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# India's G20 Presidency as a Voice of Global South

**Sushil Kumar**

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विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली



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# India's G20 Presidency as a Voice of Global South

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Sushil Kumar\*

**Abstract:** The phase of Southern-led presidencies began with the Presidency of Indonesia in 2022, followed by India (2023), Brazil (2024 and South Africa (2025). This is a most opportune moment for taking up critical issues the Global South faces and shaping the global discourse accordingly. It is in this context that the role of G20 assumes great significance. India used the Indian Presidency of the G20 to bring Voice of the Global South to the centre stage by including pressing issues of importance of the global South in the agenda of the Indian G20 Presidency and by formally including the African Union as a member of the G20. Global South has emerged as an Engine of Global Growth. Over the decades, countries of the Global South have gained significant influence in the global economy. They now contribute to more than half of the world's growth. The G20 has reiterated the fundamental significance of gender equality. It has committed to reducing the digital gender gap by 50 per cent by the year 2030 and decided to launch the "Data for Development Capacity Building Initiative" for the development of the Global South, creating resilient global value chains and assisting developing countries to move up the value chain. In the context of renewable energy, the G20 acknowledges the significance of sustainable biofuels and the setting up of the Global Biofuels Alliance. The G20 reaffirmed the commitment made in 2010 by the developed nations to mobilise jointly USD 100 billion per year in climate finance by 2020 and annually through 2025 to meet the requirements of the developing nations. The G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration emphasises the importance of addressing debt vulnerabilities in low and middle-income countries effectively, comprehensively, and systematically. India also launched two India-led initiatives, namely the Global Digital Public Infrastructure Repository and a Social Impact Fund (India has pledged an initial commitment of USD 25 million), during the Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit on November 22, 2023. These initiatives are intended to promote the development of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in the Global South.

**Keywords:** Global South, G20, Digital Public Infrastructure, Development Finance, Technology

**JEL:** O1, F02, F13, F30

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## Introduction

India hosted the G20 Leaders' Summit on September 9-10, 2023, which brought together the G20 Heads of State and Government.<sup>1</sup> The priorities of India's G20 Presidency exhibited a clear vision that is inclusive and pragmatic. These priorities encompass a wide range of substantive discussions, including strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth (G20, 2023), accelerating progress on sustainable development goals (SDGs), multilateral institutional reforms, green development for a sustainable future, technological transformation and digital public infrastructure, international taxation and women led development. These priorities are also supported by 125 countries from the Global South during the "Voice of the Global South Summit" in January 2023.

It is important to mention that under India's G20 Presidency, India's aim is to amplify the voice of the Global South, responding to its priorities, recognising the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and identifying simple, scalable and sustainable development solutions that can transform our societies and economies. The Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' promotes consultative, outcome-oriented, demand-driven development partnerships that respect the sovereignty of partner countries, where voices of the Global South are India's voice, its priorities India's priorities to be implemented in south-driven development partnerships. As the "eight-decade old model of global governance slowly changes",<sup>2</sup> the Global South needs to shape the emerging order with fundamental reform of the major international organisations that reflect the realities of the 21st century and give voice to the concerns of the developing world.<sup>3</sup> "Most of the global challenges have not been created by the global south"<sup>4</sup> even though they affect them more, as witnessed in climate change, more recently during the COVID-19 pandemic and rising incidence of grave conflicts around the world.<sup>5</sup>

The recent G20 summits, such as the Riyadh Summit in 2020 and the Rome Summit in 2021, have demonstrated a clear focus on addressing critical issues. The Riyadh Summit, held in 2020, prioritised saving

lives, livelihoods and affected economies. On the other hand, the Rome Summit, which took place in 2021, centered its agenda on the themes of People, Planet, and Prosperity. In relation to the accomplishments of the G20 during the period of the pandemic, the G20 economic response, envisaged a multipronged coordinated approach, the key features were including the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), which aimed to alleviate debt burdens. Additionally, international economic assistance was in the form of Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust and the Rapid Financing Instrument. Additionally, the member countries of the G20 have committed to providing a total of USD 21 billion in funding to support efforts aimed at combatting the global epidemic. The theme of the G20 Indonesian Presidency revolved around the concept of “Recover Together - Recover Stronger”. According to the outcome document of the Indonesian Presidency, there is a pressing global need for increased collective action and inclusive engagement among major industrialised countries and emerging economies. The priority issues addressed by the Indonesian Presidency encompassed the domains of Global Health Architecture, Digital Transformation, and Sustainable Energy Transition (Srinivas, 2023).

The theme of India’s G20 Presidency is “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: One Earth, One Family, One Future,” which emphasises equitable growth and a shared future for all. India’s G20 presidency is being shaped in consultation with not only G20 partners but also our fellow travellers in the global south, whose voices are frequently ignored.<sup>6</sup> In this context, the Indian Presidency placed a strong emphasis on representing the needs and perspectives of the Global South in the G20 which is reflected in the G20 New Delhi Leaders’ Declaration. It is also important to note that until 2025, the presidency of the G20 will be held by countries of the Global South (Brazil in 2024 and South Africa in 2025); hence, there is an opportunity to reflect the aspirations of a large number of countries that are not members of the G20 but are significantly impacted by its decisions.

