



# Policy Brief

## Advocating for a G21

Authors in alphabetical order

Sachin Chaturvedi, Pamla Gopaul, Stephan Klingebiel, Klaus Leisinger, Michael Makanga, Thomas Pogge, Riattu Qibthiyah, Jeffrey Sachs, Doris Schroeder, Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Peter Singer



## Policy Brief: Advocating for a G21

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# Policy Brief

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# Executive Summary

This policy brief advocates for the inclusion of the African Union in the G20 for ethical reasons.

The G20 or Group of Twenty is **one of the most powerful multilateral platforms today**.<sup>1</sup> It plays an important role in shaping and strengthening global governance on all major international economic issues. Its key achievements include cooperation on tax transparency, increasing female participation in the workforce, enhancing food security, and reducing the debt burden on the world's poorest countries.

**The G20 has one major limitation. Fortunately, this limitation – that it leaves out 96% of Africa's population - can be easily remedied by including the African Union.**

There are many political, social, economic and governance reasons for adding the African Union<sup>2</sup> to the G20.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

**This values-driven policy brief argues that the African Union should be included in the G20 to promote the values of fairness, respect, care and honesty.**<sup>6</sup>

# Values

On **participatory fairness**, the inclusion of the African Union in the G20 would represent a **masterstroke of fairness combined with efficiency**, in that it would grant representation to 54 more countries than the status quo, with just one additional seat.

On **substantive fairness**, African countries are suffering disproportionate losses due to climate change. The burden of championing African interests in the G20 should no longer rest on South Africa alone.

Externally driven G20 initiatives can consign Africa to a passive and consultative role, which runs counter to the value of **respect**. Inclusion of the African Union in the G20 would meet this concern.

To **leave no-one behind** is a central promise of Agenda 2030. This requires an ethics of **care** and support. With the current finance and borrowing mechanisms driven by the G20, African governments cannot support their populations appropriately.

The G20 has called for stronger **global cooperation**, praised the **strengths of regional ownership** by the African Union, and reiterated its support for Africa. The necessary step, to show the G20's **honesty** of intention and **integrity**, is to follow through with a G21.

Procedural Fair Process  
**Fairness**  
Participatory  
Substantive

Recognition  
**Respect**  
Worth Dignity

Support  
**Care**  
Leaving no-one behind  
Empathy

Fidelity  
**Honesty**  
Transparency Integrity

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This policy brief was catalysed by the January 2023 Bhopal T20 event<sup>7</sup> organized under the Indian presidency of the G20.<sup>8</sup> It was the first T20 event to link global governance with ethics and value systems.<sup>9</sup> Many of the authors<sup>10</sup> of this brief contributed to the event.

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Procedural Fair Process  
**Fairness**  
 Participatory  
 Substantive

Procedural fairness,<sup>11</sup> fair processes, and participatory fairness require that every country should have a seat at a decision-making table that discusses our common future and the most important world issues affecting us all.



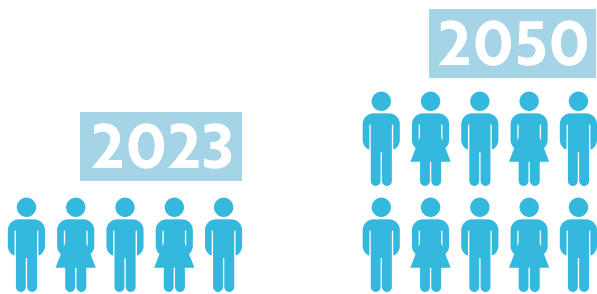
With  
**1.4 billion**  
 out of a world  
 population  
 of 8 billion (2023),

Africa represents  
**17.5%**  
 of the world's  
 people (2023)

Europe  
**9%**  
 of the world's  
 people (2023)

Latin America  
**8%**  
 of the world's  
 people (2023)

North America  
**7%**  
 of the world's  
 people (2023)



The population of  
 Sub-Saharan Africa is  
 projected to double by 2050  
 while Europe's population continues to shrink.<sup>12</sup>

Over the same period,  
**Africa is likely to have the  
 fastest urban growth rate<sup>13</sup>**

The current urban populations of **Cairo (21 million)<sup>14</sup>**, **Lagos (15 million)<sup>15</sup>**, and **Kinshasa (15 million)<sup>16</sup>** illustrate this trend.



