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## The C20-A Beacon of Hope, Underscoring Collaboration in a Challenge-Ridden World

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Amma (Sri Mata Amritanandamayi)\*

India's G20 Presidency has coincided with a period of strife and suffering in the world due to conflict and challenges posed by the post-pandemic scenario. But it has also been a period of hope that through our collective endeavours, can find ways to remedy the economic, social, health and societal hardships facing the world today. The Civil 20 (C20) has focussed on ways to ease these difficulties with the aim of boosting productivity and prosperity in the world. C20, being an important engagement group, has deliberated on contemporary challenges facing the society and provided useful recommendations to the leaders' summit during past presidencies of G20.

In the same spirit, it is important to reflect on the key contributions by the C20 during Indian G20 Presidency. C20 India, a gathering of dedicated individuals and organisations, has played

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\* Chair, Civil 20, India

a crucial role in promoting wholistic health, gender equality, rights for people with special abilities, technology and transparency, education and digitisation, sustainable development and solutions to climate change, social inclusion, the revival of rivers and the beautiful principle of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*—“The world is one big family.” In a world riven by unprecedented challenges to its wellbeing, the focus on holistic health is a step towards nurturing every individual’s physical, mental and spiritual dimensions. By emphasising preventive healthcare, promoting traditional healing systems and encouraging mindfulness practices, the C20 has sown the seeds of a healthier and happier society. We believe our efforts have increased awareness about the ancient Indian approach to health as envisioned by our ancient teachers, such as Charaka and Susruta.

India’s vision for good health is ‘One Earth, One Health’ is India’s long-held belief that the world can be healthy only when our whole ecosystem is healthy. India’s vision for a healthy ecosystem therefore encompasses animals, plants and the environment and not restricted to just human beings. Indian traditional wisdom holds that the absence of illness is not the same as good health. We believe that human beings must not only be free from illness but also go one step forward towards wellness. This is where traditional systems such as Yoga, Ayurveda and meditation come in to address physical, mental and social aspects of health.

Besides health, during the course of India’s G20 Presidency, the C20 has also advocated gender equality, women’s empowerment, equal opportunities and a society free from discrimination. Through this, C20 India has helped create an environment where women can flourish and contribute to the progress of nations. Their efforts are paving the way for a more inclusive and just society. The feminine qualities inherent in women are capable of propelling them to extraordinary heights, provided they are given the right opportunities and the necessary support. Women are not inferior to

men in governance, intellectual power or decision-making. However, blindly imitating approaches from other cultures and implementing them without compassion is dangerous. C20, in its efforts to spread this message, tried its best to reach out to organisations, groups and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) worldwide.

India has focussed on women-led development not merely women's development *per se*. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of equity and empowerment in favour of women to neutralize any socio-economic and political discrimination faced by them. Women have fundamental rights to not be discriminated on the grounds of sex and gender and get equal protection under the law. It is believed that the empowerment of women is a process that leads women to claim their rights, to have access to equal opportunities in economic, cultural, social and political spheres of life and realise their full potential. This progress has to be accompanied by their freedom in decision making both within and outside their home with the ability to influence the direction of social change.

The consequences of many of the policies implemented by the Government have resulted in an improved sex ratio; the girls studying in high school or beyond has tripled in the past decade. The enrolment of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects is at 43 per cent today -- the highest among developed countries, be it the US, UK or Germany. Many of the millions of beneficiaries of government loans in India are women. This adds to the economy besides augmenting individual family incomes. The Government has also ensured that houses built under the rural housing programme with government subsidies have been registered in the names of a woman member in the families they have been allotted to. This boosts the independence of women, their status in the family and powers of decision making. According to Government statistics, today, one out of every five non-farm

businesses in India is being handled by a woman. Women's self-help groups, too are, also playing a pivotal role in empowering women.

During our discussions, the C20 has also championed the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. By advocating for accessibility, equal opportunities and removing barriers that hinder their participation, C20 has raised awareness about the importance of creating an inclusive society and ensuring that no one is left behind. The C20 has also focussed on promoting the ethical and responsible use of emerging technologies. It has contributed to the building of a digital ecosystem that respects and protects individual rights by addressing issues such as Artificial Intelligence and Data for Society, Cybersecurity, Digital Governance and Critical Infrastructure Protection. Its efforts in fostering transparency and accountability in governance have been instrumental in strengthening democracy and trust. When availing of the benefits of the great technological leaps, especially with the rapidly evolving digital environment—governments, companies, educational institutions, the general public and families should exercise caution.

Education is a major catalyst for empowerment and transformation. C20 India advocates accessible and quality education for all, promoting the core principles of inclusiveness and human-centred approach. It emphasises the need to prioritise holistic education for development, early identification and intervention for persons with disabilities, promotion of inclusive digital accessibility and technology for societal impact. Just as students have various textbooks and subjects such as languages, history, science, mathematics and computer science, etc, to study, developing a curriculum on compassion, selfless service and other spiritual values from the kindergarten level onwards may be encouraged.

