

ALIGNING G20 INITIATIVES WITH AFRICA'S PRIORITIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a significant overlap between the G20 initiatives – particularly the Development Working Group (DWG) – and those of the African Union (AU) [Agenda 2063](#) and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ([Agenda 2030](#)). G20 members should uphold their commitments implementing Agenda 2030 both at the national level and through their international development assistance programmes. Although the implementation of Agenda 2030 is driven by the UN, G20 members can contribute by providing additional support and momentum, including through the ongoing monitoring of commitments in this regard.

This policy brief explores the G20 agenda and compares it to the AU's plans, including [Agenda 2063](#),² and UN Agenda 2030. It identifies gaps where the G20 can play a greater role in supporting specific African development priorities, including regional economic integration, infrastructure financing and inequality.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 African participants in the G20, including South Africa, should prioritise issues where the G20 can add value in support of the African development agenda, such as food security, regional infrastructure development and access to energy. They should ensure that their representation is appropriately supported and resourced.
- 2 As part of their coordination of positions for G20 engagements, South Africa, the AU and NEPAD should actively monitor G20 initiatives, and ensure regular rationalisation and alignment.
- 3 The G20 should play a role in identifying and supporting appropriate means of implementation of Agenda 2030, including mobilization of domestic and private resources as well as official development assistance for the poorest and most vulnerable countries. Other non-financial resources will be equally important, such as trade, science, technology, innovation and capacity building.
- 4 The DWG could establish a G20 dialogue platform on inequality to examine the links between implementation challenges of the SDGs and rising levels of inequality in many countries. South Africa is well placed in this regard, given its role as co-chair of the DWG and its membership of BRICS.

INTRODUCTION

The G20 has three main goals: establishing policy coordination among its members to achieve global economic stability and strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth; establishing financial regulations that reduce risks and prevent future financial crises; and modernising the international financial architecture. There has been a strong focus on development since the formation of a specific DWG in 2010. The DWG covers a wide range of issues but has tended to concentrate on the needs of low-income countries (LICs) through a traditional development cooperation paradigm.³ However, the adoption of UN Agenda 2030 and the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs)⁴ has required the G20 to adjust its approach to development issues. The SDGs are ambitious and require action by all countries, not just low-income and developing ones. This has been recognised by the G20 in its adoption of the [Action Plan on Agenda 2030](#) in 2016.

This policy brief compares the G20's agenda to the AU's plans, including Agenda 2063,⁵ and the UN Agenda 2030, and identifies gaps where the G20 can play a greater role in supporting African development priorities. It highlights policy priorities for the G20 development agenda that have been identified by developing countries and provides key policy recommendations by South Africa and other G20 members in their future engagement on the SDGs and the rest of the DWG agenda.

THE G20 AND AFRICA

The G20 agenda has had an undeniable impact on policies that have been, and which continue to be, relevant to Africa's economic development.⁶ Although South Africa remains the only African state that is a permanent member of the G20, the AU and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) have now been upgraded to facilitate their involvement at the commission and agency levels respectively, in addition to the rotating chairs of these structures usually being invited to participate in G20 summits. Despite this still minimal African representation, G20 leaders have consistently retained the position that Africa remains a priority. Research conducted by the Overseas Development Institute and the South African Institute of International Affairs found a significant overlap between G20 policies and African interests. The study

concluded that the G20 could have a positive impact on Africa's growth prospects. It identified Africa as an important player in global rebalancing, for example, by promoting capital flows from surplus countries to profitable opportunities in sustainable infrastructure and climate finance.⁷

In the past the G20 has focused on key areas for Africa's development, notably infrastructure, food security, financial inclusion and human-resource development. Its strategy for Africa has also included a series of isolated initiatives/individual initiatives depending on the presidency, such as the [G20 Energy Access Action Plan in sub-Saharan Africa](#) (Antalya Summit),⁸ [Support for Industrialisation](#) (Hangzhou Summit), and the [Africa Partnership](#) (Hamburg Summit).⁹

AGENDA 2063 AND THE SDGs

The UN Agenda 2030 identifies a set of priorities and goals for a better world.¹⁰ These goals comprise 17 comprehensive global SDGs and 169 sub-goals. Agenda 2030 serves as a strategic blueprint to protect the planet, end poverty and ensure prosperity for all, with the SDGs covering all dimensions of sustainable development and being broader and more complex than their predecessors.¹¹

The AU Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework for Africa's sustainable socio-economic transformation and integration over a five-decade period, aimed at promoting democracy, peace and security on the continent. The objectives of Agenda 2063 reflect those of the UN Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Agenda 2063 fully incorporates the SDGs and in some instances is more ambitious, for example, in relation to access to education, and more detailed, such as in the area of gender empowerment and governance. There is no doubt that the AU has extremely well-documented development plans, including Agenda 2063 and other declarations, and our analysis shows a close alignment with global priorities in Agenda 2030. This strong alignment predicts that efforts by the G20 and others to promote the full implementation of the SDGs will also see positive results in terms of the achievement of Agenda 2063 goals for the continent.