After World War II, the architecture of global governance was designed to serve two purposes. First, to prevent future conflicts through

the balancing of competing interests. Second, promote international cooperation on issues of common interests.<sup>7</sup> The events of the past few years – the financial crisis, climate change, pandemics, terrorism, and conflicts – demonstrate conclusively that global governance has failed to fulfil both of its mandates.<sup>8</sup> Also, we must acknowledge that the developing world is most affected by this failure’s tragic consequences. After years of progress, we risk reversing course on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) today.<sup>9</sup> While attempting to ensure the food and energy security of their citizens, numerous developing nations struggle with unsustainable debt levels. They are also the most affected by the global warming caused by the wealthier nations.

India has always been recognised as the Voice of the Global South, which includes African nations. In January 2023, during India’s virtual Global South Summit, Prime Minister Modi announced the establishment of the Global South Centre of Excellence among the second summit in November 2023, The Prime Minister of India inaugurated the center (DAKSHIN) stand for Development And Knowledge sharing initiative. Its work programme includes a mechanism that actively focuses on common development challenges faced by developing countries in order to develop simple and affordable solutions for accelerated and inclusive socioeconomic development.<sup>10</sup> The Global South Centre of Excellence is another significant contribution made by India during its G20 presidency (Chaturvedi, 2023). People will remember India’s G20 presidency as the People’s Presidency. It is inspiring to see how India was able to engage millions of people in just eight months. It set a record with nearly 185 official meetings and 230 meetings in 57 locations across the country. India has also added a working group on disaster risk resilience and an engagement group for the Start-up 20.<sup>11</sup>

India’s pivotal role in the G20 could mark the dynamics of global relations. It heralds a series of Southern presidencies, as it is held between the Indonesian presidency and the upcoming terms of Brazil and South Africa (DCR, 2023). Successive Southern leadership could be more than merely symbolic, ushering in a transformative phase in global diplomacy. In fact, it offers an opportunity for Southern countries - with closer



economic and developmental ties - to collectively set the international agenda and articulate and advocate for a coordinated, distinctive direction on the world stage.<sup>12</sup>

## **Membership of the African Union (AU) in the G20**

As noted in the preceding section, India recently launched a number of new initiatives for the global south, including Africa. India's relationship with African countries is centuries old (Chaturvedi, 2016). Notably, India's development cooperation with Africa is a partnership based on solidarity, non-prescriptive, and mutual benefits. The intersection of African resurgence and India's growing economy and global profile has opened up new avenues for deepening the multi-faceted development partnership between the two emerging growth poles of the world (RIS, 2015) and the African Union's membership in the G20 is the greatest accomplishment of India's G20 presidency and the African Union's membership of G20 will substantially contribute to addressing the current global challenges. It is essential to note that the inclusion of the African Union in the G20 will always be hailed as a landmark of inclusivity and will give the Global South a greater voice. In addition, the G20 reaffirms its robust support for Africa, including through the G20 Compact with Africa and the G20 Initiative to Support Industrialisation in Africa and LDCs (G20, 2023).<sup>13</sup> It is also essential to explain why the African Union's membership in the G20 is significant for both G20 member nations and the entire globe. The African Union (AU) serves as a unifying platform for all 55 African states, with the primary objective of fostering the growth and economic development of the continent. Additionally, the AU endeavours to advocate for the inclusion of citizens and facilitate enhanced collaboration and integration among African states. The African Union (AU) consists of member countries that collectively represent about one quarter of the United Nations (UN) membership. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Africa's population has nearly doubled and its GDP has quadrupled. According to the African Development Bank (2023), Africa is the world's fastest-growing economies, and its real GDP growth is expected to exceed the global average in 2023–24. It is essential to note that the continent has a substantial human capital basis,

as its population is projected to reach 2.4 billion by 2050. As the majority of the current population is young, in contrast to the ageing population of other regions. Africa is home to twenty-five per cent of the world's natural biodiversity and thirty per cent of the world's mineral resources, the majority of which are crucial for a green transition. It has a substantial renewable energy potential, including wind, solar, hydropower, and geothermal energy, and the highest solar energy potential in the globe (AfDB, 2023). The annual output at market exchange rates of AU amounts to USD 3.14 trillion, or approximately 3.25 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>14</sup>

The African Union member nations bear a responsibility for approximately 3.6 per cent of the total global carbon emissions.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, they experience economic losses ranging from 5 per cent to 15 per cent of their GDP as a result of climate change. Chaturvedi *et al.* (2023) already argued correctly that the AU should be a part of the G20 in order to promote the values of fairness, respect, care, and honesty. Moreover, crucial issues such as climate change, migration, debt restructuring, SDGs, food security and pandemics could not be debated meaningfully without Africa's participation.

## **Broad Areas of Augmenting Global South Agenda**

### ***Debt Sustainability***

Another crucial aspect for developing countries pertains to the restructuring of their debt. The G20 has placed a high priority on addressing debt vulnerabilities in low- and middle-income countries. (DWG, 2023). During India's presidency, the G20 made substantial progress in addressing debt restructuring as Global public debt has increased over the past several decades, more specifically in developing countries.

In recent years, cascading crises precipitated a sharp acceleration of this trend. Since 2000, global public debt has increased by more than fivefold, significantly outpacing global GDP growth, which has tripled during the same period. In 2022, global public debt, including

both domestic and external debt, reached a new high of USD 92 trillion. Developing nations owe nearly 30 per cent of the total.<sup>16</sup>

The aggregate public debt of developing nations experienced a notable rise, surging from 35 per cent of their respective gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010 to 60 per cent in the year 2021. In a similar vein, the proportion of a government's debt owed to foreign creditors (known as external public debt) experienced a rise from 19 per cent to 29 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2021. When examining the correlation between debt levels and the capacity of developing countries to generate foreign exchange via exports, it becomes evident that their ability to generate adequate money for servicing their external debt commitments has experienced a decline. The proportion of external public debt relative to exports had a notable rise, surging from 71 per cent in 2010 to 112 per cent in 2021 (UN, 2023).