Africa only has one seat at the G20 table, that of South Africa. **This means that 96% of Africa's population is currently not represented at the G20.** In 2021, South Africa had a smaller GDP than Nigeria (\$419 billion in comparison with \$441 billion), but it shoulders the responsibility of representing an entire continent.

One could argue that efficiency requirements make it impossible to grant procedural fairness (in the form of national representation) in every forum, and that all countries are, in any case, represented at the United Nations. Indeed, one of the strengths of the G20 is that it operates with an efficiency that allows for quicker and more flexible problem-solving. Yet by including the EU, the group accommodated, at a stroke, input from 27 countries in a coordinated way that did not jeopardize efficiency.

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**A similar masterstroke is possible today.** The inclusion of the African Union would bring all 55 African countries<sup>17</sup> into the G20, thus **giving representation to 54 countries more than the status quo, at the cost of just one additional seat.**

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The minimum requirement of **substantive fairness<sup>18</sup>** is that one should not be harmed by others.

The countries of the African Union are responsible for around 3.6% of global carbon emission,<sup>19</sup> represent 18% of the global population, and lose 5% to 15% of GDP due to climate change<sup>20</sup> – and yet they have no seat at the G20 decision-making table, where climate change and other causes of global economic crises are discussed, and consequent action decided upon.

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A seat for the African Union – a G21, in other words – would enable Africa to push for more substantive fairness on climate change and global economic policies.

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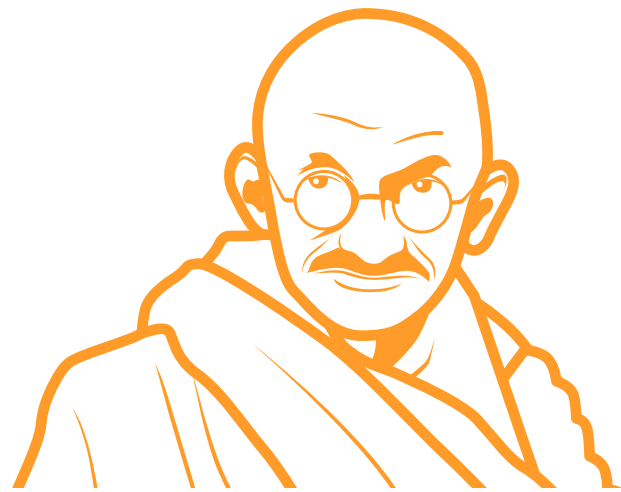
# Recognition Respect Worth Dignity

Respect for others means **recognizing their interests and their worth and dignity.**<sup>21</sup> The basis of respect is acknowledging the inherent worth of all human beings.<sup>22</sup>

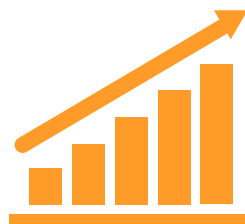
The G20 formulated a response to COVID-19 for Africa when only South Africa was formally a member of the G20.<sup>23, 24</sup> The response aimed to “help protect and assist the most vulnerable and those most at-risk because of the pandemic, who generally suffer disproportionate impacts, including women and girls, youth, people with disabilities, the elderly, migrants, refugees, displaced people, and indigenous people”.<sup>25</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi popularized the spirit of respect, expressing it like this:

**“Whatever you do for me but without me, you do against me.”**



Prior to the pandemic, under the Chinese presidency (2016), the G20 started work on supporting industrialization in African countries.