A comparison of the objectives for the AU Agenda 2063, UN Agenda 2030 and the G20's agenda on development shows a clear alignment of priorities. The G20 has

incorporated the SDGs into its DWG work programme, and there are links between some of the specific SDGs and other G20 initiatives. SDG3 on health, for example, aligns with the G20 commitment to fight antimicrobial resistance; and the G20 has agreed to numerous commitments on energy that are supportive of SDG7 (such as the G20 Voluntary Collaboration Action Plan on Energy Access). On the surface, there do not appear to be any gaps between the stated development objectives of the G20, Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030.

THE G20 AND THE SDGs

The G20 was not designed to tackle development issues directly. Its main focus has been economic growth and financial stability; and even its agenda in this area predates the SDGs. This has had the potential to create gaps at the global level in relation to development initiatives. However, more recently the G20 has explicitly incorporated into its own agenda the aspirations of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. The result is an increasing alignment of G20 initiatives and the priorities of AU Agenda 2063 and UN Agenda 2030. Although each presidency of the G20 brings a slightly different emphasis, there remains a strong level of consistency in areas such as food security (SDG2), clean energy (SDG7) and infrastructure financing (SDG9).

During the 2016 Hangzhou Summit in China, the G20 adopted the Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The German G20 presidency in 2017 committed ‘to further align our actions with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’¹² and the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development](#) in order to achieve the SDGs. This commitment to the 2030 Agenda is consistent with Agenda 2063. Adoption of the G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda moves the G20 towards a more measurable contribution towards implementation of the SDGs. The plan aims to align the G20’s agenda with Agenda 2030 through collective efforts and individual efforts, including implementing the agenda domestically according to national priorities, needs and capacities. In addition, the G20 intends to focus on sectors and themes of the 2030 Agenda where it has comparative advantage and can add value as a global forum for economic cooperation.¹³

There is still a greater role for the group to play in both the governance and operational levels of implementation

of Agenda 2030, including in identifying appropriate means for implementation of the SDGs in African countries.¹⁴ Relevant G20 initiatives will only be effective if they are implemented and monitored as part of the ongoing work of the group. G20 leaders have acknowledged the need to consider the impact of their policies on LICs; and the importance of helping these countries to become active participants in and beneficiaries of the global economic system.¹⁵

POLICY PRIORITIES FOR AFRICAN PARTICIPANTS

Africa has well-defined development priorities that align closely with the UN Agenda 2030. However, there is still opportunity to use the G20 to advance key areas of interest to Africa. Most of these are already part of the G20 process in some way, and so are not new areas per se. They include regional economic integration, infrastructure financing and inequality.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

There is no specific G20 agenda on regional economic integration. Even the discussions on trade policy have largely been limited to support for the WTO (the notable exception being the discussions on global value chains during the Mexican presidency in 2012).¹⁶ Regional economic integration – including through the negotiation and implementation of free trade areas – is, however, at the heart of the AU development agenda. Including regional economic integration in the work of the G20 DWG would help to address existing challenges in Africa through increased intra-regional trade.¹⁷ The G20 could advance regional integration policies in Africa by supporting measures that encourage intra-regional trade on the continent; and by liaising with African RECs to identify and remove intra-regional trade barriers, such as non-tariff barriers.

Africa has adopted a developmental approach to regional integration that includes the three pillars of market access, infrastructure and industrialisation, as reflected in the design of the Tripartite Free Trade Area. It would not be appropriate for the G20 to support integration through direct involvement in market access negotiations. There is nonetheless considerable scope to align G20 activities on infrastructure and industrialisation with African integration initiatives. This is already done in relation to infrastructure, where priority projects under the Programme for Infrastructure

Development in Africa are endorsed by the G20. African participants in the G20 could motivate for continued commitment to the [G20 Initiative on Supporting Industrialization in Africa](#) and Least Developed Countries. For example, there is clear alignment between the promotion of the agro-processing sector in Africa and its participation in cross-border supply chains. The G20, perhaps through its sub-structures such as the B20, could facilitate interaction between multinational corporations involved in this sector and African producers to identify both blockages and opportunities to pursue this objective.

INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING

This is an area in which the G20 has a track record of extensive debate and agreement on a range of specific initiatives. The [G20 Africa Partnership](#) highlighted the need for joint measures to enhance sustainable infrastructure. The partnership committed 'to align our joint measures with regional strategies and priorities, in particular, the African Union's Agenda 2063 and its Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA)'.¹⁸ The focus of the [Compact With Africa](#) (as one initiative for implementing the G20 Africa Partnership) is the role the private sector can play in bridging the gap that still exists for the financing of infrastructure projects in Africa. It is important that this new initiative does not undermine previous G20 efforts to strengthen the funding for national and regional infrastructure projects in Africa from multilateral development banks, development of innovative financing mechanisms and overcoming the challenges of preparing 'bankable' projects.

INEQUALITY

The G20 has always focused on inclusive economic growth and has recently initiated a dialogue on the issues of inequality. This is also an area of interest to emerging economies and African countries. The G20 could play a leading role in global discourse on this important topic, but only if the approach taken allows for different narratives to be captured. For example, developed countries have to date tended to focus on the need for improved communication about the implications of globalization rather than directly addressing the very real levels of unequal distribution of the benefits of economic growth. South Africa and other African representatives could play a leading role

in shaping a G20 dialogue on inequality that reflects a development perspective.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Catherine Grant Makokera is a Director of the Tutwa Consulting Group; Faith Tigere is a Researcher at Tutwa Consulting Group.
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