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The Voice of the Global South at G20: New Delhi to Rio and onwards Joburg



Article Content:

“With India’s G20 Presidency, the world said that multilateralism was back and that amidst all the known divisions and differences, consensus could still be found on important matters such as climate change and SDGs. Most importantly, India had conveyed to the G20 that to retain the group’s relevance as a premier economic forum, it is critical listen to the voice of the Global South.

Brazil has endeavoured hard in carrying forward the pro-global south groundwork that India had laid. They worked on strengthening this foundation and enhanced the G20’s relevance. It is creditworthy that this was carried forward in turbulent times, with conflicts from Europe to the Middle East to Africa, when the fundamentals of a rules-based international order remain under cloud.

Brazil’s presidency saw it champion important global causes, such as the launch of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, a platform for countries to support public policies to eradicate hunger and poverty, which has worsened since the pandemic and could leave 582 million people undernourished by 2030. Many priorities from New Delhi were carried forward, such as disaster risk resilience, education, and health found reiteration in Brazil.

India's call for rapidly and substantially scaling up climate finance from billions to trillions from all sources is also mentioned. Another cause close to India, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), which is now seen as an essential accelerator for the Global South to achieving SDGs, has been recognised by the G20 as transformative and quintessential to bridge existing divides and empower societies and individuals, with a special focus on women and the girl child.

Brazil did well in its push for the adoption of the G20 Call to Action on Global Governance, a document that presents G20's vision for what a reformed UN and reinvigorated multilateralism that reflects the social, economic and political realities of what the 21st century must look like. Launched during the sidelines of UN week in September 2024, it saw the participation of more than 75 countries, including Pakistan, for the first time at a G20 meeting, as Brazil invited all UN member states. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva emphasized the necessity for comprehensive reforms of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). He advocated for changes that would make the UNSC more representative, inclusive, efficient, effective, democratic, and accountable, aligning it with the realities and demands of the 21st century, and this was reflected in the joint declaration.

The farsighted pro-Global South commitments from India's Presidency, such as the need for speedy implementation of the Varanasi G20 2023 Action Plan on Accelerating Progress on the SDGs, the importance of embracing sustainable production and consumption patterns, and mainstreaming Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE) have continued to find support.

One area where Brazil imposed guardrails in its approach was the stance on responsibilities of developed countries in delivering on their ODA commitments. A reminder from the Paris Climate Agreement for the developed countries on their commitment of mobilising USD 100 billion climate finance per year would have been appropriate. The continuity in this stance by Brazil would have buttressed the Global South's position at COP 29 negotiations, which sought innovative solutions from G20.

India continued to be uncompromising on the need for the developed countries to reflect on these commitments, and the necessity of low-cost financing, technology transfer, resilient infrastructure and capacity building - much of which are available in the developed world and require immediate deployment.

While India could have taken a less energetic role, it continued to engage as a Troika member. The G20 Rio Leaders' Declaration reflects that India's G20 Sherpa Mr Amitabh Kant and the team have functioned as a crucial co-pilot. They assisted Brazil in finding the way forward through a plethora of complexities in centring the concerns of the Global South and emerging economies.

The baton now passes on from Rio de Janeiro to the next frontier of the Global South in Johannesburg for addressing concerns and challenges and finding ways to move ahead on furthering the frontiers of human progress. Here's wishing the best to South Africa's G20 Presidency."