

G20's Role in Advancing Global Sustainability and India's G20 Presidency

The G20, comprised of 19 countries and the European Union, was established in 1999 [\[1\]](#), with a central mission that included achieving robust, long-lasting, and equitable economic expansion, with a subsequent mention of 'inclusive growth'. The G20 summit is held annually with a rotating presidency. December 1st, 2022 marked a significant day as India took over the presidency of the G20 forum from Indonesia. As the world's largest democracy and the fastest-growing economy, India's G20 presidency carries great importance, as it commits to accelerate progress on various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), building upon the holistic efforts already initiated by the government. During the opening day of the G20 Summit on September 9th, Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, a significant milestone in India's G20 presidency that holds particular importance given the varying viewpoints on the Ukraine conflict among the participating nations.

Empowering the G20 For Urgent SDG Progress: Insights from the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration

In a utopian world, there is no hunger, and everyone can live fruitful lives on a thriving planet, marked by prosperity, sustainability, and happiness. In line with this vision, the United Nations (UN) initiated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. These 17 global objectives, with 169 specific targets, aim to improve the planet's condition and enhance human life worldwide by 2030. [\[2\]](#) As per the SDGs Report 2023 [\[3\]](#), the climate crisis, the Ukraine conflict, a sluggish global economy, and the persistent aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic have exposed vulnerabilities and impeded progress toward the Goals. Recognising the imperative for resolute actions, New Delhi Leaders' Declaration (NDD) encompasses the goal of 'Accelerating Progress on Sustainable Development Goals. "At the midway point to 2030, the global progress on SDGs is off-track with only 12 percent of the targets on track". [\[4\]](#), said the unanimously adopted G20 NDD. It added, "During this Decade of Action, we will leverage the G20's convening power and its collective resolve to fully and effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and accelerate progress toward the SDGs, in a timely manner, to shape the world we want to see for our future generations". [\[5\]](#) The G20 2023 Summit theme, 'One Earth, One Family, One Future,' draws inspiration from the sanskrit scripture term '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*,' highlighting the importance of global unity. It underscores the need for collaborative efforts to address the world's major challenges, emphasising the consolidation of actions to accelerate progress on the SDGs. The theme also puts a spotlight on "LiFE" (Lifestyle for Environment), advocating for environmentally sustainable and responsible choices, not only in individual lifestyles but also in national development. This emphasis on LiFE encourages transformative actions worldwide, ultimately leading to a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future. The idea revolves around embracing a human-centric and pro-planet approach generating long term positive effects, enhancing the overall quality of life for everyone, with a commitment to ensure no one is left behind. The NDD envelopes a wide array of global issues including recommitment to achieving SDGs through digital transformation, ensuring adequate and timely mobilization of financial resources to enable the developing countries with their domestic efforts to overcome obstacles in implementing 2030 Agenda. Additionally, the NDD shed light on the indispensability of tourism and culture for sustainable socio-economic development and economic prosperity. Beyond the efforts to combat hunger and malnutrition by strengthening

food security measures, there are additional priority accorded areas in the Declaration. These include replenishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) resources to overcome food insecurity, reinforcing global health initiatives, and adopting a One Health Approach to strengthen the global health framework via enhanced collaboration between finance and health sectors. Furthermore, it aims to deliver to all, including those in vulnerable situations, a high-quality education which is inclusive and equitable, and recognises culture as a transformative driver of the SDGs.

Challenges and Imperatives: A Closer Look At SDG Progress

The UN SDG Report in 2019^[6] highlighted the need for more action to achieve the SDGs, as ending extreme poverty by 2030 seemed unlikely, global hunger was on the rise, and issues persisted in health services, education, and gender equality. The COVID-19 pandemic reversed progress, pushing more people into extreme poverty, increasing the risk of child labour and marriage, and hampering education. The 2021 UN SDG Report^[7] echoed these concerns, with the global extreme poverty rate rising for the first time in over two decades and educational gains eroded as millions of children fell below reading proficiency levels. Significant efforts are needed to provide universal health services and reduce health inequalities. Preventable mortality is projected to cost low-income and developing countries a cumulative USD 11.2 trillion in economic output from 2015 to 2030. Achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2030 would require an average of an extra USD 58 per capita per year across 67 low-income and developing countries. Many of these countries are expected to face funding shortages, hindering their Universal Health Care (UHC) goals.^[8] As per the World Bank, certain regions in South Asia have experienced notable drying trends since the 1970s, accompanied by a rise in drought occurrences. Additionally, crop yields are projected to substantially decline in the area by the 2040s. These changes pose significant threats to economies like India, heavily reliant on monsoon-fed agriculture, and can impact income, food security, as well as overall health and well-being.^[9] Unsustainable production and consumption patterns within the G20 are the driving forces behind three critical environmental crises: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. This fact is beyond dispute. Now, the G20 faces a pivotal choice. It can either continue along the high-carbon, resource-intensive path that threatens to erode the progress made and hinder the SDGs, or it can lead the world toward a new, more sustainable trajectory that aligns with nature.

