

ASSESSING THE OUTCOMES OF G20 SUMMIT

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.S. President Joe Biden, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen at the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment; India-Middle East-Europe Economics Corridor event during the G20 Summit 2023, in New Delhi. | Photo Credit: PTI

The [18th G-20 Summit](#) produced the '[New Delhi Leaders' Declaration](#)'. In the days building up to the summit, there was anxiety about the chances of its success. It hinged on the question of whether the summit would end in a consensus-based, full-spectrum declaration or in a 'Chair's summary', with its portions marked to show a split among the members. Yet, by the afternoon of day 1, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that complete consensus was reached on the declaration's contents. This, together with the [inclusion of the African Union \(AU\) in the G-20](#) as a member, turned concern into joyous celebration. Now it is time to evaluate the declaration and assess its value on the three-fold yardstick of consensus, additionality, and implementability (CAI). The attempt is to dissect only the more important elements of the text.

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Six paragraphs of the 'Preamble' and the last paragraph of the 'Conclusion' reveal the goals and driving motivations of the G-20 leaders. "We are One Earth, One Family, and we share One Future", they noted. The notion of unity and a shared destiny was aptly stressed to convey the gravity of the multiple challenges facing humankind today. The way out for the world is to be driven by the "the philosophy of living in harmony with our surrounding ecosystem." They worked on harmonising development with environment, stating that "no country should have to choose between fighting poverty and fighting for our planet."

Paragraph 5 lists 12 goals to which the members are fully committed. These range from securing inclusive growth and accelerating full implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda to addressing debt vulnerability, reform of Multilateral Development Banks, and integrating the perspectives of the Global South into the "future G-20 agenda." The document's last paragraph reiterates the determination "to steer the world out of its current challenges" and build a bright future. That this will be a long-term project was evident.

Eight paragraphs were devoted to defining the grouping's view of what the preceding ministerial meetings had called "geopolitical issues." A fine balance was struck between the Russian red

line and the insistence by G7 on ensuring respect for “territorial integrity and sovereignty or political independence.” This middle path, crafted by Indian negotiators, with the valuable help from other countries’ diplomats, was seen as the only way to save the summit.

The general verdict was that Russia gained a little more, while the G7 lost a little to prevent the summit’s failure. The leaders agreed to call for “a comprehensive, just and durable peace in Ukraine.” Whether their labour will have any serious effect on the two warring sides and their backers remains doubtful.

The first-ever expansion of G-20 membership was imbued with much significance. The document depicts the AU as “a permanent member” even though G-20 does not have permanent and non-permanent members; it has only members and guests. The admission was agreed in the name of creating a more inclusive world. The leaders’ commitment on what follows will be watched with real interest; they observed, “We commit to strengthen our ties with and support the African Union realise the aspirations under Agenda 2063.” To begin with, G-20 may have to offer ample assistance to facilitate AU’s participation in G-20 activities at the level of governments and miscellaneous Engagement Groups.

G-20’s central agenda relating to economic and financial sectors, climate action and energy transitions, implementation of SDGs, technological transformation through Digital Public Infrastructure, reform of international financial institutions, trade, and taxation, and securing gender equality and empowerment of “all” women and girls is wide-ranging, ambitious, and even aspirational. Relevant domain experts are in a better position to assess the prospects of this agenda’s implementability. A question that is often asked is, from where will additional financial resources come for achieving all these goals? John Kirton, Director, G-20 Research Group at the University of Toronto, noted, “There was little new money mobilised for debt relief for developing countries, for reform of MDBs and the International Monetary Fund, for global health, or for food security, education and other social needs.”

Paragraph 47 propounds the view that global challenges of the 21st century can “only be addressed through reinvigorated multilateralism, reforms and international cooperation.” It wants the UN institutions to be “more responsive” to the entire membership. The need to make the global governance “more representative, effective, transparent and accountable” has been stated clearly. The fact that these formulations have the support of the entire G-20 leadership creates a glimmer of hope of some progress in the future, even though realism demands that the proponents of reform to remain cautious.

On the CAI yardstick, it is obvious that the declaration is not only backed by “100%” consensus, but it also breaks new grounds and records progress in terms of concepts, goals, and objectives, as compared to the Bali Declaration. The key criterion for the success of the summit is the degree of implementation of its decisions. But this will be accorded an answer only in the medium term.

Meanwhile, there should be no hesitation in recognising that the summit has been a major political and diplomatic success for G-20 and its current president, India.

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