



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, HIS EXCELLENCY MR SHIPOKOSA
PAULUS MASHATILE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE T20 AFRICA
HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE AT CSIR INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
CENTRE, PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA. 29 APRIL 2025**

Programme Directors, Mr. Mohamed El Karaksy and Ms. Pamla Gopaul;

Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the
Republic of South Africa, Honourable Alvin Botes;

Chief Executive of the South African Institute for International Affairs, Ms.
Elizabeth Sidiropoulos;

Chief Executive Officer of the African Peer Review Mechanism, Her
Excellency Ms Marie-Antoinette Rose Quatre;

Chief Executive Officer of AUDA-NEPAD, Her Excellency Ms Nardos
Bekele-Thomas;

Director of Economy, Infrastructure, Trade and Industrialisation at AUDA-
NEPAD, Mr Amine Idriss Adoum;

Director of the Institute for Global Dialogue, Dr Philani Mthembu;

Director of the Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation,
Professor Siphamandla Zondi;

Officials from Government, AUDA-NEPAD, SAIIA, IGD, and IPATC;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of all participants and the Government of South Africa, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the organisers of this crucial and essential Think 20 (T20) Africa High-Level Dialogue, themed ***"Strengthening African Agency in the G20 Within the Global Order"***.

It is a privilege to have been invited to participate in this T20 under the G20—an engagement that brings together research and policy institutions, academics and think tanks to provide policy recommendations and research-based insights to inform G20 decision-making.

As Government, we hold the T20 in high regard because it is a critical platform for the dissemination of intellectual and strategic inputs that ultimately facilitate the systematic articulation of African perspectives in global policy processes.

This gathering emphasises the need for Africa to address the persistent challenges of economic development, political instability, and governance weaknesses. It calls for a critical evaluation of current interventions aimed at strengthening Africa's priorities, including economic growth, sustainable development and global governance reforms.

Africa is ours, and we must create the Africa we want.

We must build on the ideas of our visionary leaders who committed themselves to the advancement of their African nations. I am reminded and grateful to intellectuals among other such as Ntsikana, Tiyo Soga, John Tengo Jabavu, Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana, Samuel Edward Krune Mqhayi, Cheikh Anta Diop, Ali Mazrui, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, and Nelson Mandela.

These individuals have contributed significantly to literature, politics, religion, journalism, and the fight for liberation and reconciliation. They have established a trajectory for Africa's growth, resulting in over a dozen African nations attaining their independence. They are largely responsible for Africa's current status as the world's fastest-growing continent.

To make Africa great and attain complete political and economic independence, we must pick up where they left off. In collaboration with

each of you present here today, we possess the collective ability to honour their legacy and positively transform Africa's existing and future prospects for us all who call this continent home.

While Africa is one of the most fascinating continents, it currently stands at a crucial juncture in its development journey, with a growing population, and vast natural resources, yet it remains underdeveloped.

We also need to recognise that Africa has the youngest population globally, with a significant proportion of its citizens under 30 years of age. The presence of a youthful population offers a range of possibilities for the development of the continent.

Regrettably, a significant proportion of Africa's youth are unemployed or underemployed, and many face limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Africa's demographic dividend remains underutilised with women and youth disproportionately excluded from formal economies.

Nonetheless, with targeted strategies and interventions, this segment of our population has the capacity to substantially enhance economic growth, stimulate innovation, and promote social development.

South Africa is committed to placing employment generation, advancing gender-responsive policies, and equitable access to opportunity at the centre of the G20 dialogue.

Africa can accelerate development through digitalisation, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and emerging technologies. The Fourth Industrial Revolution must be inclusive, bridging gaps in education, healthcare, financial services, and governance. Investment in digital skills, data infrastructure, cybersecurity, and innovation ecosystems is crucial to ensure that no one is left behind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The South African G20 Presidency provides us with an opportunity to take meaningful steps towards addressing economic and developmental issues in Africa.

Since 1999, South Africa has been a member of the G20, which accounts for 85% of global GDP and 75% of international trade. This group is crucial for global economic cooperation, bringing together leaders and policymakers from major economies to discuss and coordinate policies on various issues.

South Africa's G20 Presidency, being the first ever on African soil, marks a significant moment for the continent. Regardless of it being in South Africa, "*the G20 Presidency is for Africa.*"

Through our Presidency, we intended to define the economic destiny of Africa, one marked by sustained growth, high employment, increased living standards, and sustainable development and innovation.

