

Concept Paper on Establishment of a Network of Think Tanks among Developing-8 (D-8) Member Countries

(Proposed by the Arab Republic of Egypt)

Introduction

The D8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, comprising Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Türkiye, presents a unique opportunity for member states to foster economic growth, political stability, and mutual cooperation. The Organization has long sought to promote social, economic, and industrial cooperation. However, as global dynamics shift due to political instability, economic challenges, and health crises, the need for collaborative research and policy insights has become increasingly crucial.

It is against this background that the Arab Republic of Egypt proposes to establish the D8 Network of Economic Think Tanks to serve as a platform for sharing information, exchanging ideas, and enhancing partnerships among research centers, through the involvement of policy experts and digital innovators, in order to individually and collectively develop informed solutions to the pressing development challenges facing the D8 member countries. The paper outlines the rationale, objectives, and proposed framework for establishing a network of think tanks that will focus on critical issues affecting the D8 countries, facilitating research and collaboration to enhance regional development.

2. Rationale

The D8 member states share common challenges and opportunities in promoting economic cooperation and trade. The dynamic global landscape, marked by geopolitical tensions, economic crises, and pandemics, necessitates a coordinated approach to address these issues effectively. By creating a network of think tanks, D-8 members can pool expertise, share knowledge, and develop actionable strategies that leverage the strengths of each member state.

3. Purpose and Objectives of the Network

The primary purpose of this network is to create a structured platform for intellectual discourse and exchange among D-8 countries. This platform will drive research on critical economic, political, and social issues impacting the region and identify collaborative solutions.

Furthermore, the network is aimed at promoting economic cooperation, sharing of best practices, and enhancing policy research on contemporary international issues affecting the D-8 member states. Given the complex, interdependent nature of the modern global economy, this network will serve as a valuable platform to foster sustainable development, improve trade flows, and address geopolitical risks impacting D-8 nations.

- A. Promoting Economic Cooperation and Trade:** 1) Research and analyze strategies to enhance trade flows and investment among D8 countries. 2) Identify and address challenges faced by business communities and investors, including regulatory barriers and logistical impediments. 3) Develop incentive programs to foster cross-collaboration among member states.
- B. Sharing Best Practices in Economic Development:** 1) Facilitate knowledge exchange regarding successful economic policies and initiatives implemented in member states. 2) Create platforms for dialogue and collaboration to enhance capacity building in areas such as trade facilitation, entrepreneurship, innovation and digital economy and trade.
- C. Analyzing International Political Challenges:** 1) Conduct assessments of how international conflicts impact D8 member states. 2) Examine potential economic crises and pandemics, and their implications for regional stability and economic cooperation.
- D. Analyzing Economic and Trade Challenges:** Investigate and address the current economic and trade challenges facing D-8 nations, including high debt burdens, barriers to financing, and impediments to free trade. This includes providing actionable recommendations to support the financial health and economic independence of member countries.

- E. Developing Projects for Mutual Benefit: Explore and develop cooperative projects that can yield mutual benefits for D-8 member states, potentially in areas such as tourism, energy, agriculture, technology, artificial intelligence, infrastructure, and education.

4. Key Research Areas

The Network of Think Tanks will focus on, but not be restricted to, the following topics:

- A. Economic Cooperation and Trade:
- Identifying current barriers to trade among D-8 nations.
 - Developing policies to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers.
 - Crafting innovative financing solutions for joint economic projects.
 - Developing measures to increase the D-8 PTA effectiveness in supporting intra-D-8 trade.
 - Exploring mechanisms to support free trade within the group and in wider global markets.
- B. Best Practices in Economic Development:
- Creating a database of successful economic models implemented by D-8 members.
 - Offering workshops, conferences, and reports on implementing these practices effectively.
- C. Political Challenges:
- Assessing the impact of current global geopolitical dynamics and tensions on D-8 economies.
 - Formulating a framework for collaborative strategic diplomatic responses.
- D. International Economic and Trade Issues:
- Addressing the high cost of accessing finance, especially for infrastructure and sustainable development.
 - Promoting access to affordable financial services for micro, small, and medium enterprises.
 - Identifying strategies for debt relief and restructuring in economically vulnerable D-8 nations.
- E. Common Projects and Collaborations:
- Developing ideas for joint infrastructure projects, such as transportation networks.
 - Identifying joint research opportunities in fields like healthcare, agriculture and the digital transformation of the economy.
 - Creating shared resources for disaster preparedness and pandemic response.

5. Methodology:

The Network of Think Tanks will rely on a multi-faceted approach combining research, collaborative dialogue, and knowledge exchange to achieve these objectives. The following key methodologies will serve as the backbone of the initiative:

- A. Research Consortia and Collaborative Projects: Establish specialized research consortia across the network to focus on the thematic areas identified above. Each consortium will conduct research, issue policy recommendations, and propose actionable projects to address the specific challenges facing D-8 countries.
- B. Regular Workshops and Conferences: Host regular workshops, conferences, and seminars where member states' think tanks can discuss findings, share insights, and collaborate on common projects. These events will facilitate face-to-face dialogue and strengthen inter-institutional relationships.