Under the German presidency (2017), the G20 Compact with Africa was created to increase private investment in African countries,



and the Italian presidency (2021) hosted the first Africa Advisory Group.<sup>26</sup>

It has been argued that “all these G20 initiatives consign Africa to a passive, consultative, or at best diminutive role”,<sup>27</sup> which runs counter to the value of respect. Adding the African Union to the G20 would address this concern while only adding one seat.



# Support Care

Leaving no-one behind  
Empathy

Leaving no-one behind exemplifies the ethics of care<sup>28</sup>, empathy,<sup>29</sup> and support.



High-income countries borrowed **\$17 trillion** to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic,

**0%**

as they can borrow at **ZERO** interest rates.

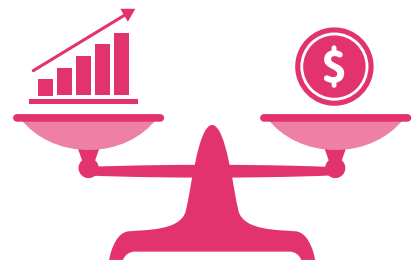


Low-income countries pay **5% or 10%** coupon rates



or have no access at all because of existing debt service obligations.<sup>30</sup>

**With the current finance and borrowing mechanisms, African governments cannot upgrade health systems and thus provide better care for their populations in order to cope with the current or future pandemics.**



The G20 is the multilateral platform that addresses finance and borrowing measures.



Through inequitable trade and financing arrangements,<sup>31</sup> including an inequitable response to the COVID-19 pandemic,



vulnerable populations world-wide, but particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have been pushed back, rather than merely left behind,<sup>32</sup> suffering a greatly disproportionate share of severe deprivations.



For example, **79.9%** of Africans were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2020.<sup>33</sup>

African countries need access to key global decision-making bodies to advocate for structures and policies that care for the needs of the poor and leave no-one behind. The G20 is such a body.

# Fidelity Honesty Transparency Integrity

**Honesty**,<sup>34</sup> **transparency**, and **fidelity** are all characteristics that demonstrate personal integrity.<sup>35</sup> If a person or a group of persons expresses commitment to a principle, value, or goal and then fails to follow through, then that actor's integrity is in question.

In 2021, the G20 High Level Independent Panel on Financing the Global Commons for Pandemic Preparedness and Response<sup>36</sup> report argued that

**“ in a historically unprecedented way, security for people around the world now depends on global cooperation”.**

The report also noted that

**“ the current pandemic has demonstrated the strengths of regional ownership, e.g. the major initiatives taken by the African Union”.**

In 2022, under the Indonesian presidency, G20 Heads of States were “deeply concerned that multidimensional crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as lack of fiscal space and unequal access to finance and technology, are posing significant challenges towards realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.<sup>37</sup> The G20 Heads of States declared: “We also reiterate our continued support to Africa”.<sup>38</sup>

The G20 could prove its fidelity, honesty, and transparency in relation to previously expressed support for Africa by admitting the African Union into its ranks.



**Crises can be a catalyst for change.**<sup>39</sup>

To promote **fairness**, **respect**, **care**, and **honesty** and to permit better preparation for the next global pandemic, the admission of the African Union into the G20 is recommended.

# Annexes

# Annex 1 The G20

The Group of Twenty has become a pillar of multilateralism. Although the world has many high-level talk shops, the G20 represents the best kind, actively supporting global dialogue, debate, and – most importantly – economic problem solving.<sup>40</sup>

Jeffrey D. Sachs

The Group of Twenty (G20) was founded in 1999 in response to the Asian financial crisis so that Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors could discuss global economic and financial issues. As a result of the 2007 global financial crisis, the group was upgraded to Heads of State level in 2008.

There are now two parallel G20 tracks, the Finance Track led by Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, and the Sherpa Track led by Heads of State. In 2023, India holds the G20 presidency.

The G20 is made up of 19 countries plus the European Union, together representing 63% of the world's population and 87% of gross world output.



