President V.Putin: *"It is possible to transmit power lines through the territory of Mongolia, if the Chinese and Mongolian sides are interested. It might be decided based on economic benefits and other calculations."*¹⁷

On July 2015, Presidents of Mongolia, Russia and China pledged to strengthen trilateral cooperation during their meeting in Ufa. During the summit:

- President Ts.Elbegdorj: *"The trilateral cooperation on railway transportation, logistics, facilitation of agricultural and mineral product trade, infrastructure construction and other sectors will benefit peoples of the three countries. The Mongolian side hopes to deepen cooperation among the three nations."*
- President Xi Jinping: *"Last September we held the first meeting of heads of state of China, Russia and Mongolia, and launched the trilateral cooperation process. It was a major decision made by the three countries with a focus on common development of the three countries and closer regional*

cooperation... The economic cooperation is the priority and key area of trilateral cooperation. It is hoped that the three parties will dovetail more closely China's construction of Silk Road Economic Belt with Russia's construction of the Railway across Eurasia and Mongolia's Prairie Road initiative, and push forward the construction of China-Russia-Mongolia economic corridor."

- President V.Putin: *"Russia, China and Mongolia are in close connections and enjoy a solid foundation for cooperation. Since the first meeting of heads of state of the three countries last year, relevant departments have maintained close communication and coordination, with smooth launching of cooperation in fields including railway transportation and tourism."*¹⁸

On June 2018, Presidents of Mongolia, Russia and China pledged to strengthen trilateral cooperation during their meeting in Qingdao. During the summit:

- President Kh.Battulga: *"Mongolia's top priority to develop friendly cooperation with the two permanent neighbors of China and Russia. Mongolia stands ready to work with China and Russia to implement trilateral cooperation consensus and launch the China-Mongolia-Russia economic corridor construction as early as possible, while promoting cooperation in sectors such as infrastructure and energy transportation"*.
- President Xi Jinping: *"Since the heads of state of China, Russia and Mongolia held their first meeting more than three years ago, the three countries have centered on aligning China's Belt and Road Initiative with Russia's development strategies, especially its transcontinental rail plan, and Mongolia's "development path" initiative, deepened cooperation and yielded results... The three countries should push the construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia economic corridor, actively explore cooperation in areas such as infrastructure interconnectivity, and promote sub-regional cooperation in adjacent areas of the three countries."*¹⁹
- President V.Putin: *"We have good opportunities for interaction in energy. Our Mongolian partners have proposed oil and gas pipelines from Russia to China across their territory. Generally, we are supportive, this is a good idea. But of course, as always, thorough feasibility studies need to be carried out... We believe it is important to step up the efforts to promote three-way cooperation in tourism. In this context I would like to mention the proposal to form a cross-border*

¹⁶ The role of Mongolia for development of Northeast Asian Super Grid, <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/Session%203-4%20Batbayar%20Chadraa.pdf>

¹⁷ Same above

¹⁸ Xi Jinping Attends Second Meeting of Heads of State of China, Russia and Mongolia, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/jj/2015zt/xjpcxjzgjdrdqchwhshhzzfcygyshdswch/202406/t20240606_11381436.html

¹⁹ China, Russia, Mongolia vow to strengthen cooperation http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/10/c_137243022.htm

“Tea Road” that would link these regions in Russia, China and Mongolia.”²⁰

On June 2019, Presidents of Mongolia, Russia and China pledged to strengthen trilateral cooperation during their meeting in Bishkek. During this summit:

- President Kh.Battulga: *“Mongolia’s unswerving policy to deepen the friendly cooperation with China and Russia is committed to pushing forward the trilateral cooperation and the construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor... Three sides should set up institutional arrangements so as to accelerate the construction of a network of cross-border highways, facilitate customs clearance, strengthen energy cooperation, and discuss the construction of regional power grids.”*
- President Xi Jinping: *“We should focus on the alignment of the three countries’ development strategies, promote comprehensive cooperation in all fields, and jointly release the positive signal of maintaining multilateralism and creating an open world economy... The three countries should promote the implementation of cooperative projects within the framework of the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, promote customs facilitation measures, upgrade major ports, and deepen sub-national cooperation.”*
- President V.Putin: *“Russia is committed to deepening its relations with China and Mongolia on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, and is ready to step up cooperation to promote the synergy between the Eurasian Economic Union, the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, and Mongolia’s Steppe Road program... The three parties need to enhance inter-connectivity in transportation, expand trade, and bolster cooperation in energy and finance.”*²¹