The G20 has prioritised addressing debt vulnerabilities in low- and middle-income countries from 2021. Achieving the 2030 agenda depends on these countries' progress, yet debt hinders their efforts, limiting fiscal space for financing the SDGs. It is important to note that the G20 recently agreed to keep all of the promises made in the Common Framework for Debt Treatments Beyond the DSSI, including those in the second and last paragraphs, as agreed on November 13, 2020, and to speed up the implementation of the Common Framework in a predictable, timely, orderly, and coordinated way.<sup>17</sup> The G20 also encouraged the efforts of the Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable (GSDR) to facilitate effective debt treatment by enhancing communication among key stakeholders.

Under India's presidency in 2023, the G20 gave a significant boost to debt restructuring through the Common Framework. Only Chad had previously gone through the debt restructuring process outlined in this framework before India took the lead. Zambia, Ethiopia, and Ghana have all made significant progress as a direct result of India's efforts. India played a pivotal role, being a key creditor. With a committee co-chaired by India, Japan, and France, G20 forums facilitated debt restructuring coordination for Sri Lanka outside of the Common Framework.<sup>18</sup>

## *New Trade Opportunities*

The phenomenon of global growth has revealed a notable pattern wherein 80 percent of the world's growth currently emanates from nations located in the Global South. The emergence of this revolutionary pattern can be traced back to the commencement of the G20 conference in 2008.<sup>19</sup> The same trend is also observed in the global trade of the Global South. overall trade from the global South was USD 140.75 billion in 1990, rising to USD 9.36 trillion in 2021. It has expanded more than 66 times in the last 31 years, and its share in global total trade has increased from 31 percent in 1990 to 55 percent in 2021.

It is important to mention that under the Indian G20 presidency, the trade and investment group reached a consensus on five important action-oriented outcomes. As mentioned above, Intra-South exports grew at an annual average rate of 13 per cent between 1995 and 2022, far outpacing the growth of world exports at 7.5 per cent during the same period. G20 reaffirms the rules-based, non-discriminatory and transparent multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core.<sup>20</sup> The member countries of G20 engaged in discussion pertaining to the five key areas of focus, namely: resilient and sustainable global value chains, Facilitating the integration of Micro and Medium enterprises into international trade, trade for growth and prosperity, WTO reform and underscoring the importance of reduced entry barriers on digital platforms. More importantly, for the Global South, the G20 also recognises the importance of WTO's "Aid for Trade Initiative" to enable developing countries and LDCs to participate effectively in global trade. In this context, focusing on digital up-skilling and reskilling programmes would also extremely relevant for expanding trade and investment linkages across the Global South (Chaturvedi & Kumar, 2023). It is important to mention that since the Aid-for-Trade Initiative was started in 2006, DAC member countries have disbursed USD 262.76 billion to finance Aid for Trade initiatives and projects, primarily in LDCs and LMICs. The outcome document of the Trade and Investment Minister's Meeting also highlights that G20 member countries also enhance their cooperation to increase transparency of Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary

(SPS), and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) measures by the WTO agreements and G20 member countries will help the Global South through technical assistance and capacity building to strengthen their ability for establishing and complying with technical requirements<sup>21</sup> G20 also emphasises the importance of services trade in global growth, more specifically, generating employment opportunities, and, in this context, G20 member countries agreed to remove unnecessary barriers (qualification requirements and procedures, technical standards and licensing requirements, etc) in cross-border trade in services. In addition, G20 welcome the “voluntary sharing of best practices by G20 members on Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) for professional services and the proposed development of a “Presidency’s Compendium of Best Practices on MRAs for Professional Services” (Outcome Document of Trade and Investment Minister’s Meeting, 2023). G20 also expressed support for current ongoing discussions on reforms in the WTO dispute-settlement system and making it fully functional and accessible to all Members by 2024 (27th report of MEA, Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2023).

The Prime Minister of India stated in his speech that the Indian presidency’s top priority has been increasing the participation of MSMEs in global trade and value chains. G20 recognises the role and significance of digital technology, technology-based tools, and appropriate policy and institutional measures in facilitating MSMEs’ access to information, finance, and markets. Additionally, G20 member nations issued the Jaipur Call for Action to improve MSMEs’ access to information (“need to utilize technological tools to bridge such informational gaps for MSMEs seeking business and trade-related information”,<sup>22</sup> Support scaling-up an existing information portal of MSMEs and Agree that Global Trade Helpdesk implemented by ITC, UNCTAD and WTO is suited for such an upgrade considering its inclusivity and veritable information provided to MSMEs). The final area of concern pertains to the logistical aspects of trade. The G20 recognises the importance of ensuring the reliability and predictability of international trade and cargo operations. They emphasise the need to promote international paperless trade transactions

and invest in logistics infrastructure to stimulate global trade demand. (Outcome Document of G20, 2023) Again, it is essential to note that the G20 member nations adopted two new important initiatives under India's G20 presidency. The first initiative proposes principles for digitalizing trade documents, and the second is a framework for mapping global value chains that focus on connectivity.