G20's United Efforts to Advancing Global Sustainability

The G20 has strengthened its comprehensive approach by enhancing cooperation among its working groups to align with the global scope of the 2030 agenda. This dedication was restated during the Osaka Leaders' Summit in 2019 ^[10], where G20 Leaders reiterated their determination to take a prominent role in advancing the on-time realization of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The 2030 Agenda recognises the importance of global food and agriculture systems in addressing food security, nutrition, sustainable resource management, and economic development, particularly in developing countries. G20 nations wield significant influence over global food security and nutrition. They've boosted productivity and sustainably and taken collective actions to advance

food security. The G20 consistently focuses on food security, productivity, and sustainability, with recent attention on sustainable resource use. Additionally, they prioritise collaboration in agro-food value chains and support rural development efforts, including addressing youth unemployment in rural areas. Through its endorsement of high-level principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development during this cycle and the Indian presidency, the G20 has demonstrated its commitment to the latter, more environmentally friendly path.^[11]

India's G20 Presidency: A Catalyst for Sustainable Development

India's presidency in the G20 is not just a transition but a leap forward toward leadership among emerging economies. This group already represents 80% of the world's GDP and two-thirds of the global population. Our focus during this presidency centres on sustainable growth and inclusivity, especially in the context of achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. India's commitment to sustainability was reaffirmed at the 2022 G20 Bali summit^[12], where Prime Minister Modi highlighted the importance of sustainability and promoted a universal spirit of brotherhood. Therefore, by aligning with the Prime Minister's vision of an ambitious, inclusive, decisive, and action-oriented presidency, the faster attainment of the SDGs can make this tenure even more productive and impactful. According to a working paper from the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister^[13], the world is on a trajectory to fulfil its 2030 promises nearly 50 years behind schedule, with the expected attainment year being 2078. Notably, India stands out among G20 nations as it has experienced the swiftest growth trend from 2015 to 2019, surpassing even lower-middle-income countries in progress. If current trends continue, India is projected to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2059.^[14]

Endnotes

[1] Ministry of Earth Sciences, “Overview of G20”, https://moes.gov.in/g20-india-2023/moes-g20?language_content_entity=en

[2] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*”, January 1st, 2016, <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

[3] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “*The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition*”, July 10, 2023, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/>

[4] G20 New Delhi Leaders’ Declaration, 2023, Page 7, https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/document/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf

[5] Ibid.

[6] United Nations, “*The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*”, 2019, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

[7] United Nations, “*The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021*”, 2021, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2021.pdf>

[8] UNDP, OECD, “*The G20 Contribution to 2030 Agenda*”, 2019, <https://www.oecd.org/dev/OECD-UNDP-G20-SDG-Contribution-Report.pdf>

[9] Shilpa S, Associate, Centre for Public Policy Research, “India’s G20 Presidency- a shorter path to fulfil SDGs amidst the climate change”, *Hindustan Times*, January 10, 2023, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/ht-insight/economy/indias-g20-presidency-a-shorter-path-to-fulfill-sdgs-amidst-the-climate-change-101673264709442.html>

[10] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *G20 Osaka Leaders’ Declaration*, June 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/g20_summit/osaka19/en/documents/final_g20_osaka_leaders_declaration.html#:~:text=We%2C the Leaders of the,for the benefit of all.

[11] Inger Anderson, “The G20 is a global force for Sustainability”, *United Nations Environment Programme*, July 28, 2023, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/g20-global-force-sustainability>

[12] G20, *G20 Bali Leaders’ Declaration*, November 2022, https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/about_g20/previous-summit-documents/2022-bali/G20 Bali Leaders Declaration,15-16 November 2022.pdf

[13] S Narendra Dev, “As G20 Presidency passes to India, it can bring renewed focus to sustainability deadlines”, *The Indian Express*, November 25, 2022, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/india-g20-presidency-pm-narendra-modi-8287257/>

[14] Ibid.

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