At home in India, the Government has introduced the New Education Policy that has reworked the curriculum to follow the global trend of “on-the-job learning.” This means a special focus on

internships and apprenticeships to ensure “outside-the-classroom exposure” for the youth. The aim is to harness India’s demographic dividend. India has set up “Skill India Mission” that aims to skill, up-skill and re-skill our people to prepare them for a future where technology will play a major role. Special emphasis has therefore been laid on skills required in the Industry 4.0 era – in sectors like AI, Robotics and Internet of Things. Indian expertise in the areas of Information Technology and healthcare is well known as many people look for better employment opportunities abroad. In his speech to the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers in July 2023, the Prime Minister pointed out that “India has the potential to become one of the largest providers of skilled workforce for the world. A globally mobile workforce is going to be a reality in the future. Therefore, it is now time to globalize the development and sharing of skills in the true sense. The G20 must play a leading role in this.

Climate change is the most critical challenge of our time, impacting the development of sustainable and resilient communities. C20’s emphasis on sustainable practices, renewable energy, net-zero emission management, environmental sustainability, biodiversity conservation and social justice aligns perfectly with the urgent need to protect and restore our planet. Their dedication to achieving the SDGs and creating a sustainable future inspires governments and individuals alike. Widespread, rapid and intensified climate change is increasingly becoming a critical determinant in accelerating the entire process of humanity’s extinction. Climate change is manmade. Hence, it will accelerate the entire process of humanity’s extinction, if humanity does not embrace a loving, reverential and compassionate attitude towards our planet and nature.

The revival of rivers has received significant attention and support from C20 during the Indian Presidency. Raising awareness about the importance of conserving and rejuvenating water bodies has paved the way for collective action towards this vital endeavour.

Restoring ecosystems' lifelines will benefit future generations and contribute to a more sustainable and harmonious world. Rivers are like a circulatory system. A person can die if blood circulation stops. Likewise, life will perish if rivers are not protected and preserved.

India believes strongly in the harmony between humans and nature. The country has for long equated nature with divinity. *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*—the ancient Indian principle of the whole world being one big family—has found resonance in C20's work during the India's leadership. By fostering social inclusion, advocating for the marginalised, and promoting intercultural dialogue, C20 has celebrated the diversity of our global family. Its commitment to unity and compassion is a guiding light in an often-divided world. This scriptural declaration is not only about the harmonious coexistence of various cultures and societies. It indicates an ultimate truth, a law set by the universe, about an unknowable source. It is an instruction to humanity to abide by that law and strive to live as one family. This universal law is known as *dharma*, the Central Constitutional Law that binds us all. So, it is important to remember that humanity is answerable to that power.

Addressing financial issues requires collaborative efforts in an increasingly interconnected global economy. The establishment of a Special Committee for Financial Issues by C20 fosters a more stable and resilient financial system. Despite efforts to reduce global social inequalities, minimal changes are observed. Homelessness, poverty, medical aid and insurance, taxation, sustainable finance, future pandemic prevention, affordable financial products and services are some of the challenges that still haunt many countries. The giving attitude of the rich needs to expand, as the existence of all of us, indeed all of the entire creation, depends on the principle of giving.

Most significantly, C20 has put in a sincere and heartfelt effort into emphasising and incorporating compassion as a fundamental element in bringing diverse cultures, religious faiths and people

of different perspectives together. Emphasising compassion in the global discourse is of utmost importance, for it reminds us that the wellbeing of one is intricately woven with the wellbeing of all. It is crucial that the world is aware of that compassion—the hallmark of humanity—not merely as an abstract concept but as a call to action. Through compassion, we recognise our fellow beings’ struggles and aspirations and extend a helping hand to uplift and empower them. One significant aspect of compassion is exemplified through *udaharans*, or best practices. These are the living testimonies of compassion in action—the stories of those who have selflessly dedicated their lives to alleviating suffering and creating positive change in their communities.

Amidst the challenges that face humanity, C20 serves as a beacon of hope, uniting individuals and organisations with a shared vision for a better world. By emphasising cooperation, collaboration and collective responsibility, C20 has underscored that true progress can only be achieved when nations and societies stand together as one family, transcending borders and ideologies. Time is to recognise that it is in our hands to create a world where every individual can live with dignity and lead a life of purpose and fulfilment. May we continue to walk this path of compassion, supporting one another, sharing the burden of suffering and the joy of service. Together, by sowing seeds of love, empathy and kindness, it may blossom into a world of endurance, peace and harmony.

In conclusion, the contributions of Civil 20 during India’s G20 Presidency in 2023 have been significant and far-reaching. As we collectively endeavour to create a world where peace, prosperity and harmony prevails, the contributions of C20 during the Indian G20 Presidency in 2023 stand as a beacon of hope for the entire world. It is important to remember that the path to a better world begins with the seeds of compassion sown in the hearts of each individual. May the G20 and C20 continue to inspire us all to work together for

the collective wellbeing of humanity.

May we all join hands and continue to work towards a world where love, compassion and sustainable progress thrive. May the light of unity guide our path as we strive to create a better future for all.





*“Start-Ups have always  
been the engine of  
progress. The mega  
corporations of today  
were Start-Ups of  
yesterday.*

*What is different now is  
that the digital age has  
created a fertile new  
environment for Start-  
Ups.”*

*— Shri Narendra Modi  
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India*