



CONCEPT NOTE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The T20 South Africa Vision

The Think 20 (T20) is the ideas bank of the G20. The T20 South Africa will fulfil that purpose by facilitating a deeper policy engagement between the task forces, the Advisory Council and the official G20 track, thus optimising the participation of experts in the T20 from around the world. Building on past T20s, the T20 South Africa will also seek out cooperation with other G20 engagement groups on specific policy issues where synergies exist.

The mainstay of the T20 process will continue to be the policy briefings, which will have three purposes: (i) increase the engagement of G20 think tanks on the G20 agenda; (ii) foster collaborative networks across think tanks; and (iii) inform the task force discussions that will feed into the T20 final communiqué that will be submitted to the sherpa and finance tracks.

1.2. The G20

On 1 December 2024, South Africa assumed the rotating presidency of the Group of 20 (G20), a group of 19 countries (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Russia, Türkiye, UK and USA) and two regional bodies: the African Union and the European Union. The members of the G20 represent around 85% of the world's gross domestic product, more than 75% of world trade and around two-thirds of the world's population.

The G20's scope has evolved since its establishment in 1999. At that point, it was principally dedicated to global macroeconomic coordination and financial stability challenges as a response to the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s. The elevation of the G20 to the Leaders' Summit level in 2008 allowed for a broadening of the G20 agenda, including efforts to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and build a more inclusive and representative multilateral system. Decisions of the G20 wield significant influence on global governance, including on the global financial architecture, global agreements and processes, and multilateralism.



Under the theme ‘Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability,’ South Africa aims to consolidate the Global South agenda and support the African continent’s development priorities.

1.3. The Think 20 as part of the G20 Official Engagement Groups

The T20 Engagement Group was established under the Mexican G20 presidency in 2012. At the time, it brought together a small number of think tanks from G20 member countries. The German G20 presidency in 2017 introduced a more structured approach. This included, for the first time, a series of task forces on themes linked closely with the priorities of the German G20 presidency but determined by the T20 organisers themselves. The task forces included researchers from diverse think tanks and universities. They were encouraged to submit policy briefings with recommendations on issues related to the G20 agenda. The policy briefings had to be collaborative, involving multiple countries and institutions.

This model has become the standard approach for the T20, and over the years a number of excellent policy briefings have been published. The T20 organisers have also built up more frequent interactions with the various G20 working groups to contribute insights and recommendations emerging from the work of the T20 taskforces.

The T20 has continued to evolve since 2012. It has established a practice of producing a communiqué that draws from the policy briefings and other work produced by the task forces. Each year, the T20 hosts numerous events including an inception conference, a midterm conference and a T20 summit. The T20 South Africa will additionally convene a Think20 Africa conference during the course of 2025.

1.4. T20 South Africa: Principles and Objectives

The Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) associated with UNISA, the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), and the Institute for Pan African Thought and Conversation (IPATC) have been appointed by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) to organise the T20 process under South Africa’s G20 presidency. The principles of solidarity, representativity and inclusivity will guide the process, with the aim of attaining high-impact outcomes in the G20 policy processes. Moreover, as 2025 marks the culmination of the first cycle of G20 presidencies, the T20 South Africa aims to consolidate and sustain the gains made in the previous T20s.

Guided by the priorities of South Africa’s 2025 G20 presidency, the T20 South Africa Secretariat will invite a wide range of experts and institutions from across the globe, and especially Africa and the Global South, to engage and develop ideas and solutions to contemporary global challenges. This is the first G20 to be presided over by an African country and it is therefore a unique opportunity to amplify marginalised voices. The composition of task forces and



participants at meetings, conferences and other process activities will reflect this.

T20 South Africa will seek to focus on high-impact, solutions-driven and implementation-focused policy recommendations. This process will provide for regular direct engagement between participating think tanks and policymakers across G20 structures and processes. This approach builds on the progress Brazil and other recent G20 presidencies have achieved in ensuring more timely inputs by the T20 into G20 processes. This interaction will assist in focusing policy ideas for specific interventions with proposals for implementation plans. T20 engagements will be organised during or closer to engagement activities and meetings of government officials and sherpas.

Guided by the concept of solidarity, the T20 process will seek to add to the growing research and collaboration networks between the Global South and the Global North. In the call for abstracts, a multidisciplinary approach will be encouraged to offer well-rounded solutions for policymakers. While it will encourage the continued engagement of existing participants, this T20 will also seek to increase the participation of new think tanks in the process, particularly from Africa.

Guided also by the concepts of representativity and accountability, the T20 will reach out to other [engagement groups](#), such as Civil20, Labour20, Women20, Youth20, University20 and Business20.

T20 South Africa has identified headline themes and sub-themes. The following thematic areas have been selected:

- Task force 1: Trade and Investment
- Task force 2: Digital Transformation
- Task force 3: Financing for Sustainable Development
- Task force 4: Solidarity and the Sustainable Development Goals
- Task force 5: Climate Action and the Just Energy Transition

2. Organising Structure

The Think20 Secretariat comprises the heads of the three organisations (SAIIA, IGD and IPACT) supported by two teams: an operational and technical support team, and a content team that will provide support with research, developing concept notes and related outputs.