The inclusion of the African Union as a permanent member of the G20 also marks a transformational moment in global governance. The move is the culmination of persistent advocacy to ensure Africa's rightful place in shaping global economic, political and social constructs.

South Africa's G20 Presidency is centred on the theme of **"solidarity, equality, and sustainability,"** which is not just a catch-phrase but the reflection and commitment of the African order. The theme further reflects a commitment to re-imagine multilateralism in the face of fragmentation and rising unilateralism.

Our Presidency is grounded in the philosophy of Ubuntu, which reminds us that our fates are intertwined and that collective progress must underpin global governance. This principle shapes our agenda and informs our deep engagement with the AU, African institutions, and fellow G20 member states.

Moreover, the Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability theme highlights the South African Government's commitment to tackling global concerns through collaborative action while also prioritising the needs and challenges of the Global South, particularly the Africa continent.

Currently, the world is facing relentless challenges that are testing our global humanity and solidarity among nations. Major megatrends such as globalisation, geopolitical instability, climate change, rising nationalism,

demographic changes, technological convergence, conflict, trade wars, and financial crises are causing further hardship and have the potential to threaten our collective future.

Global economic growth is subdued, with many economies, particularly in Africa, burdened by unsustainable debt levels, while billions are affected by underdevelopment, inequality, poverty, and unemployment.

Similarly, our G20 Presidency has encountered significant changes in the landscape of global affairs. The challenges facing multilateralism, which have been apparent for an extended period, have now emerged as a significant factor that is fundamentally reshaping global dynamics and relationships.

Therefore, we should take a dim view and strongly discourage the erosion of multilateralism, as it poses a potential threat to global growth and stability. A fair, transparent, equitable, and inclusive international order is essential for economic stability and sustained growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the ongoing trade tensions may result in rising cost of living, due to increased prices, particularly for manufactured goods, potentially exacerbating the sluggish economic growth across our continent. It is necessary that we respond collectively and decisively as Africans while increasing capacity and capability to reduce dependency.

South Africa is acutely aware that war and conflict are innately detrimental to a nation's economy and its people, as evidenced by our experience during apartheid era. Devastation of infrastructure, loss of life and labour, and disruption of trade networks significantly impact economic stability.

Hence during our G20 Presidency, South Africa will persist in promoting constructive and peaceful resolutions. Engaging in inclusive dialogue, which stands as the primary assurance for achieving sustainable and enduring peace.

We call for deeper G20-AU collaboration in peace-building on the continent, including sustainable funding for AU peace operations and mechanisms aligned to the Silencing the Guns initiative. Strong

institutions, regional integration and democratic accountability must guide our response to instability across the Sahel, DRC, and Horn of Africa.

South Africa has demonstrated a strong commitment in its foreign policy by advocating for principles such as justice, solidarity, equality, peace, and respect, all grounded in its dedication to human dignity.

The G20 Presidency of South Africa is poised to advocate for reforms within the global financial framework, emphasising the need for equitable credit rating systems, accessible climate financing, and substantial debt relief for nations with lower income levels. In this regard, it resonates with the agreement that achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 necessitates comprehensive transformation rather than mere policy adjustments.

South Africa has worked closely with the AU to ensure its six G20 priorities—ranging from inclusive development and fair finance to climate action and global governance reform—are integrated into our Presidency's workstreams. This includes our three G20 high-level Task Forces on:

- Inclusive Economic Growth, Industrialisation, Employment and Inequality,
- Artificial Intelligence and Innovation for Sustainable Development, and
- Food Security

Africa has the potential to not only achieve food security but also to become a leading agricultural exporter globally. By investing in agricultural innovation, supply chains and rural industrialisation, we can ensure food sovereignty and economic empowerment.

Additionally, our Presidency will be the leading force behind a review of the Cost of Capital; an Africa-focused Compact with Africa meeting in Addis Ababa; a Critical Minerals Initiative to promote value addition and beneficiation; and a 20-year retrospective review of the G20 to assess impact and identify reforms.