### ***Food Security***

The G20 Agriculture Working group was created in 2011 during France's presidency of G20. At that time, there was a high volatility in global food prices, and the whole world was affected, including the Global South. It has since become an essential forum for discussing agriculture-related issues and enhancing cooperation among the G20 members. Agriculture issues are critical for achieving the SDG goals, especially the goal of zero hunger (SDG 2). It is essential to mention that the Global South, more specifically low-income countries experience the greatest rates of food and nutrition insecurity, estimated at over 50 per cent.<sup>23</sup> If we see the outcome documents of G20, we can find that G20 has consistently discussed food security issues and ensured access to food for all, especially in times of crisis.<sup>24</sup> Like the "Global Agriculture and Food Security Program" was launched in 2011 by the G20 to support agricultural development and food security in low-income countries and consequently, the Food Security and Nutrition Framework was adopted in 2014 by the G20. In 2021, the Metara Declaration on Food Security and Nutrition was adopted, and in 2022, G20 leaders in Bali also supported the international efforts to ensuring the food security, particularly developing and least developed countries.<sup>25</sup> Under the Indian G20 presidency, the Deccan High-level Principles on Global Food Security were adopted (see table 1). It is essential to mention that these principles provide a basis to ensure global food security, more specifically, Global South through G20 actions and programmes with collaboration multilateral organisations. The Agriculture Market Information System (AMIS) and MAHARISHI initiative, i.e, Millets And other Ancient Grains International ReSearch Initiative are two major achievements in this context (Chaturvedi & Kumar, 2023).

**Table 1: Deccan High Level Principles on Food Security and Nutrition 2023**

Sr. No.	Principles
1	Facilitate Humanitarian Assistance to Countries and Populations in Vulnerable Situations
2	Enhance Availability and Access to Nutritious Food and Strengthen Food Safety Nets
3	Strengthen Policies and Collaborative Actions for Climate-Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems
4	Strengthen Resilience and Inclusivity in Agriculture and Food Value Chains
5	Promote the One Health Approach
6	Accelerate Innovation and the Use of Digital Technology
7	Scale-Up Responsible Public and Private Investments in Agriculture

*Source:* Outcome Document of G20 Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (2023).

### ***The Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA)***

On the sidelines of the Delhi Summit, Prime Minister of India and leaders of the United States, Brazil, Singapore, Bangladesh, Argentina, Mauritius, Italy, and UAE launched the Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA).<sup>26</sup> It is a multi-stakeholder alliance of government, industries and international organizations. Currently, 22 countries and 12 international organizations have already agreed to join the Alliance<sup>27</sup> and the majority of these countries are from Global South. The Alliance aims to accelerate the global adoption of biofuels by facilitating technological advancements, intensifying the use of sustainable biofuels, and shaping comprehensive standard setting and certification with the participation of a diverse range of stakeholders. The Alliance will also serve as a central knowledge repository and expert centre. GBA aims to serve as a catalytic platform, fostering global collaboration for the advancement and widespread adoption of biofuels.<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that the global ethanol market was worth USD 99.06 billion in 2022 and is projected to grow

at a CAGR of 5.1 per cent between 2022 and 2032, surpassing USD 162.12 billion by 2032. Due to Net Zero targets, the IEA predicts a 3.5 to 5 fold growth potential for biofuels by 2050, generating a tremendous opportunity for India as well as for the global south.<sup>29</sup> According to the Indian Biogas Association (IBA), a biofuel alliance could generate USD500 billion in opportunities for G20 nations over the next three years.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Space Research***

In the context of the space sector, the space technology has had a significant impact on the quality of life of the human being, and the world's dependence on space and space assets is increasing daily. In this new epoch, the space industry presents enormous opportunities for private industries. By 2040, the current USD 447 billion industry is projected to surpass USD1 trillion. It is essential to note that the theme of this year's SELM (Space Economy Leaders Meet) under India's G20 presidency was "Towards a New Space ERA (Economy, Responsibility, Alliance)", reflecting the importance of New Space in shaping the global economy. Recalling the reaffirmation at the second SELM (2021) to address the growing hazard of space debris and the increasing congestion in Earth's orbit and emphasised the importance of preserving certain orbital regimes for secure human space flight activities in the interest of all nations. 4th space economy leaders' meeting also discussed the potential advantages of transitioning to a more sustainable production of space systems and the progressive use of eco-friendly and green propulsion systems. SELM also emphasised the importance of bilateral and multilateral partnerships involving space agencies, industries, and academic institutions in order to address the challenges of outer space's long-term sustainability and also recognised the growing number and diversity of space players. In addition, leaders have encouraged all spacefaring nations to promote international cooperation and capacity building in support of space-aspiring nations. It is important to mention that a prosperous space economy can help us better target our efforts on ensuring food security for all, taking timely and responsible climate action, providing quality healthcare and education for all, especially in the Global South.



## ***Remittances***

As one of the largest development finance flows, remittance offers immense potential to contribute to the achievement of Agenda 2030 and financial inclusion. On the other side, the high cost of remittances stops them from reaching their full potential. Since 2009, there has been a global drive to reduce the cost of remittances. The average cost of sending money home was 6.23 per cent around the world in 2021. It is more than the G20 goal of 5 per cent and more than twice as much as the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), of 3 per cent by 2030. A one per cent reduction in the cost of remitting USD 200 would result in an additional USD 6.05 billion being sent to low and middle-income countries. There is a substantial variance in the cost of remittances, with high costs in low-income countries and low costs in high-income countries (Kumar, 2023).

