14

Indian G20 Presidency: Pushing for Global Solutions

Sachin Chaturvedi*

India took over the G20 Presidency on 1 December, 2022 at a time of crisis and chaos with the world facing challenges posed by the after-effects of the pandemic, conflicts and lots of economic uncertainty. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, the focus would be to make Indian Presidency, a presidency for "Hope, Healing and Harmony". India resolved to make the Presidency decisive and action oriented. This meant that adverse geo-political situation shall not be allowed to overwhelm the process rather India would make every effort to work across the North-South as well as East-West divides to arrive at concrete deliverables.

In the background, India emphasised on two points. First, issues of economic development and sustainability would not be overshadowed by geopolitics, given that the G20 is primarily an economic forum of high significance; and second, the G20 should not continue to represent the same structure as observed in most multilateral organisations and must include the 'voice of the Global South'. This made the Indian Presidency of the G20 convincing to

*   Director General, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi.

partner emerging economies as well as the vast majority of Southern countries that were not part of the G20. Finally, India was successful in permanently changing the course of the G20 by championing and later including the African Union as the 21st member through solidarity and a principled approach to global governance that India is traditionally known for.

The success of the New Delhi Summit of the G20 does not only lay in keeping geopolitics out of the room, bringing Africa on table and producing a consensus leaders' declaration the probability of which seemed very low to many – but also in mobilising the G20 to concertise its position on several multilateral issues, accelerate actions and commit to solutions in a time bound manner. The confidence with which India approached G20 and steered it, came from its own developmental transformations and delivery of solutions in the recent years. Hence, India plugged in not only norms and principles but defined the contours of actions and solutions across sectors that the world finally agreed to.

With continuing polarisation, escalated contestations and fragmented multilateralism, and marginalisation of the Global South, global challenges have been insurmountable for the international community to address. With his most iconic articulation, at Bali the G20 meet, Prime Minister Modi got the global community together when he said: "This is not an era of war". He underlined a strong message in favour of peace and harmony. He said without security and stability, "future generations will not be able to take advantage of economic growth or technological innovation".

This comprehensive roadmap of the Indian G20 Presidency featured geopolitical concerns, sustainability related priorities and emphasis on an inclusive order. The idea of healing, harmony and hope opened up several new vistas of engagement, inclusion and recalibration in those situations where the global community ended up with huge disequilibrium. Apart from continuing the most important achievements of the Indonesian Presidency, India identified six

broad priorities and pushed them across, viz. accelerated, inclusive, sustainable and resilient growth; accelerating progress of SDGs; green development pact; women led development; twenty first century multilateral institutions; and digital public infrastructure (DPI). In all these areas several different kinds of efforts have been made. A number of working and engagement groups have discussed these themes and identified specific modalities of taking them forward.

Since 1999, under the overall lead from the US, the concerns of the G20 Presidency focused on macro-economic stability, global tax coordination and addressing debt issues till South Korea, in 2010, added development as an area of concern and its relevance for managing global financial architecture better. The 2023, Indian Presidency has taken the focus to a much larger level, where concerns for humanity and for the larger Global South provided a very different narrative.

The Indian G20 Presidency has placed effective and most relevant solutions, based on the ideas emanating out of Indian philosophy, ethos and practices. The wider challenges global community has been facing for last couple of years have led to further complications with the world getting engulfed with the polycrisis of climate change, geopolitical conflicts, extreme inequalities, and fragmentations at several levels.

With the idea of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' India has attempted to reconcile the conflicting nature of economic growth with biodiversity conservation, de-weaponising the supply chain of essential commodities, and to ensure inclusive global order. This would certainly require trust, humane approach and confidence for G20 to move forward. These values now seem to be essential for promoting resilient growth across all the partner countries. The looming debt crisis, supply chain disruptions are results of self-centered approaches.

In the words of Prime Minister Narendra Modi: "Today, there is an unprecedented curiosity in the world to know and understand

India. Today India is being studied in a new light. Our current successes are being assessed and unprecedented hopes are being expressed about our future".

"In such an atmosphere it is the responsibility of the citizens to go beyond these expectations and acquaint the world with India's capabilities, philosophy, social and intellectual strength."

Further, he also emphasised: "We have to unite everyone and energise them for their responsibility towards the world".

A New Development Strategy

This Summit has brought together startups, incubators, accelerators, corporates, and state governments. With several participants from the Global South, this summit epitomizes the global spirit of collaboration and progress. India's G20 Presidency underscores the nation's commitment to steering the global community towards a future that is stable, inclusive and prosperous for the humanity, and also for all other forms of lives, including the mother planet. The new vision for development at the G20 is a beacon of hope, harmony and healing.