Argentina



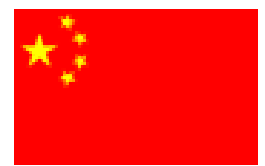
Australia



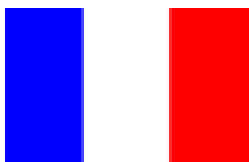
Brazil



Canada



China



France



Germany



India



Indonesia



Italy



Japan



Republic of Korea



Mexico



Russia



Saudi Arabia



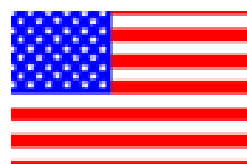
South Africa



Turkey



United Kingdom



United States



European Union

## Annex 2 The African Union

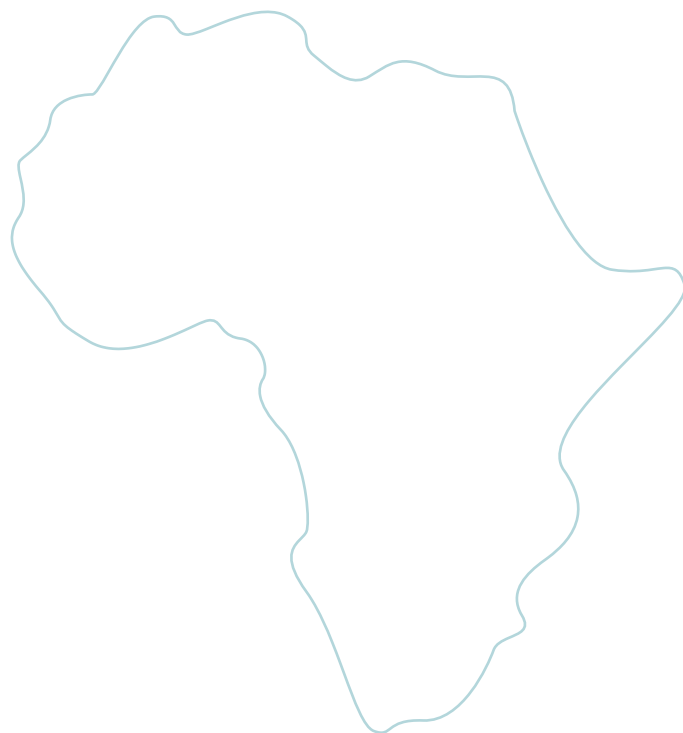
The African Union (AU) brings together all 55 African states to promote the continent's growth and economic development while championing citizen inclusion and increased cooperation and integration among African states.<sup>41</sup> The establishment of the AU was announced in Libya on 9 September 1999.

### Its recent achievements include:

- The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which came into operation at the beginning of 2021.<sup>42</sup>
- Successful peace missions, for instance in Somalia.<sup>43</sup>
- The mobilization of resources to boost development initiatives, which included making COVID-19 vaccines more widely available in African countries.<sup>43</sup>

**The AU's 55 countries, constituting more than one quarter of UN members, are home to 1.4 billion people (17.5% of the global total) and produce \$3.14 trillion in annual output at market exchange rates, or about 3.25% of world GDP.**

Africa's share of the world's population and output will grow in future years.



## Annex 3 Values-driven policy and the TRUST framework

In 2021, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen warned that Europe was entering an era of global crisis and pandemics.<sup>44</sup> In 2022, the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) noted that “values play an important role in how we understand and make sense of crises” and that values “should guide strategic crisis management”.<sup>45</sup>

It is notoriously difficult to identify global moral frameworks to assess policies. However, in the realm of international research ethics, one such framework is available: the TRUST framework.

**Research has shown that exploitative research partnerships between higher- and lower-income countries are characterized by violations of fairness, respect, care, and honesty.**<sup>46</sup>

Acknowledging the global challenges we face today, we ask in this values-driven advocacy brief whether the expansion of the G20 to include the African Union is not ethically obligatory on the basis of fairness, respect, care, and honesty.

