

## G-20 and Sustainable Development: A Way Forward

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### Abstract

In the recent G-20 meeting held in New Delhi under the Indian presidency, the leaders from different countries raised concerns over the fulfilment of the Agenda 2030 as the global progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is unsatisfactory. The members expressed a dire need to put collective efforts to fully and effectively implement the 2030 Agenda for a greener planet and to lessen the socioeconomic divides among the developed and developing countries. The ray of hope for a sustainable and carbon-neutral world rests in the actions of G-20 nations.

**Keywords:** Agenda 2030; Greener Planet; G-20; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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## Introduction

The G-20 summit was held under the Indian presidency on 9-10 September 2023 in New Delhi on the theme “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”, that is, “*One Earth, One Family, One Future.*” It availed the opportunities by protecting its national interests and building the self-capable image of *Vishwa Guru* among global leaders (Tripathi, 2023). The G-20 meeting in New Delhi changed little but revealed much. The emergence of India as one of the world’s leading powers is a significant development of G-20 (The Wall Street Journal, 2023). It was a startling sign of how global power and priorities are moving away from Europe to the world’s developing countries (Mehrotra, 2023). The New Delhi Declaration, a historic and path-breaking, was adopted with 100 per cent consensus on all developmental and geopolitical issues. Besides, inclusion of the African Union in the G-20 helps make the ‘*Voice of the Global South*’ more effective. However, the central question here is to what extent the G-20 summit achieve Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. First, though, we give a brief background about G-20 and its links to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## Background

G-20, since its formation in 1999 in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis,<sup>1</sup> has been referred to as a ‘transition to a new world order’ with a power struggle between developed and emerging economies, especially BRICS countries (Renard, 2010). A report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2019 reveals that the G-20 can be pivotal in achieving the SDGs as it represents 85 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP), 75 per cent of global trade, and two-thirds of the world’s population. Sustainable Development, which connects environmental, social and economic issues for the North and the South, is also one of the

Agendas of the G-20. It connotes the 17 SDGs to be achieved by 2030 to ensure human and planetary well-being. The Brundtland Commission Report “*Our Common Future*” defines ‘*sustainable development to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*’ (Brundtland, 1987).

Most SDGs target enhancing prosperity, removing hunger and vulnerability, social inclusion and environmental protection, and building partnerships and collaboration with stakeholders. In the Delhi Summit of G-20, the world leaders raised concerns over the fulfilment of the Agenda 2030 because the global progress on SDGs is off-track where only 12 per cent of the targets are on track at the midway point to Agenda 2030. The members expressed a dire need to put collective efforts to fully and effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and accelerate progress toward the SDGs in a timely bound manner to make the world carbon-free, greener and liveable.

Sustainability permeates the idea that humans should not degrade global commons to realise the short-term benefits, as these are essential for life on the planet (Mor, 2022; Mor et al., 2023a). Research indicates that sustainability embodies a trade-off between the aspirations of humanity towards a better life and the limitations imposed by nature (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). Haedicke (2019) argued that sustainability is instrumental in ensuring social justice in the world. The concept of sustainability is equally applied to businesses and organisations to accomplish sustainable business practices and organisational activities and is classified as a business for sustainable and sustainable organisations (Wikström, 2010). Again, socially sustainable practices affect economic sustainability performance in supply chains (Sudusinghe & Seuring, 2020) and quality improvement into a systematic approach to an

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<sup>1</sup> After the global financial crisis in 2007, it was elevated to the level of Head of State/Government under a rotational Presidency leadership aimed at discussing issues connected to global economic and financial.

organisation's sustainability (Schalock et al., 2016).

The world looks to technology, including information and communications technology (ICT), 5.0 Industry, 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and machine learning and technological innovations for sustainable development. Technology and sustainability are the emerging areas where the world is looking to counter the ill effects of global warming. Gouvea et al. (2018) showed that ICT and human development significantly affect environmental sustainability. Technological innovations help businesses minimise their adverse environmental impacts besides inducing sustainable behaviours (Vacchi et al., 2021).

Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) can develop novel solutions and foster sustainable development. In educational institutions' sustainability has recently received greater attention due to grading and ranking systems (Horan & O'Regan, 2021). HEIs have the mandate of promoting sustainability through addressing the 'Agenda 2030', mainly owing to its networking between people, the planet and profit. HEIs promote changes in organisational culture to embed sustainability values in strategic planning and academic and managerial work (Ruiz-Mallén & Heras, 2020).

The mitigation of Greenhouse gases (GHGs) has become a crucial issue for environmental sustainability. The limiting global warming under the Paris Agreement to well below 1.5°C, compared to pre-industrial levels, is a ray of hope. The agreement is described as a breakthrough in international climate policy (Falkner, 2016; Janetschek et al., 2020). However, the Earth's temperature is all set to surpass the limits set under the Paris Agreement, even if all national pledges are fully realised (Young, 2016). Sustainable development cannot be achieved without climate action, where achieving low-carbon, climate-resilient growth is indispensable for our future (Mor et al., 2023b).

## Conclusion

To recap, SDGs require an interdisciplinary approach. We need to introduce more

sustainable courses in sustainability science and introduce them in different Universities, which will help accelerate progress in achieving the goals of SDGs (Swaminathan & Kesavan, 2016). Technological collaboration and its transfer are the need of the hour for shifting to a zero-carbon society besides achieving the goal of limiting the global average temperature below 2°C and striving to maintain it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial level mean global temperature (Mor & Ghimire, 2022). Herein, investment in sustainable development is essential to address climate change and build resilience. G-20, therefore, remains a crucial player towards leveraging the 17 SDGs. However, as discussed above, the G-20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration mentioned that the global progress on SDGs is off-track, with only 12 per cent of the targets on track, signalling that it is overtly ambitious to achieve the required SDGs by 2030. Of course, to a certain extent, the COVID-19 pandemic is to be blamed for. Nevertheless, during this Decade of Action, the G-20's convening power and collective resolve should be leveraged to fully and effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and accelerate progress toward the SDGs to shape the world we want to see for our future generations (G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, 2023)

With India marching ahead to become the world's third largest economy by 2027, surpassing Germany & Japan, the 2023 G-20 Summit can be said to be a great success not only in terms of adoption of the historic '*New Delhi Leaders' Declaration*' but also an excellent opportunity for India to showcase its Economic Prowess & Cultural Might. Nevertheless, it remains paramount to mention that the transition to Green or low-carbon economies and their financing are crucial in the light of energy prices. However, the ray of hope for a greener planet rest in the actions of G-20 nations.

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