

# EMPOWERING AFRICA'S VOICE WITHIN THE G20

## EVENTS OUTCOMES REPORT



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## Introduction

This report synthesises the outcomes and recommendations of two high-level African dialogues on the G20, held between October 2025 and March 2026. Together, they represent a sustained and evolving continental conversation about how Africa can translate its presence at the G20 into durable influence and tangible development outcomes.

The first event, the 'G20 Conference in West Africa: Empowering Africa's Voice within the G20', was held in Dakar, Senegal on 30–31 October 2025. Co-organised by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), AfriCatalyst, AU Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), it was the first G20 outreach conference held in West Africa, bringing together policymakers, think tanks, civil society organisations, multilateral institutions and development banks at a critical juncture. South Africa's G20 presidency was drawing to a close and several parallel global processes, including the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), had concluded.

The second event, the 'G20 Strategic Roundtable: Sustaining Africa's G20 Agenda Across Global Processes', was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 26 March 2026, hosted by SAIIA and AUDA-NEPAD. Coming five months after Dakar and with the G20 now in the hands of a Global North presidency cycle, this session was framed not as a retrospective but as a transition: the beginning of what participants described as 'the real work'.

The two events trace an arc from agenda-setting to institutionalisation, from aspiration to action, and from demonstrating that Africa can lead to ensuring that leadership endures. This report synthesises the discussions from the two events, highlighting the key arguments, insights and recommendations relevant to African stakeholders engaged in global processes, including the AU, its knowledge partners, African member states and civil society organisations.

## Background and context

South Africa's G20 presidency, under the theme 'Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability', marked a defining moment in Africa's engagement with global economic governance. As the first African country to chair the G20, South Africa helped reposition the continent from being the subject of global deliberations to an active agenda-setter, elevating issues such as debt sustainability, climate finance, disaster resilience, critical minerals and inequality. The presidency also coincided with several major multilateral processes, including the 2025 UN Climate Change Conference, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and negotiations toward a UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation, creating an important opportunity to advance African priorities within global governance debates.

Key outcomes of the SA G20 presidency, including the formation of the Africa Expert Panel (which produced a comprehensive report on Africa's key economic and financial concerns) and the establishment of the Africa Engagement Framework (AEF), were designed to embed African priorities more within G20 processes and strengthen continuity beyond a single G20 cycle. Endorsed by G20 finance ministers and central bank governors, the AEF organises priorities around five pillars: fiscal and debt management; debt sustainability; multilateral development bank (MDB) reform; reducing the cost of capital; and cross-border infrastructure, while setting out a roadmap to 2030. As the G20 transitions to a presidency cycle led by Global North countries, the challenge is to ensure that the AEF continues to

deliver value and that these priorities are sustained across successive presidencies amid growing geopolitical fragmentation, rising protectionism and increasing strain on multilateral cooperation.

## Key insights

The dialogues collectively highlighted eight interconnected insights with implications for future engagement.

**1** **Presence is not power.** The inclusion of the AU as a permanent member of the G20 is a significant milestone for African representation in global governance. However, participants emphasised that meaningful influence would depend on sustained coalition-building, technical coordination and consistent engagement through mechanisms such as the AEF.

**2** **A single African voice is the most powerful asset and the hardest to sustain.** Both dialogues returned repeatedly to the imperative of collective African positioning. Fragmented messaging undermines negotiating power while coherent common positions amplify it. The Lomé Declaration on African Debt, endorsed by AU finance ministers and central bank governors in October 2025, demonstrated what a unified continental stance on a key issue can achieve, as its language was reflected directly in the FFD4 outcome document in Seville and further contributed to efforts toward the adoption of the G20 Ministerial Declaration on Debt Sustainability adopted in October 2025. However, sustaining this unity across 55 member states, multiple regional bodies and numerous global processes requires deliberate institutional investment, not goodwill alone.

**3** **Institutionalise or lose ground.** The gains of South Africa's presidency are real but fragile. The AEF is not binding on incoming presidencies; each new host country may choose whether to adopt it. Without a standing Continental G20 Coordination Mechanism, annual retreats and a dedicated policy knowledge architecture, Africa's agenda risks resetting with every handover. The G20's troika system with no permanent secretariat means that institutional memory must be actively built and maintained by African actors themselves.

**4** **Discipline in prioritisation: Fewer issues, consistently advanced.** Africa's global advocacy is diluted when spread across too many issues. Both dialogues recommended that Africa identify two to three core priority asks with technical capacity backing per year and advance them consistently across the full multilateral calendar: the G20, IMF/World Bank meetings, African Development Bank (AfDB) annual meetings, the G7 and UN processes. It is more effective to package existing priorities clearly than to introduce new ones. The AEF, the

Africa Expert Panel and Agenda 2063 address many of the same challenges under different names: the task is coherent strategic messaging, not proliferating frameworks.