- C. Virtual Knowledge Exchange Platform: Create an online platform that provides easy access to research findings, policy papers, and discussion forums for continuous engagement among network participants. This platform will serve as a digital repository for sharing reports, case studies, and best practices.
- D. Publication of Annual Report: Issue an annual report summarizing research outcomes, policy recommendations, and collaborative achievements. This report will serve as a reference for policymakers, stakeholders, and the broader international community.
- E. Advisory Role to Policymakers: Provide a structured channel through which research insights and policy recommendations can reach D-8 governments, allowing think tanks within the network to serve as advisors on pressing issues impacting member countries.

6. Implementation Strategy

- A. Initial Research Agenda: Conduct an assessment to prioritize topics based on urgency and relevance to all member states. This can involve surveys of policymakers and experts across D-8 countries. Initially, Foreign Ministries from each Member State may approach selected 'Think Tanks', with the request to share their views and inputs towards establishing the Network, and possible topics/policy research areas.
- B. Engagement with Stakeholders: The network will work closely with business associations, government agencies, and educational institutions across the D-8 countries to ensure practical relevance.
- C. Dissemination and Policy Advocacy: Research findings will be shared through policy briefs, white papers, conferences, and online platforms. The network will also lobby for adoption and implementation of these recommendations by member governments.
- D. Collaborative Research Projects: Encourage joint research initiatives that bring together scholars, policymakers, and industry experts from different member states.
- E. Annual Conferences and Workshops: Organize regular conferences and workshops to share findings, discuss policy recommendations, and strengthen networks among participants.

Structure and Funding:

The structure of the D8 Network of Economic Think Tanks can be later discussed by the D8 Member States. Options to be discussed in this regard include the following:

- The Network of Think Tanks can operate as a D-8 affiliated body with each member state designating or nominating two economic research centers in their country (i.e. one from the public and one from the private sector) to participate in the network.
- A central body can be created to oversee the network's activities, facilitate communication among member think tanks, and coordinate research efforts. This body can be named 'Executive Council', which may comprise representatives from each member country to oversee the network's strategic direction and budget allocations.
- A secretariat can be established to coordinate all activities, organize meetings, and maintain a centralized database of research findings and resources. The headquarters can either be hosted permanently by an interested member state, or it can be established on a rotating basis among D8 member states.
- An advisory board, consisting of economic, political, and sectoral experts can be established to provide insights into research priorities and emerging challenges.
- Options to consider for funding include:
 - Each member state contributing to the network's operational budget proportionate to their economic capacity.
 - Funding may be sought from multilateral organizations.
 - The Network, itself, can generate revenue from, among others, providing research services to interested parties, thematic courses, and paid subscriptions to the journal of research papers.
 - The member state holding the Chairmanship can be responsible for the funding of reports issued during its tenure as Chair, in addition to the operational fees of the secretariat (if it is agreed to be a rotational secretariat).

10. Expected Outcomes

The establishment of the Network of Think Tanks is anticipated to yield several valuable outcomes, including, but not limited to:

- A. Enhanced Trade and Investment Flows: The network's recommendations will help identify practical solutions to increase trade and investment flows among D-8 countries, generating economic benefits for the entire region, thus paving the way for smoother economic integration among D-8 countries and leading to stronger economic ties and growth.
- B. Better Policy Coordination and Shared Best Practices: Through regular exchange of successful models, member states will benefit from enhanced policy frameworks suited to their unique contexts. A more cohesive policy environment across D-8 countries will eventually enable smoother business operations, trade activities, and investment.
- C. Resilience to Political and Economic Crises: D-8 countries will be better prepared to respond collectively to international political and economic issues. With joint strategies and informed policymaking, member states will be better equipped to respond to international crises, both political and economic.
- D. Innovative Joint Projects: Through targeted cooperative projects, member countries can address shared needs, promoting both efficiency and unity. Successful identification of common projects will enhance cooperation, foster regional integration, and contribute to sustainable economic growth.
- E. Shared Development Insights: Through the network, D-8 countries will benefit from shared best practices, enhancing their capacity for economic development and improving their competitive positioning globally.
- F. Knowledge Sharing: A robust platform for sharing best practices, facilitating learning, and improving economic policies across member states.

11. Conclusion

The Network of Think Tanks will provide a solid foundation for D-8 member states to address pressing economic, political, and social issues, collaboratively. By pooling resources, insights, and expertise, the network will help realize the shared goal of sustainable development across the D-8 member nations. This initiative represents a proactive step towards a more integrated and resilient future for the D-8 community, in an increasingly complex world.

The establishment of a Network of Think Tanks among D-8 countries is an essential step towards realizing the organization's long-term vision for economic cooperation and development. Through structured research, collaborative problem-solving, and proactive policy recommendations, this network will serve as a valuable resource for D-8 governments, helping them navigate complex global challenges and strengthen intra-regional ties. With the backing of member states, the network can play a transformative role in shaping the future of D-8 collaboration.

The Network, when fully operational, will go a long way in supporting the work of the D8 Secretariat as well as the affiliate bodies of the D8 Organization in general, by offering useful policy recommendations for their operations and guidance.