## ***Digitalisation***

India's G20 presidency in 2023 has prioritised Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Typically, it encompasses digital IDs, digital payments, and trusted data sharing. When we observe the achievements of DPI in India, it becomes evident that it can serve as a model for both the global community, more specifically Global South. The collaborative efforts of the public and private sectors in embracing digital transformation have had a profound effect on the wellbeing of the citizens (Kant, 2023). Throughout its G20 Presidency, India has emerged as a global leader in driving equity, transparency and accessibility by strengthening its digital public infrastructure (DPI). It is important to mention that three areas were discussed during the digital economy minister's meeting in 2023: the first one is DPI for digital inclusion including financial inclusion and innovation, building digital economy more safe, secure and resilient and digital skilling for building global future for ready workforce. G20 also welcome the "G20 Framework for Systems of Digital Public Infrastructure, a voluntary and suggested framework for the development, deployment and governance of DPI (Outcome Document of Digital Economy Ministers Meeting, 2023). It is important to mention that this

framework covers the technology as well as nontechnology components and provides flexibility to G20 members and other countries in terms of choice of technology and approaches to DPI and it will also provide a reference for Global South to fully harness the opportunities offered by the DPI.

It is essential to mention that India's digital transformation started in 2015 with the introduction of the Digital India initiative. The central concept of this initiative is inclusion and leaving no one behind. As stated by the Prime Minister of India during the G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Meeting conducted on August 19 in Bengaluru,<sup>31</sup> India currently has over 850 million internet users and some of the lowest data costs in the world. It is also essential to note that India has utilised technology to transform governance, making it more effective, inclusive, rapid, and transparent. Today, approximately 1.3 billion Indians have a digital identity known as Aadhaar, and India has utilised the strength of the JAM trinity - Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar, and Mobile - to revolutionise financial inclusion in India. In India, approximately 10 billion UPI (India Instant payment system) transactions occur each month, and more than 45 per cent of global real-time payments occur in India. The CoWIN portal helped the Covid vaccination drive in India. More than 2 billion vaccination doses and digitally verified certificates were delivered through this app. Infrastructure and logistics are mapped using technology and spatial planning by the Gati-Shakti platform. India also developing Bhashini, a language translation platform enabled by AI. It will promote digital inclusion in all of India's diverse languages

PM also mentioned that a solution that has proven successful in India has the potential to be effectively implemented in various regions across the globe. India is eager to offer its valuable experiences to the global community. India extended the availability of CoWIN platform to support global efforts during the challenging times of the Covid pandemic. India also announced the successful development of the India Stack, an innovative online Global Public Digital Goods Repository. This is to ensure that no one is left behind specially from Global South.<sup>32</sup>

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced two India-led initiatives, namely the Global Digital Public Infrastructure Repository and a Social Impact Fund (India has pledged an initial commitment of USD 25 million), during the Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit on November 22, 2023. These initiatives are intended to promote the development of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in the Global South.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)***

Today, the world is confronting various development issues, particularly in the global south, as discussed in the previous section, including rising inflation, geopolitical conflicts, and the resulting food and energy insecurity, which are expected to push 670 million people into extreme poverty by the end of the year. According to estimates, the world will need roughly USD 3.8 trillion each year until 2050 to transition to a low-carbon future. There is a gap of USD 500 billion in developing countries, including LDCs and SIDS<sup>34</sup> and due to COVID-19, fulfilling the SDGs may now cost USD 4.2 trillion (UN, 2023). In the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, it was made abundantly clear that at the halfway point to 2030, global progress on SDGs is off track, with only 12 per cent of targets on track. During this Decade of Action, we will leverage the G20's convening power and collective resolve to fully and effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and accelerate progress towards the SDGs in a timely manner, in order to shape the world, we want for future generations.<sup>35</sup>

Since the adoption of the G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>36</sup> in 2016, G20 leaders have consistently recognised the key role of the G20 in contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The G20's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been regularly reaffirmed and reviewed by the Action Plan's annual updates.<sup>37</sup> G20's comparative advantage lies in its convening power and its collective ability to adopt and support initiatives at the highest global level, including those that involve a macro-economic framework, and to create the global enabling environment, that will help achieve the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. Recently, The G20 Development

Ministers' Meeting<sup>38</sup> was held on June 11th -13th, 2023, in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh (India), and the outcome document proposed an ambitious seven-year action plan for accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goals, which presents a coordinated, integrated, and inclusive road map for G20 actions. The outcome document also mentioned that the 2023 Action Plan will focus on actions that will have a transformative effect on accelerating progress towards achieving all SDGs, including digital transformation, gender equality and women's empowerment; and implementing sustainable, inclusive, and just transitions on a global scale, leaving no one behind and enhanced the representation of developing countries in the decision-making process of the international finance institutes in order to realise the 2030-development agenda.

### **Strength of Consecutive Developing Country Presidencies (Troika<sup>39</sup> -IBSA)**

It is essential to note that the next G20 troika will consist of the current chair, India (2023), the successor, Brazil (2024), and South Africa (2025), the next in line. It is also essential to note that each of these countries is located on one of three different continents. These countries, which comprise the Global South, task themselves to voice the collective interests of the South in international forums and international politics on issues of peace, security, and development. Approximately two decades ago, in 2003, India, Brazil, and South Africa came together and formed the IBSA dialogue forum. It was established with the aim of fostering South-South Cooperation through a tripartite democracy initiative. It is a vibrant and growing regional grouping, with a combined GDP of approximately USD 5.9 trillion. In an increasingly polarised world, where religious fundamentalism and authoritarianism are on the rise and democratic values are under attack, the IBSA partnership plays an important role. The importance of IBSA rises in an international context of changing geo-strategies that impact an increasingly intersecting world (RIS. 2022). The next G20 troika will be an outstanding opportunity to advance the agenda of the global south during the G20 presidency of Brazil and South Africa.

