

T20 celebrates 12th anniversary during Brazil's G20 presidency in 2024

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The Group of Twenty (G20) was founded in 1999 and has since become the central forum for international cooperation on financial and economic issues. It is composed of Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the UK, the U.S., and the European Union. Governments and central bank governors from these countries and the EU meet year-round at the ministerial level. The outcomes of these meetings are then presented at the annual G20 Summit. Every year, a different member country takes over the presidency, which lasts from 1 December to 30 November.

Founded in 2012 during the Mexican presidency, the Think20 (T20) is an official engagement group of the G20 that operates independently from national governments. Composed of major think tanks and academia from member countries, the T20 has been developing policy recommendations through thematic task forces since the Germany presidency in 2017. Through organising events and engaging in dialogue with G20 policymakers, other engagement groups and the global audience, the T20 generates insightful policy proposals elaborated by high-level experts. These proposals provide analytical depth and evidence-based assessments to discussions that help leaders suggest concrete and sustainable policies based on the Group's priorities.

Each year, the T20 creates task forces to structure proposals around the most critical issues, driving policy inputs from the global research community. Themes are defined by the government of the country occupying the presidency, based on inputs from think tanks of other member countries. Themes of T20 task forces during the German Presidency in 2017 included: digitalisation; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; climate policy and finance; G20 and Africa; global inequality and social cohesion; forced migration; ending hunger; sustainable agriculture; financial resilience, trade and investment; circular economy; international cooperation in tax issues; and resilience and inclusive growth. Germany also created T20 Africa to generate policy recommendations together with and relevant to African countries, which are largely underrepresented in the G20. Subsequently, Africa has often appeared as a theme of task forces during other presidencies.

In 2018, Argentina's T20 presidency largely followed the same work streams defined by Germany. However, it emphasised the future of work and education and how it relates to digitalisation. The T20 report was handed to President Mauricio Macri at the end of the T20 Summit in Buenos Aires. In 2019, the Japanese presidency of the T20 highlighted human security and included the topics of population ageing—a clear policy concern in Japan—and small- and medium-sized enterprises. Saudi Arabia brought the urgent issue of COVID-19 to the forefront of discussion during its 2020 term and also focused on the empowerment of women and youth. In 2021, Italy developed a task force to reform the T20 process itself, which proposed,

among other things, the creation of an advisory/contact group to prevent intellectual dependency on the US or the EU, focusing on both regional and global challenges, producing fewer and more impactful policy briefs, and distinguishing between short-, medium- and long-term goals and several outreach and coordination activities. In 2022, Indonesia created task forces focusing on inequality; human capital; well-being and food security; and sustainable agriculture. In 2023, India constructed a task force on 'lifestyle for the environment', resilience and values for well-being, and also focused on reforming multilateral institutions.

Indonesia's term kickstarted a series of G20 (and hence T20) presidencies from the global South: it was followed by India (2023), which in turn will be followed by Brazil (2024) and South Africa (2025). These presidencies offer the hope of stronger international cooperation, increased continuity in the G20 agenda and a renewed (and perhaps even unique) perspective on development (Lynders and Reiners 2022). It also presents an opportunity for resurrecting the IBSA group—composed of India, Brazil and South Africa—which has been dormant since 2013 and may yet play a relevant role in the future of the G20.

In 2024, Brazil is likely to focus its term on the environment and biodiversity—particularly as it relates to the Amazon; multilateralism; and healthcare, areas in which it has led global governance processes. Food security and hunger, as well as socio-economic inequality, are also central themes in Brazilian domestic policies and should be highlighted in the T20 agenda. Finally, another major theme to be addressed should be development cooperation in Africa, as President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has signalled a willingness to favour relations with countries in that region (Mello e Souza, Fracalossi, and Schleicher 2022).

The G20 (and T20) will also present an opportunity for Lula da Silva's current administration to emphasise that Brazil will once again play an active role in global affairs and to renew the country's commitment to multilateral processes. This is especially relevant in the aftermath of four years of foreign policy neglect by former President Jair Bolsonaro, who failed to attend the G20 Summit in 2022. The Brazilian Presidency of the G20 and T20 should mark country's full return to international agendas. Finally, Brazil should also underscore the increasing importance of the G20 as a key forum in confronting the world's most pressing challenges, including the provision of global public goods related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as effective and equitable climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives.

References:

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