**5** **The cost of capital is the central economic constraint.** Systemic overpricing of African sovereign risk remains one of the most significant barriers to development financing on the continent. By inflating borrowing costs, it diverts scarce public resources away from development priorities and into debt servicing, limiting governments' ability to invest in infrastructure, social services and economic transformation. Addressing this challenge requires more than increasing the volume of available finance. It demands structural reforms to the global financial architecture, including revisions to credit-rating methodologies, the establishment of the Africa Credit Rating Agency and the Africa Financing Stability Mechanism and the mobilisation of Africa's own institutional capital toward productive development investments.

**6** **Coalition-building beyond Africa is non-negotiable.** Africa cannot sustain its G20 agenda through continental solidarity alone. Incoming G20 presidencies must be engaged proactively, before their agendas are finalised. There are real points of alignment: the US priorities of sustainable economic growth, financial regulatory modernisation and energy transition affordability can be connected to African asks on capital costs, critical minerals and renewable energy access. The lesson of South Africa's presidency is that co-creation with like-minded G20 partners, through structures like the B20 and T20, produces outcomes that are more durable and more broadly owned.

**7** **Implementation is largely national, not only global.** Many of Africa's priority reforms, including on tax policy and domestic resource mobilisation, curbing illicit financial flows and developing financial regulatory frameworks to deepen domestic financial markets, fall primarily within national competence, while regional economic communities can help translate G20 outcomes into deeper integration and support for the African Continental Free Trade Area. The February 2026 decision of the AU Assembly underscored the need for member states and the AU to move beyond cataloguing G20 outcomes and instead actively assume responsibility for their implementation.

**8** **Africa's engagement must move from elite conversation to public understanding.** Africa's G20 alignment remains largely confined to technical and political elites. Sustaining this agenda across political cycles will require broader public understanding and ownership, including clear communication

on the AEF, its relevance and its links to the AU's Agenda 2063 and everyday development priorities.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations integrate inputs from both dialogues. They are organised thematically to reflect the structure of the discussion and are aimed at African governments, the AU Commission (AUC), regional bodies, multilateral institutions, civil society organisations and think tanks.

### 1. Establish a continental G20 coordination architecture

- Establish a Continental G20 Coordination Mechanism under the AUC to harmonise negotiating positions and ensure consistent African engagement across G20 workstreams, IMF/World Bank meetings, AfDB annual meetings, the G7 and UN processes.
- Convene an annual Q1 G20 Africa Policy Retreat bringing together the AUC Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration members, South Africa as founding steward of the AEF, the AfDB, African multilateral institutions and the Africa Expert Panel members in their continuing advisory capacity.
- Produce a concise African G20 Priorities Paper from each retreat, transmitted formally to the incoming G20 presidency by the AU chairperson; this paper should serve as the reference document for every African delegation at every multilateral meeting that year.
- Hold pre-meeting alignment sessions 4–6 weeks before each major G20 and multilateral forum, with a specific mandate to agree on African positions on AEF priority issues and assign lead spokespersons by topic.
- Co-create African common positions with genuine buy-in from all 55 AU member states, ensuring collective ownership, credibility and compliance.
- The AUC should adopt a model similar to the G20's Engagement Groups, institutionalising distinct engagement platforms for African think tanks, businesses, women and youth.

### 2. Build proactive coalitions with incoming G20 presidencies

- Engage the incoming G20 presidency proactively ahead of its agenda-setting process to ensure that Africa's priorities are reflected from the outset.
- Formalise annual consultations between the AU and each incoming G20 presidency, providing a structured channel for African asks to be articulated before agenda finalisation.
- Identify specific points of alignment between African priorities and each incoming presidency's stated themes, and package African asks accordingly rather than presenting them as competing demands.

- Extend coalition-building beyond the G20 to UN processes, UNCTAD, WTO and the Seville FFD follow-up platform.
- Engage African ambassadors in Washington DC as frontline advocates in 2026 because the US is the G20 chair and because of the presence of international financial institutions. They should be briefed systematically, not as an afterthought.
- The engagement of African ambassadors as frontline advocates should be undertaken in every capital hosting the G20 presidency.
- Continue supporting civil society, think tanks and business communities in coordinating roles modelled on the B20 and T20.