These nations possess distinct characteristics and offer valuable contributions to one another and the broader Global South. India is widely recognised as a prominent global hub for pharmaceutical production, renowned for its technological expertise, advancements in digitalisation, significant contributions to the field of democracy, and substantial generation of solar energy. Brazil is widely recognised for its significant presence in the field of agriculture, while South Africa holds a prominent position in global environmental conservation efforts and serves as a key participant with direct access to the African Union (AU) (Mehta, 2023). In this context, it is imperative that India's prioritisation of the global south, as focusing in the current presidency, be sustained in the subsequent two presidencies. This prioritisation should encompass areas such as development financing, green development, and food security. It is imperative to note that IBSA has engaged in extensive discussions pertaining to several areas like global governance, sustainable development, climate-related issues, trade and supply chain dynamics, social sector development, trade-related issues, and multilateral reforms, among others. Numerous development projects have been deliberated upon and implemented using the IBSA fund. The next two G20 presidencies should prioritise the development of a shared narrative on South-South Cooperation and development towards a more equitable world. In light of the development agenda, it is imperative for IBSA to emphasise the importance of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and adhering to the Rio principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) and respective capabilities (RIS, 2022).

## **Development Cooperation and G20**

UNGA Resolution 70/1, titled "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," recognises international development cooperation as a means to achieve agenda 2030. According to the OECD Development Cooperation Report (DAC) of 2023, the traditional flow of development cooperation from the North to South hovered at about 0.3 per cent of the GNI of developed countries (as against the UN agreed figure of 0.7 per cent). However, South-South and Triangular development Cooperation have been effectively complementing these

efforts. G20, which is the premier forum for international economic cooperation, with its convening power, provides a unique platform for tackling development challenges and to provide an impetus for the achievement of SDGs. It has significant potential to drive reforms to improve the enabling environment for development and to remove constraints to sustainable growth and poverty reduction. In the G20, development cooperation exists in different formats, viz. financial, capacity support, and policy change. G20's approach to development is characterised by its overarching focus on international economic cooperation and is framed by the six G20 Development Principles set out in the Seoul Development Consensus (2010): Focus on economic growth; global development partnership; global or regional systemic issues; private sector participation; complementarity; and outcome orientation. Development cooperation in the G20 encompasses various modalities, namely financial assistance, capacity building, and policy reform. The primary emphasis is placed on the promotion of economic growth. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on fostering global development partnerships and addressing global or regional systemic concerns. Encouraging private sector participation is also considered crucial. India recently hosted an important conference on the voice of the Global South (MEA, 2023) and outlined the following sectors that are crucial for the development of the Global South.

1. Health (Promoting traditional medicine, developing regional hubs for healthcare, improving mobility of health professionals, deployment of digital health solutions)
2. Education (Sharing our best practices in vocational training, and in the use of technology to provide distance education, especially in remote areas)
3. Banking and Finance (deployment of digital public goods for increasing financial inclusion in developing countries at scale and speed)
4. Connectivity and Global Supply Chains (connectivity Infrastructure, diversification of global supply chains and linking developing countries to the value chains)

5. Climate Finance and Technology (controlling emissions from production; and discard use-and-throw consumption patterns for environment friendly sustainable lifestyles)

## **DAKSHIN**

The Voice of the Global South Summit was organised before the G20 Summit in 2023, January. At this virtual Global South Summit, Prime Minister of India announced the setting up of the Global South Centre of Excellence for sharing Indian development experience. After the G20 summit in November 2023 (during the 2nd Voice of Global South Summit on 17 November 2023) the Prime Minister of India inaugurated the centre (DAKSHIN), which stands for Development And Knowledge Sharing Initiative, and is hosted by RIS. The vision of the centre is “to foster knowledge sharing and mutual learning for building capacities and developing sustainable, affordable, and locally relevant solutions by collating resources, experiences and strategies to overcome developmental challenges the Global South faces and promote globally inclusive partnerships”.

DAKSHIN aims to foster a new development paradigm where the Global South shares experiences of development solutions of, for, and by the Global South, and is open to partnerships through triangular cooperation modalities. The work programme includes a mechanism that actively focuses on common challenges faced by developing countries in order to ensure simple and affordable solutions for accelerated and inclusive socio-economic growth. The Global South Centre of Excellence is another significant contribution from India during its G20 Presidency (Chaturvedi, 2023). The modalities that are identified include sharing experiences and co-production of knowledge, capacity building reskilling and sharing of technology. The idea is also to bring in some details on the institutional ecosystem within which several public-centric development solutions are being delivered (Chaturvedi & Kumar, 2023).

## **Conclusion and Way Forward**

The G20 leaders' declaration focuses on promoting robust, sustainable, balanced, and inclusive growth. It seeks to accelerate progress on SDGs and come up with an action plan accordingly. It envisions a green development accord for the future's sustainability. It also endorses voluntary principles on hydrogen, the Chennai principles for a sustainable and resilient blue economy, and the Deccan principles on food security and nutrition, among others. The pivotal role of technology in facilitating transformation and promoting inclusivity has been underscored, particularly in relation to digital public infrastructure. The G20 has reiterated the fundamental significance of gender equality and has made a commitment to reducing the digital gender gap by 50 per cent by the year 2030. The G20 leaders additionally underscored the importance of revitalising multilateralism and implementing reforms within international financial institutions. These measures are pertinent in effectively addressing global debt risks, with a specific focus on developing nations. Additionally, this will serve to augment the representation and influence of emerging nations in the process of decision-making. It is imperative to note that within the prevailing framework of debt management, notable advancements were made by Zambia, Ghana, and Ethiopia during the Indian G20 presidency and the initiation of the Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable. During its presidency, India also added a working group on Disaster Risk Resilience (DRR) and an engagement group on Start-up 20 to discuss emergent issues and decided to launch "Data for Development Capacity Building Initiative" for the development of Global South. Throughout its presidency, India has been a vocal voice not only for itself but also for the greater global South community. In this context, The Voice of Global South Summit is a remarkable demonstration of India's commitment to addressing the concerns of the global south at a prominent international forum (Chaturvedi, 2023). The development experience of India may provide solutions that are simple, scalable, and sustainable, which can transform respective economies and societies. To accomplish its common goals, the Global South would rely on both what Southern countries can do together and what they can seek together on the global