On September 2022, Presidents of Mongolia, Russia and China pledged to strengthen trilateral cooperation during their meeting in Samarkand. During this meeting:

- President U.Khurelsukh: *“Our country intends to further strengthen mutually beneficial political and economic cooperation with our neighbours at the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership, and to implement joint program and projects intended for our region’s sustainable development... Mongolia believes that the successful implementation of the Mongolia-Russia-China Economic*

Corridor Program will strengthen the strategic partnership of our three countries and take cooperation to a new level within our region.”

- President Xi Jinping: *“Cooperation on joint COVID-19 prevention and control in the border areas was carried out to keep economic and trade interactions steady and smooth. Notable progress was made in the development of international road transportation along the Asian Highway Network connecting the three countries... Three parties should work for more outcomes in trilateral cooperation and supporting the expansion of settlement in local currencies in mutual trade.”*²²
- President V.Putin: *“I would like to recall that at a trilateral summit in Ufa in 2015, we endorsed a roadmap to build up our cooperation across the board. Following this fundamental document, in 2016 we approved a program for creating a Russia-Mongolia-China economic corridor. Today, we can note with satisfaction that all these agreements are being successfully implemented and are yielding us practical dividends... Undoubtedly, reinforcing trade, economic and investment ties between Russia, China and Mongolia is an important part of the integration processes in Eurasia and ties in well with the EAEU development processes and efforts to move forward China’s One Belt One Road initiative and Mongolia’s Steppe Road initiative.”*²³

On October 2024, Prime Minister of Mongolia L.Oyun-Erdene met with Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Mikhail Mishustin and Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Li Qiang. Prime Minister of Mongolia proposed several initiatives aimed at advancing trilateral cooperation, such as infrastructure development to connect the three countries, implementing the project to build a natural gas pipeline from Russia to China through Mongolia on a trilateral level, cooperating on green and renewable energy projects within the frameworks of energy reforms, establishing a model tourism region between the three countries, creating a cross-border e-commerce platform, and collaborating on education, science, culture, humanitarian efforts, and disaster response.²⁴

2.2. “Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security”

Under the auspices of the dialogue, in 2014 Mongolia has

²⁰ Meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Mongolian President Khaltmaagiin Battulga
<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57713>

²¹ China, Russia, Mongolia vow to strengthen trilateral cooperation,
http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-06/15/c_138144422.htm

²² China-Russia-Mongolia summit secures infrastructure and energy connectivity, enhances regional trust,
<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202209/1275413.shtml>

²³ Meeting with PRC President Xi Jinping and President of Mongolia Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh,
<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69357>

²⁴ Meeting between Heads of Government of Mongolia, China and Russia held,
<https://www.montsame.mn/en/read/353866>

organized the first “Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security” International Conference with the participation of representatives from Mongolia, Russia, China, Japan, DPRK, ROK and other countries. And on the same year, the “Sustainable and Inclusive Cities” Northeast Asian Mayors Forum was held in Ulaanbaatar. On March 2015, Mongolia hosted an international conference with a title of “NEA Energy Connectivity”, in which delegates from six Northeast Asian countries participated and shared their opinions on creating energy connectivity in the region.

The Ninth “Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security” International Conference was organized on June 2024 and the government representatives, experts and scholars discussed “Security Challenges and Opportunities in the Region”, “Multilateral Cooperation in the Region”, “Climate Change and Security Challenges in the Region”, “Secure and Affordable Energy Transition in the region” and “Developing Sustainable and Resilient Value Chains for Critical Energy Transition Minerals”.

So, these initiatives are the key steps in reducing Mongolia’s reliance on coal, contributing to SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) by fostering a cleaner, greener energy infrastructure. By utilizing these renewable resources, Mongolia moves closer to its sustainability goals while contributing to regional energy security and environmental health, all of which are vital to sustainable growth and collaboration. Russia also plays a pivotal role in Mongolia’s energy security, with joint agreements in oil and gas ensuring stable energy access (SDG 7). Furthermore, Russia aids Mongolia’s border security through training initiatives that strengthen institutional capabilities (SDG 16).

3. FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE REGIONAL COOPERATION

Mongolia has potential avenues for collaboration with Northeast Asian neighbors in scientific, humanitarian, and cultural sectors, offering mutual benefits while addressing regional challenges.

A prime example of this collaboration is the Mongolia-South Korea Joint Startup Support Center, set to open in 2024. This center aims to stimulate innovation in both countries by facilitating student and IT expert exchanges, supporting collaborative projects, and fostering startup development. Through such initiatives, Mongolia and South Korea are building

a framework for shared technological advancement, which aligns with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and reinforces the importance of cross-border knowledge transfer central to SDG 17. So, the establishment of this center: *“will contribute significantly to the development of Mongolia’s startup ecosystem, enabling the economic circulation of innovative products and services, increasing exports, preparing and enhancing human resources, and facilitating the mutual exchange of experiences.”*²⁵

Furthermore, the “Mongolia Open Innovation and Co-creation for SDGs” (MICS) program, initiated by the representative office of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Mongolia, is another testament to Mongolia’s commitment to advancing scientific collaboration. This initiative encourages joint research projects and innovation exchanges, facilitating technology transfer in key sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, and disaster management. By integrating innovative solutions into its agricultural practices and disaster preparedness strategies, Mongolia and Japan are advancing their respective SDG agendas while fostering mutual growth and development. In particular, “A diverse spectrum of 137 organizations, encompassing private and public sectors as well as governmental and non-governmental bodies from Mongolia and Japan, actively participated in proposing innovative solutions and 40 projects presented at the MICS 2023 Forum.”²⁶

Mongolia has a long history of engaging in humanitarian efforts and disaster relief with Northeast Asian partners. These initiatives not only provide essential support to communities in need but also strengthen diplomatic ties and promote regional stability. Mongolia’s active participation in the UN’s Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC) is a notable example. By deploying experts to assist in disaster management efforts across the region, Mongolia demonstrates its commitment to regional cooperation during crises. Such actions fulfill immediate humanitarian needs and reinforce long-term diplomatic relationships, thereby promoting stability in the region. This aligns closely with SDG 17, emphasizing the importance of building partnerships to address shared challenges effectively.

Mongolia’s ties with Northeast Asian nations have fostered resilience through diverse humanitarian support, particularly during natural disasters and economic challenges. China provides crucial aid during Mongolia’s severe winters (Dzud), supplying food, fuel, and essential resources to alleviate crisis situations (SDG 2). South Korea has reinforced economic and

²⁵ Mongolia-South Korea Joint Startup Support Center to be Established, <https://montsame.mn/en/read/348259>

²⁶ “Mongolia Open Innovation and Co-creation for SDGs” 2023 is Continuing Its Mentoring Program, <https://www.montsame.mn/en/read/326923>

health sector partnerships with Mongolia, marked by discussions on a potential Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and significant health aid, such as its \$200,000 contribution during the COVID-19 pandemic. These efforts aim to boost economic stability and healthcare capacity, aligning with SDGs 8 and 3. Japan's contributions focus on financial support for urban infrastructure, including Ulaanbaatar's public transport, and disaster relief aid during "Dzud" periods, supporting Mongolia's sustainability and urban development goals (SDG 11). Mongolia and DPRK have committed to actively enhancing their collaboration in various sectors, including education, culture, sports, agriculture, health, and humanitarian efforts, by facilitating visits across different levels.

This renewed engagement also emphasizes the importance of scientific cooperation, which is vital for achieving SDGs related to health, education, and environmental sustainability.

- Cultural Exchange and People-to-People Diplomacy

Cultural exchange and people-to-people diplomacy have played a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding and collaboration among Northeast Asian nations. By promoting cultural programs, educational exchanges, and collaborative artistic projects, Mongolia has strengthened its ties with neighboring countries, creating a foundation for deeper cooperation.

The Mongolia-China Cultural Exchange Program, launched in 2023, promotes joint cultural events, language learning, and collaborative artistic projects. This initiative enriches cultural understanding and fosters economic ties through tourism and trade. By enhancing cultural diplomacy, Mongolia can build trust and goodwill among Northeast Asian countries, reinforcing the importance of cross-cultural cooperation in achieving SDG 17 goals.