For more information on the TRUST framework and its adoption by high-profile institutions (e.g. the European Commission, European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership, Nature), see <https://www.globalcodeofconduct.org/>.



iStock

## Annex 4 The Indian presidency of the G20

**India's G20 presidency provides a strategic opportunity to ... deepen the historic India-Africa partnership ... to create a more inclusive and better world for all: One Earth, One Family, One Future.**

**Former South Africa G20 Sherpa and former South African Ambassador to the EU, Prof. Anil Sooklal<sup>47</sup>**

Eight of the eleven authors of this policy brief contributed to the Special Think 20 (T20) Event at the Kushabhau Thakre International Convention Centre in Bhopal on 16 and 17 January 2023.<sup>48</sup> The Bhopal Declaration<sup>49</sup> requested that:

“Values and ethical considerations should not be treated as residual elements in formulating development strategies; rather they should form the core of the substantive practices in production, technology and financial transactions.”

During the Bhopal T20 event, Prof. Sachs stressed the importance of including the African Union in the G20. That imperative, combined with India's values-driven approach to its G20 presidency, catalysed this values-driven policy brief.

The logo for the Indian G20 presidency was explained by Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi as follows:

“The logo and the theme together convey a powerful message of India's G20 Presidency, which is of striving for just and equitable growth for all in the world, as we navigate through these turbulent times, in a sustainable, holistic, responsible, and inclusive manner. They represent a uniquely Indian approach to our G20 Presidency, of living in harmony with the surrounding ecosystem.”<sup>50</sup>





## Annex 5 Authors in alphabetical order



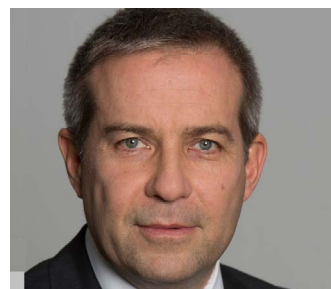
**Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi** is Director General at Research and Information System for Developing Countries, a think-tank at the Indian Ministry of External Affairs



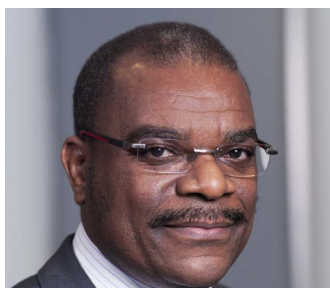
**Pamla Gopaul** is Head of the Policy Bridge Tank Programme at the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD



**Prof. Klaus Leisinger** is the founding president of the Novartis Foundation and a senior UN advisor on corporate responsibility



**Dr Stephan Klingebiel** is Head of the Inter- and Transnational Cooperation Research programme at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability



**Dr Michael Makanga** is the Executive Director of the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership



**Prof. Thomas Pogge** is Director of the Global Justice Program and Leitner Professor of Philosophy and International Affairs at Yale University



**Prof. Riatu Qibthiyah** is Senior Researcher at the Institute for Economic and Social Research, University of Indonesia, and Executive Co-Chair, Think20 Indonesia 2022



**Prof. Jeffrey Sachs** is Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University



**Prof. Doris Schroeder** is Director of the Centre for Professional Ethics UCLan UK and Co-ordinator of the PREPARED project at the Law School of UCLan Cyprus



**Elizabeth Sidiropoulos** is Chief Executive of the South African Institute of International Affairs



**Prof. Peter Singer** is Ira W. DeCamp Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University and Professor at the University of Melbourne



## Additional Resources

Professor Sachs speaks at the UN food system pre-summit, making the G21 proposal. (Watch from 04:03.)<sup>51</sup>

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZ1xc491mnU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZ1xc491mnU)



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# Advocating for a G21

Procedural Fair Process  
**Fairness**  
Participatory  
Substantive

Recognition  
**Respect**  
Worth Dignity

Support  
**Care**  
Leaving no-one behind  
Empathy

Fidelity  
**Honesty**  
Transparency Integrity