agenda. Developing nations are deeply concerned about the increasing fragmentation of the international landscape and aspire to have an equal voice in the international development discourse.<sup>40</sup>

Important commitments for developing countries under the Indian G20 presidency include creating resilient global value chains and assisting developing countries to move up the value chain, welcoming Jaipur's call for action to boost MSMEs, adopting the G20 Generic Framework for Mapping Global Value Chains (GVC), adopting high-level principles on digitalisation of trade documents, and recognising the significance of the WTO's 'Aid for Trade' initiative. Introducing digital upskilling and reskilling programmes, G20 principles on harnessing data for development, and launching a data for development capacity building initiative, and calling on developed nations to fulfil their ODA obligations. For eliminating hunger and malnutrition G20 encourage efforts to strengthen research cooperation on climate resilient and nutritious grains, nurture the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food and commit to strengthening the agriculture market information system (AMIS). In the context of renewable energy, the G20 acknowledges the significance of sustainable biofuels and the setting up of the Global Biofuels Alliance. The G20 reaffirmed the commitment made in 2010 by the developed nations to mobilise jointly USD 100 billion per year in climate finance by 2020 and annually through 2025 in order to meet the requirements of the developing nations. The African Union's membership in the G20 is the greatest accomplishment of India's G20 presidency.

In the context of connectivity and trade, India, Saudi Arabia, the European Union, the United Arab Emirates, France, Germany, Italy, and the United States signed an agreement to establish the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) during the G20 Summit in New Delhi. The primary objective of the IMEC is to facilitate economic growth by promoting improved connectivity and economic integration among the regions of Asia, the Arabian Gulf, and Europe. The IMEC will consist of two discrete corridors: the eastern corridor, which will

connect India to the Arabian Gulf, and the northern corridor, which will connect the Arabian Gulf to Europe. Asia, Europe, and the Middle East will undergo a radical transformation as a result of the corridor's increased efficiencies, decreased costs, enhanced economic unity, job creation, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Chaturvedi (2023) noted that as the IMEC promises sustainable solutions in terms of finance, ecology, and most importantly, ideology, India can look forward to the fulfillment of the objective of a value-based economic framework.<sup>41</sup>

Starting with the Presidency of Indonesia in 2022, it will be led by Southern countries till 2025. India handed over the baton to Brazil on 1st December 2023, to be subsequently passed on to South Africa in 2025. This is the most opportune moment for taking up critical issues faced by the Global South. Several key takeaways from the New Delhi summit in 2023 would continue to be pertinent to the Brazilian and South African G20 summits, including development finance, life style for sustainable development, women-led development, and digitalisation.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> G20 brings together the world's 20 largest economies. They account for 85 percent of the global GDP, 75 percent of international trade, and two-thirds of the global population.
- <sup>2</sup> [https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/36109/Prime\\_Minister\\_Shri\\_Narendra\\_Modis\\_Opening\\_Remarks\\_at\\_the\\_Inaugural\\_Leaders\\_Session\\_of\\_Voice\\_of\\_Global\\_South\\_Summit\\_2023](https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/36109/Prime_Minister_Shri_Narendra_Modis_Opening_Remarks_at_the_Inaugural_Leaders_Session_of_Voice_of_Global_South_Summit_2023)
- <sup>3</sup> Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's Opening Remarks at the Inaugural Leaders' Session of Voice of Global South Summit 2023
- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.g20.org/en/media-resources/speeches/march-23/fmm/>
- <sup>5</sup> Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's Opening Remarks at the Inaugural Leaders' Session of Voice of Global South Summit 2023
- <sup>6</sup> Narendra Modi, India's agenda chairing its G20 Presidency will go inclusive, ambitious action oriented, and decisive, The Indian Express, 1 December 2022.
- <sup>7</sup> <https://misc.pagesuite.com/pdfdownload/f10569c0-09f5-4548-9a79-504fd1828800.pdf>
- <sup>8</sup> Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's opening remarks at the inaugural leader's session of Voice of Global South Summit, 2023.