### 3. Reduce the cost of capital and tackle debt sustainability

- Advocate within the G20 and international finance institute reform processes for revision of credit rating methodologies to reduce systemic bias against African sovereigns, including recognition of natural assets and reform of how environmental shocks are assessed.
- Advance the Africa Credit Rating Agency as a complement to global agencies, providing local currency coverage, information transparency and an African perspective on risk.
- Scale risk-sharing tools guarantees, political risk insurance, refinancing facilities and hybrid capital through the AfDB and the Alliance of African Multilateral Financial Institutions (AAMFI).
- Advocate for the inclusion of AAMFI members as invited international organisations at the G20, recognising their role as lenders of last resort and their policy importance in African financial stability.
- Operationalise the African Financing Stability Mechanism, addressing Africa's status as the only region in the world without a regional financial safety net.
- Reform domestic incentive structures to redirect pension fund and insurance company capital (approximately \$77 billion continent-wide) toward infrastructure and productive domestic investment.
- Pursue an intergovernmental debt restructuring institution under UN auspices in the long term, building on FFD4 language on reforming the debt architecture.
- Strengthen public financial management systems, procurement integrity and fiscal transparency to address both the actual and the perceived risk premium on African sovereign borrowing.

### 4. Sustain the climate, energy transition and critical minerals agenda

- Ensure AU participation in the US G20 energy abundance working group, emphasising that any credible discussion of global energy abundance must include scaling renewable energy and energy access in Africa.
- Leverage the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change, the Africa Group of Negotiators and the African Climate Change and Resilience Development Strategy to maintain structured, cohesive continental messaging on climate and energy across forums.

- Continue driving political and technical work on debt-for-climate swaps as a mechanism at the intersection of climate vulnerability and debt sustainability.
- Advance the G20 Critical Minerals Framework and the African Green Mineral Strategy to ensure that Africa's critical minerals contribute to green industrialisation on the continent, not merely to industrialisation elsewhere.
- Strengthen African carbon registries and verification systems to boost the value of Africa's natural capital in global carbon markets.

## 5. Advance tax cooperation and tackle illicit financial flows

- Continue pushing for public country-by-country reporting within UN tax convention negotiations, which is foundational to taxing multinationals, stopping illicit financial flows (IFFs) and addressing base erosion and profit shifting.
- Coordinate national tax legislation across African countries, amplifying individual reform actions such as Nigeria's fractional apportionment approach through collective continental momentum.
- Convert the High-Level Principles on Illicit Financial Flows into a practical, country-adaptable implementation playbook.
- Develop a Programme of Action on IFFs specifically for developing countries, for inclusion in the Seville FFD follow-up platform.
- Feed outputs from South Africa's G20 IFF work into the UK's IFF Summit in June 2026 and the UK G20 presidency in 2027.
- Advocate for a UN General Assembly resolution recognising the International Panel on Inequality and enabling it to report to ECOSOC, the General Assembly, the High-Level Political Forum and the G20.

## 6. Build institutional capacity and a knowledge architecture for Africa

- Establish a G20 African Policy Knowledge Hub to compile data on African common positions, monitor G20 pledges, track implementation progress and support delegations with easily accessible reference materials – using AI and digital tools to build the institutional memory that well-resourced G20 members already have.
- Ensure the AUC retains experienced technical experts to accompany political leaders in G20 working groups, providing continuity of knowledge and consistent messaging across presidency cycles.
- Invest in African research institutions to produce continent-driven, evidence-based policy analysis for multilateral negotiations.
- Develop clearer, more strategic public communication that connects the AEF, the Africa Expert Panel and Agenda 2063 into a coherent narrative accessible to non-specialist audiences, closing the gap between elite policy dialogue and public understanding.
- Separate issues requiring external engagement (MDB reform, credit rating reform) from those requiring internal African action (domestic tax reform, pension fund regulation) and ensure the right platforms are used for each.
- Provide ministries, parliaments and development finance institutions with capacity-building support to oversee G20 technical procedures effectively.

## Conclusion

The Dakar and Addis Ababa dialogues demonstrated that Africa's accession to the G20 through the AU is an important milestone, but sustained influence will depend on the continent's ability to move beyond representation towards institutionalised engagement, strategic coordination and effective implementation. While South Africa's G20 presidency created key foundations through initiatives such as the AEF and the Africa Expert Panel, preserving and advancing these gains will require coherent African positions, stronger coordination mechanisms, robust knowledge and policy support systems and sustained engagement across G20 cycles and related multilateral processes. The discussions highlighted the need for Africa to focus on a limited number of strategic priorities, build coalitions within and beyond the continent and strengthen the linkages between global commitments and national implementation. Ultimately, the long-term success of Africa's G20 engagement will depend on the collective efforts of the AU, member states, regional institutions, development partners, research organisations, civil society and the private sector to ensure that Africa's growing voice in global governance translates into tangible development outcomes that advance the aspirations of Agenda 2063.

*Africa has the table. The frameworks are in place. The agenda has been set. The task now is to keep it there – through discipline, coalition and the institutional resolve to ensure that what was achieved in 2025 becomes the foundation for the decade ahead.*

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