In a nutshell, our ultimate goal for the duration of this Presidency is to prioritise the advancement of Africa. As we have indicated on a number

of different occasions, we have identified four priorities for the term of this G20 Presidency which are:

1. **Firstly**, to strengthen disaster resilience and responses. This is due to the widespread damage that natural disasters cause to infrastructure, the interruption of economic activity, the destruction of livelihoods, and the unfortunate loss of lives.
2. **Secondly**, to ensure debt sustainability for developing economies. The G20 will prioritise debt sustainability for developing economies; address rising sovereign debt levels and servicing costs; demonstrate leadership in addressing global economic imbalances; and fill the funding gaps necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. **Thirdly**, to mobilise finance for a just energy transition. South Africa's G20 Presidency aims to mobilise financing for a just energy transition by focusing on limiting global temperature increases in an equitable and just manner. South Africa has pioneered the use of country platforms to coordinate funding through the Just Energy Transition Partnership.
4. **Lastly**, to harness critical minerals for inclusive growth and sustainable development. We seek to promote South Africa and Africa as a business and investment destination and for the country to lead in solving global economic challenges.

The geopolitical contest for critical minerals must not replicate extractive models of the past. South Africa's Critical Minerals Initiative seeks to establish sustainable, inclusive and diversified supply chains that prioritise local beneficiation and value adding.

This aligns well with the African Green Minerals Strategy and builds on the 2024 UN Panel on Energy Transition Minerals. Africa must leverage its mineral wealth for industrialisation, energy transitions, and digital transformations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, during this Presidency, we are also amplifying Africa's strategic voice in a fragmented world. Africa's economic and geopolitical profile is rising. Driven by the African Continental Free Trade Area and domestic economic resilience, forecasts indicate that Africa will

be the second-fastest growing region globally, and it is expected to increase intra-African trade by over 50 percent by 2035, significantly boosting economic activity.

However, structural inequality, the cost of capital, climate shocks, and persistent marginalisation in decision-making forums jeopardise this growth. The T20 Dialogue is therefore a key platform to consolidate Africa's intellectual leadership and develop strategic responses to these systemic challenges, ensuring Africa's agency is proactive, not reactive.

We must take advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area, Africa's most ambitious economic integration project, bringing together 55 AU Member States into a single market. The Free Trade Agreement in Africa promotes industrialisation by reducing reliance on raw material exports and promoting value-addition. It increases Africa's bargaining power in global trade negotiations, allowing it to attract more direct foreign investment, negotiate better trade deals with other continents, and develop diverse industries.

Nonetheless, there is still more work to be done to overcome inefficient logistics and inadequate infrastructure. Modern transport networks must be developed, for example, while energy and digital infrastructure must be built, trade restrictions must be lifted, and smooth cross-border trade must be encouraged.

Ladies and gentlemen, in our pursuit of strengthening African agency within the G20 framework, we must re-emphasise the importance of collaboration, open dialogue, and collective action. As African nations, we have to come together and speak with one voice. We have to combine our strengths to guide policies and decisions that align with our interests and aspirations.

Furthermore, we must engage constructively with our global partners within the G20, cultivating partnerships founded on mutual respect, understanding, and reciprocity. We can construct a more equal and inclusive global order that benefits all countries by bridging gaps and forging partnerships.

I truly believe that a fair, inclusive global order is possible, but it requires leadership grounded in equity, responsibility, and cooperation. The G20 should form part of this as we seek to unite as country states and develop policies that are progressive for the interest of all. Our intention is to work with like-minded countries and progressive institutions to establish a more equitable, representative, and just international order.

The G20 is not a substitute for existing international institutions but must complement and accelerate progress on already agreed global commitments. As we reflect on “The G20 After 20 Years”, South Africa is initiating a review to ensure the forum remains responsive, representative and reform-orientated.

In conclusion, let us remember that the strength of the G20 lies in its diversity and inclusivity. Strengthening African agency within this framework not only empowers African states but also increases the credibility and efficacy of global governance.

South Africa’s G20 Presidency will remain accountable to the continent and to its people. We are not just observers of history; we are co-authors of a new global order. The T20 Africa High-Level Policy Dialogue is not simply a meeting of minds; it is an affirmation of Africa’s leadership in reshaping the global agenda.

I am therefore confident that, over the coming days, you will be spending time dealing with epistemology, both tacit and explicit application. I hope you will have meaningful contributions to advancing African Agency in the G20 and on the global stage.

At the end, we must conclude this dialogue with a clear grasp of what must be done to reposition Africa as a hub of knowledge and growth while finding solutions to its challenges.

Africa is at a turning point, armed with ambition, vision, and growing global influence.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to participate in this dialogue.

Link:

<https://dirco.gov.za/keynote-address-by-deputy-president-shipokosa-paulus-mashatile-on-the-occasion-of-the-t20-africa-high-level-dialogue-at-csir-international-convention-centre-pretoria-29-april-2025/>