9. Video Message of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting March 02, 2023, <https://www.g20.org/en/media-resources/speeches/march-23/fmm/>
10. [https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty\\_new/document/G20-New-DelhiLeaders-Declaration.pdf](https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/document/G20-New-DelhiLeaders-Declaration.pdf)
11. <https://misc.pagesuite.com/pdfdownload/f10569c0-09f5-4548-9a79-504fd1828800.pdf>
12. [https://www.ris.org.in/sites/default/files/2023-09/DCR%20July-September%2020231\\_New.pdf](https://www.ris.org.in/sites/default/files/2023-09/DCR%20July-September%2020231_New.pdf)
13. [https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty\\_new/document/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf](https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/document/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf)
14. See Chaturvedi et al (2023)
15. See Chaturvedi et al (2023)
16. [file:///C:/Users/RISC-243SUSHIL/Downloads/osgmisc\\_2023d4\\_en%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/RISC-243SUSHIL/Downloads/osgmisc_2023d4_en%20(1).pdf)
17. [https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty\\_new/document/3rd\\_G20\\_FMBCG\\_Outcome\\_Document\\_and\\_Chair's\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/document/3rd_G20_FMBCG_Outcome_Document_and_Chair's_Summary.pdf)
18. <https://www.businesstoday.in/interactive/photo-essay/bt-exclusive-this-g20-reflects-the-voice-of-the-global-south-says-pm-narendra-modi-83-26-08-2023#>
19. <https://www.businesstoday.in/india-at-100/story/global-south-contributes-80-to-global-growth-amitabh-kant-395729-2023-08-26>
20. See Outcome Document and Chair's Summary of Trade and Investment Minister's Meeting 24th – 25th August, 2023, Jaipur, Rajasthan
21. See Outcome Document and Chair's Summary of Trade and Investment Minister's Meeting 24th – 25th August, 2023, Jaipur, Rajasthan
22. Outcome Document of Trade and Investment Minister's Meeting, 2023
23. T20 Policy Brief "Food And Nutrition Security in The Global South: Policies, Technologies and Institutions"<https://t20ind.org/research/food-and-nutrition-security-in-the-global-south/#:~:text=The%20three%20key%20sectors%20involved,nutrition%2Dsensitive%20while%20maintaining%20productivity.>
24. Outcome Document of G20 Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (2023)
25. Ministry of External Affairs (2023), India's Engagement with G20 Countries Twenty Seventh Report. Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi (<https://sansad.in/ls/committee/departmentally-related-standing-committees/11-external%20affairs-nameH=%E0%A4%B5%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%A6%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%B6%E0%A5%80%20%E0%A4%AE%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%AE%E0%A4%B2%E0%A5%87>)
26. MEA (2023) , Launch of the Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA), Ministry of External Affairs, 9 September <https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/37092/Launch+of+the+Global+Biofuel+Alliance+GBA>

27. Eight G20 countries: 1. Argentina, 2. Brazil, 3. Canada, 4. India 5. Italy, 6. Japan 7. South Africa, 8. USA, Four G20 Invitee Countries: 1. Bangladesh, 2. Singapore, 3. Mauritius, 4. UAE, Ten non-G20 countries: 1. Iceland, 2. Kenya, 3. Guyana, 4. Paraguay, 5. Seychelles, 6. Sri Lanka, 7. Uganda, 8. Finland, 9. Tanzania, 10. Philippines and Twelve International organizations: Asian Development Bank, World Economic Forum, World LPG Organization, UN-Energy for All, UNIDO, Biofutures Platform, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Energy Agency, International Energy Forum, International Renewable Energy Agency, World Biogas Association. World Bank
28. MEA (2023) , Launch of the Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA), Ministry of External Affairs, 9 September, <https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/37092/Launch+of+the+Global+Biofuel+Alliance+GBA>
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30. Hindustan Times (2023) “Global Biofuel Alliance launched at G20 Summit: What’s the significance?” <https://www.hindustantimes.com/car-bike/global-biofuel-alliance-launched-at-g20-summit-whats-the-significance-101694322462601.html>
31. <https://www.g20.in/en/media-resources/speeches/august-2023/economy.html> (Text of PM’s video message during G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Meet)
32. <https://www.g20.in/en/media-resources/speeches/august-2023/economy.html>
33. See <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1979113> (Prime Minister announces completion of Global Digital Public Infrastructure Repository and creation of a Social Impact Fund to advance Digital Public Infrastructure in Global South)
34. <https://www.g20.org/en/media-resources/speeches/april-2023/second-dwg/>
35. [https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty\\_new/document/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf](https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/document/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf)
36. <http://www.g20chn.org/English/Documents/Current/201609/P020160908661601548463.pdf>
37. [https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty\\_new/document/G20%202023%20Action%20Plan%20for%20SDGs.pdf](https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/document/G20%202023%20Action%20Plan%20for%20SDGs.pdf)
38. The G20 Development Ministerial Meeting took place as a culmination of priorities, outcomes, discussions, and initiatives of the four meetings of the Development Working Group (DWG): 1st DWG Meeting from December 13 – 16, 2022 in Mumbai, Maharashtra, 2nd DWG Meeting from April 6 – 9, 2023 in Kumarakom, Kerala, 3rd DWG Meeting from May 8 – 11, 2023 in Goa and 4th DWG Meeting from June 6 – 9, 2023 in New Delhi.
39. The Troika is the G20’s top grouping, consisting of the current, past, and upcoming presidencies.

<sup>40</sup>. Chturvedi (2023)

<sup>41</sup>. [https://www.deccanherald.com/specials/closer-links-faster-growth-a-new-economic-corridor-2-2689541?utm\\_source=whatsapp&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=socialshare](https://www.deccanherald.com/specials/closer-links-faster-growth-a-new-economic-corridor-2-2689541?utm_source=whatsapp&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=socialshare)

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# **RIS** A Think-Tank of Developing Countries

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) is a New Delhi-based autonomous policy research institute that specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. RIS is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues.

The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. RIS is engaged across inter-governmental processes of several regional economic cooperation initiatives. Through its intensive network of think tanks, RIS seeks to strengthen policy coherence on international economic issues and the development partnership canvas.

For more information about RIS and its work programme, please visit its website: [www.ris.org.in](http://www.ris.org.in)

*Research shaping the development agenda*



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for Developing Countries**

विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

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