The Mongolia-Japan Cultural Exchange Year in 2023 celebrated shared history and values through art exhibitions, language classes, and youth exchange programs. Such initiatives create lasting connections and deepen mutual appreciation between the two nations, including their interactions with DPRK. By engaging in cultural diplomacy, Mongolia, Japan, and DPRK not only strengthen their bilateral ties but also exemplify the potential for cultural exchange as a means to advance shared SDG objectives, promoting social cohesion and understanding.

Mongolia has also established partnerships with various Northeast Asian countries to enhance educational exchanges and capacity building. Programs like the Mongolia-Russia Educational Cooperation Initiative foster academic collaboration, providing scholarships and opportunities for students from North Korea to study in Mongolia. By investing in human capital and promoting educational exchanges, Mongolia contributes to SDG 4 (Quality Education) while reinforcing its commitment to regional cooperation through shared educational goals.

In scientific areas, Mongolia could explore joint environmental research initiatives with China, Japan, and South Korea focused on climate change, air quality, and desertification, issues central to regional stability. Collaborative renewable energy projects, such as solar and wind, could leverage Mongolia's natural resources and align with SDG 7 goals, supporting sustainable energy development. Additionally, establishing a telemedicine innovation hub in partnership with Japan and South Korea could advance healthcare access in rural areas across the region, while a coordinated disaster response network could improve preparedness for natural crises.

In humanitarian fields, Mongolia might collaborate on maternal and child health programs, benefiting from South Korea's and Japan's public health expertise. Crisis preparedness workshops could also foster shared skills in disaster management, enhancing regional resilience.

Cultural collaborations might include expanded student exchanges, regional festivals, and heritage conservation projects with Japan and South Korea to protect historical sites. Joint expos and exhibitions would further strengthen cultural ties and foster mutual understanding, aligning with Mongolia's Vision 2050 goals and promoting greater integration across Northeast Asia.

CONCLUSION

As Mongolia continues to navigate its unique geopolitical position between two global powers, its role as a mediator and connector in NEA remains crucial. By prioritizing collaborative efforts that align with SDG 17, Mongolia is poised to become a pivotal player in fostering a sustainable and resilient future for Northeast Asia. Ultimately, the pursuit of shared goals through strategic partnerships will be essential in achieving Mongolia's Vision 2050 objectives while reinforcing the importance of international cooperation in addressing complex regional challenges.

Mongolia plays a pivotal role in Northeast Asia, acting as a crucial intermediary for scientific, humanitarian, and cultural exchanges among its neighboring countries. Its unique geographic position between China and Russia allows it to facilitate dialogue and cooperation, serving as a platform for addressing regional challenges.

By promoting partnerships that align with SDG 17, Mongolia emphasizes the importance of collaboration in achieving sustainable development across the region. Mongolia's strategic role as a mediator and partner is vital for enhancing cooperation and ensuring stability in Northeast Asia, making it an indispensable player in the region's future while embodying the principles of SDG 17 to foster collaborative efforts for sustainable development.

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北東アジアにおけるSDGsの達成に向けた モンゴルの役割(要旨)

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要 旨

モンゴルは、持続可能な開発目標(SDGs)に沿った共同プロジェクトに参加することで、北東アジア(NEA)における重要なパートナーとしての地位を強化してきている。SDGsは、持続可能な発展を実現するために国際的なパートナーシップの重要性を強調している。そのため、中国、日本、韓国、北朝鮮、ロシアを含む北東アジア諸国とのモンゴルの協力の歴史を検証し、モンゴルの「持続可能な開発ビジョン2030(SDV)」と「ビジョン2050」の目標を支援する科学、人道、文化交流に焦点を当てることが重要な課題となる。また、「SDG 17:目標のためのパートナーシップ」[1]は、持続可能な進展を達成するための国際協力の重要な役割を強調している。モンゴルは、ロシアと中国という2つの大国の間に位置する内陸国として、経済的・環境的課題に効果的に対処するために地域のパートナーと協力することの重要性を認識している。地理的位置と外交への歴史的な傾向から、モンゴルは北東アジアにおける仲介者・接続役として、経済的、社会的、環境的な目標を推進する国境を越えたプロジェクトを促進する上で、独自の役割を果たすことができる。本研究では、モンゴルが北東アジア諸国間の関係を強化する努力を強調しつつ、モンゴルの地域での持続可能な発展と経済発展に関する長期ビジョンにおいて、SDG 17が重要な役割を果たしていることを指摘している。

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