

Cover Story

AFRICAN UNION IN G20: A TRIUMPH FOR INDIA'S PRESIDENCY

The African Union (AU) became a full member of the G20 during the September 2023 summit hosted by India. This move, accepted by G20 members, underscores Africa's growing importance and India's efforts to amplify the Global South's voice. Africa's resilience, rich natural resources, and demographic growth are attracting global attention. India's G20 presidency, themed "One Earth, One Family, One Future," emphasized inclusivity, particularly towards Africa. Major powers, including the US, China, and Japan, are enhancing their presence in Africa. The AU's G20 membership strengthens India's ties with Africa, reflecting its commitment to a more equitable international order.

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The African Union (AU) became a full member of the Group of 20 (G20) during the two-day summit hosted by India on 9-10 September 2023. The G20 member states accepted India's proposal of bringing this key bloc of the Global South to the high table of the global economies. The G20, formed in 1999, comprises 19 countries including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and a supranational bloc, the European Union (EU). It accounts for around 85 per cent of the global GDP over 75 per cent of the global trade and two third of the world's population. AU is the second regional organisation after the EU to gain permanent membership of this exclusive group. African Union's entry in the G20 showcases the rising importance of the region. It also highlights India's efforts under its G20 Presidency to enhance the voice of the Global South, in particular, of Africa.

Africa rising

In recent years, Africa has been the centre of global attention. Major powers like the United States, France, China, Japan, and India have been engaging the African countries. This is mainly due to several significant developments in the continent. First, African economies are demonstrating resilience and growth. In 2023, despite the setback during the COVID-19

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pandemic, six of African countries were in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) list of top ten fastest growing economies in the world. They include Libya, Senegal, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Cote d'Ivoire.¹ Moreover, African Union represents a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of around USD 3 trillion.²

Second, the region is rich in natural resources. Africa is home to 60 per cent of global energy resources.³ It also has over 40 per cent of global reserves of critical minerals such as cobalt, manganese and platinum that are needed for clean energy technologies.⁴ As climate change leads the world towards environmentally friendly fuels, this wealth of critical minerals essential for green transition has the potential to make Africa a substantial player in the global economy. Third, Africa's population is projected to double in the next two decades. It is currently around 1.4 billion and is predicted to reach around 2.5 billion by 2050.⁵ Thereby accounting for 25 percent of the world's population.⁶ The demographic transformation in continent will have global ramifications. Africa is set to become a major source of the global workforce in the future.

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India's G20 Presidency

India's G20 presidency will go down in history of this important forum for promoting inclusivity. This was reflected in theme of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* i.e. "One Earth, One Family and One Future", promoted by India. India's spirit of inclusivity was visible in one of the largest participation by the countries from the Global South. At the beginning of its presidency, India organised the "Voice of Global South Summit." The virtual summit received a tremendous response, with 125 countries participating in the event. This included 47 from Africa, 31 from Asia, 29 from Latin America, 11 from Oceania and seven from Europe.⁷

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During its G20 presidency, India rightfully brought the focus on Africa, reflecting its commitment towards the region. As reiterated by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "Africa is a top priority for us even within the G20 ... no future plan on earth can succeed without all voices being heard."⁸ During the Leaders' Summit in September 2023, leaders from a large number of African countries were present. Apart from South Africa, which is a permanent member, there was representation from Nigeria, Mauritius, Egypt and Comoros.

Securing the permanent membership for African Union has boosted India's image as a dependable partner for the African countries. It also underscores India's efforts in championing for greater representation from the continent in the multilateral forums. India

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in its global war against terrorism. It is also perceived as engaging with Africa through initiatives like the 2022 US-Africa Leadership Summit, primarily, to deter rising Chinese influence. In the last two decades, Beijing has boosted economic and security ties with several African countries. However, China is often accused of following a debt-trap policy in a bid to enlarge its influence. The search for critical resources and challenge of migration has led

The induction of African Union in G20 comes at a time when the continent has become a hotspot, with major powers...

last Tokyo International Conference for African Development (TICAD) hosted by Japan in Tunisia, it announced \$30 billion development assistance for African countries.⁹

The entry of AU in the G20 will surely help in improving India's relations with the region. Africans do recognise India's efforts in making the AU a full member of G20 a reality. The response from African countries indicates appreciation and support for India's role within the region. After the conclusion of the G20 summit the Chairperson of African Union, President Azali Assoumani of Comoros, 'thanked Prime Minister Modi for his efforts for making AU a permanent member of G20.'¹⁰ Similarly, Kenya's President William Ruto was quite generous in his praise of India for pulling off this feat. He said, "India has made a very huge contribution. We want to thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for making sure that Africa became a permanent member of the G20 during his presidency."¹¹

In conclusion, African Union's entry in G20 is a significant milestone that highlights Africa's growing political and economic potential. It also symbolises India's efforts towards promoting a more equitable and just international order. There is no doubt India's contribution in this development will augur well for strengthening bonds with African countries.

¹ "Does the IMF expect economic growth in African countries in 2023," October 2023 at <https://developmentreimagined.com/will-african-countries-see-economic-growth-in-2023/> (Accessed 15 December 2023)

² "G20: positive signals on the integration of the African Union" at <https://www.africanews.com/2023/09/08/g20-positive-signals-on-the-integration-of-the-african-union> (Accessed 15 December 2023)

- ³ International Energy Agency, Africa Energy Outlook 2022 at <https://www.iea.org/reports/africa-energy-outlook-2022/key-findings> (Accessed 15 December 2023)
- ⁴ Ibid
- ⁵ Andrew Stanley, "African Century" *Finance and Development Magazine* September 2023 at <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2023/09/PT-african-century> (Accessed 15 December 2023)
- ⁶ Ibid
- ⁷ RezaulH Laskar, "New initiatives to be set up to aid developing nations: Modi at voice of Global South summit", 14 January 2023 at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/new-initiatives-to-be-set-up-to-aid-developing-nations-modi-at-voice-of-global-south-summit-101673635535313.html> (Accessed 19 October 2023) ⁸PTI's Exclusive Interview with Prime Minister Narendra Modi", 3 September 2023 at https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/ptis-exclusive-interview-with-prime-minister-narendra-modi/ (Accessed 19 October 2023)
- ⁹ Julian Ryall, "Japan ramps up aid to Africa to weaken China's grip" 9 July 2022 at <https://www.dw.com/en/japan-ramps-up-aid-to-africa-to-weaken-chinas-grip-on-continent/a-63032431> (Accessed 19 October 2023)
- ¹⁰ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Prime Minister's meeting with the President of Comoros" 10 September 2023 at https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/37100/Prime_Ministers_meeting_with_the_President_of_Comoros (Accessed 19 October 2023) ¹¹ANI, "Want to thank PM Modi for helping Africa become G20 member: Kenya President" Business Standard 2 December 2023 at https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/want-to-thank-pm-modi-for-helping-africa-become-g20-member-kenya-president-123120101339_1.html (Accessed 15 December 2023)