2.1. Advisory Council

The Advisory Council will be drawn from South African and international think tankers and academics with deep expertise on the G20 and issues that the T20 South Africa will be



addressing.

The T20 Advisory Council is encouraged to promote ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking on the issues of most interest to the South African government in particular and the G20 in general. This could include commissioning or preparing brief policy notes linked to specific issues in the respective working groups of the sherpa and finance tracks that may not be included in the five Think 20 task forces; as well as direct interactions with the South African government or the working groups in either the finance or sherpa tracks.

In addition, the Advisory Council’s role will include:

- Promoting awareness of the role of the G20 and of the T20 within their countries and networks.
- Identifying and facilitating interactions with think tanks, research centres and government officials engaged with the sherpa and finance tracks, particularly in the Global South, with a view to expanding the T20 outreach.
- Contributing to South Africa’s T20 activities and events (eg, convening side events, reviewing policy brief abstracts and participating in task force activities and side events.)
- Contributing to dialogues between T20 and other engagement groups.

The co-chairs of each of the task forces will be ex officio members of the Advisory Council.

This approach enables the T20 South Africa to make full use of the intellectual capacity assembled in the Advisory Council as well as the task force membership.

The T20 South Africa Organising Committee will reach out to the sherpa and finance tracks to inform them of this approach and to identify meeting opportunities either with the South African government or with individual working groups for engagement.

2.2. Task Force Structure

The T20 South Africa task forces reflect the G20 priorities identified by the South African government. Five task forces have been established. Each task force has three co-chairs: one drawn from South Africa, one from a different Global South country, and one from a Global North G20 country. Each theme has a limited number of sub-topics; these sub-topics will be coordinated by the sub-theme leads. Moreover, in the constitution of the task forces, gender representation and continuity from the previous T20 processes have been carefully considered. Task force chairs will drive the policy briefing process with the support of coordinators drawn from the Secretariat. The task force chairs will provide their expertise beyond the publication process, including participating in briefings and high-level engagements that feed into the official track. Additionally, they will be encouraged to author joint research outputs.



3. Policy Briefings

The T20 South Africa will publish a maximum of 100 policy briefings. To ensure inclusivity and representation, the guidelines for the policy briefings are as follows:

- Policy briefings must be authored by more than one organisation.
- Policy briefings must be co-authored by institutions from the Global South and Global North.
- Co-authors must have a minimum of one female author.
- The final policy briefing submitted must match the abstract that was accepted. If a different policy briefing is submitted, this will result in disqualification.
- Policy briefings must have a maximum of 1 500 words and limit the use of references.
- Abstracts must have a maximum of 350 words.
- The policy briefings should clearly articulate why the G20 is the appropriate platform for their recommendations and consider previous T20 and G20 outcomes.

Authors are requested to strictly adhere to the abovementioned guidelines. The T20 Secretariat will introduce a blog and podcast series to enhance forms of engagement and the exchange of ideas on G20 issues. Policy briefings that have not been accepted for publication may be considered as blogs on the T20 South Africa website and shared across the T20 social media platforms.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. Task Forces

Substantive discussions and collaborative work will take place within the five task forces of T20 South Africa:

- Each task force will focus on a specific theme, taking into account the priorities of the South African G20 presidency and the official working groups, as well as suggestions from national and international think tanks. The thematic focus of the five task forces has been outlined in section 1.3 above.
- Task force themes are divided into a limited number of sub-themes related to the general task force theme. Each sub-theme has been assigned to a sub-theme lead responsible for working with other task force members.
- Cross-cutting issues not treated as a theme of a specific task force can be accommodated as sub-themes in multiple task forces.
- Task force teams will have regular meetings and will be responsible for:
 - Selecting policy briefings and peer review proposals.
 - Discussing and drafting the recommendations of the task forces.
 - Liaising with the T20 Secretariat as it develops the agenda for the conferences.



The coordinators of each task force will provide coordination and secretarial support for the co-chairs and sub-theme leads.

Researchers who are not formally part of a task force will be able to participate in open discussions (eg, webinars and side events) and submit policy briefings to task forces.

4.2. The Co-chairs will:

- Lead the selection and review process of policy briefings in collaboration with the sub-theme leads and systematise the main conclusions and recommendations for each sub-theme.
- Lead discussions on task force recommendations with support from the T20 Secretariat.
- Support and participate in T20 South Africa conferences and summits.
- Support and participate in some of the side events of T20 South Africa.

4.3. The Sub-theme Leads will be responsible for:

- Engaging with task force members working on the sub-theme under their responsibility.
- Conducting the discussion and other activities related to the sub-theme assigned to them.
- Ensuring that researchers co-authoring the selected policy briefings on the sub-topic are drawn from at least two countries and two organisations and with gender diversity in the co-authorship.
- Engaging with co-chairs on sub-theme progress. Consolidating the written peer review comments of the three members working on the sub-topic.
- Participating in the three T20 South Africa conferences and in some of the side events related to T20 South Africa. Co-chairs and sub-theme leads may only submit policy briefing proposals for a sub-theme other than the one they are working on as a task force member.