The world this year is celebrating the seminal volume from the Club of Rome called *Limits to Growth*. This volume reminded the world in the early 1970s about the importance of preserving resources and reversing prevalent development strategy which was later re-emphasised by the Brundtland Commission. In order to meaningfully observe this anniversary, the Club of Rome has come up with a follow-up volume called *Beyond Limits*. This again is reminding us why in this era of disruption, we need a development strategy that is grounded, resilient and all-inclusive in its approach.

In this backdrop, solidarity needs commitment for three key causes. One, the "One Health", which is intrinsically linked with inter-specie balance. Second, green transition and associated support mechanisms for financing these initiatives. Third is access to environmentally friendly technologies.

It is also important to bring protection for all forms of lives for inter-species balance in the ecosystem, which is also essential for the idea of One Health. Even with all the technological advancements, the damage to the US economy with COVID-19 was huge. This crisis killed one person in every 500 and damaged the US economy by US $ 16 trillion. In this regard, realising that the idea of one world also brings in genuine solutions for global challenges like pandemics, climate change and other large-scale global shocks that often occur successively or even simultaneously when this inter-specie balance is lost. The causes of Wuhan-originated plague indicate this endeavour much more than ever before. Second, climate finance holds the master key to accelerating green transition and green development. With the world becoming increasingly conscious of the damaging consequences of global warming, time-bound urgent delivery of climate finance from developed countries to developing countries has acquired a note of urgency.

Third, India expects concrete action from rich countries in terms of access to climate-sensitive technology transfers and strengthening the capacity of poor and developing countries to combat climate change. Given the sheer scale of the climate crisis, action cannot be delayed any further. In this regard, the G20 has a major responsibility to persuade developed countries to walk the talk on access to climate-friendly technologies.

Indian G20 Presidency will always be remembered as People's Presidency. It is inspiring to see how India could engage with millions during this short span of eight months. With almost 185 official meetings and in total 230 meetings in 57 destinations, it has created a record of its own kind. In the Chinese Presidency meeting were organised in 15 cities and 25 cities in case of Indonesia. India has also added a working group on Disaster Risk Reduction (DPR) and an engagement group on Start-up 20.

As part of its G20 Presidency, India is committed to keep working towards addressing the multiple social, political and

economic challenges facing the world. The thrust is to ensure that no one is left behind while world is making relentless efforts to ensure inclusive development and happiness of all. Here, it also needs to be underscored that India has always been known as the Voice of Global South, including that of the African countries.

Multilateralism and Voice of the Global South

The contemporary times are challenging with threats like recession, inflation, cybersecurity, distorted supply chains, etc. looming above us and it is imperative that existing institutions are substantially reformed.

There is a need for a new multilateralism and global financial order that can ensure adequate credit enhancement and availability of finance to keep up with the emerging requirements. It is important to consider what can be revived within the complex of global institutions—such as the WHO, WTO, and the ILO—and which of these institutions should be reformed substantially. Thus, it is the need of the hour to focus on creating a reform agenda of the key multilateral institutions and create a roadmap for a renewed multilateralism. As the G20 Presidency, India has focused on mechanisms for making multilateralism work in a multipolar world that play an eminent role in formulating potential solutions to the threats of impending recession, high inflation, and interrupted supply chains.

At the 2023 Global South Summit, Hon'ble Prime Minister Modi said developing countries are also concerned about increasing fragmentation of the international landscape and that these geopolitical tensions distracted the Global South from focusing on their development priorities. He also said that to address this geopolitical fragmentation, there is an urge for fundamental and urgent reform of the major international organizations, including the UNSC and the Bretton Woods institutions.

In the Prime Minister Modi's words at the 2023 Global South Summit, "These reforms should focus on giving voice to the concerns of the developing world, and reflect the realities of the 21st century. India's G20 Presidency will attempt to voice the views of the Global South on these important issues."

He outlined the aim of this year-long stewardship as one that would seek "to amplify the voice of the Global South" in accordance with the theme: 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'. Framing this objective within the civilisational ethos of India, Prime Minster asserted that the path to this lofty aspiration "is through human-centric development."

Prime Minister made an effort to reemphasise solidarity with Global South. The Voice of Global South Summit on 12-13 January 2023, was a manifestation of this commitment. At this Summit, Prime Minster announced the setting up of a Centre of Excellence on Global South. With the success of the financial inclusion programme across the country, he offered sharing digitally sound technologies, with support for building the necessary ecosystem.

The proposed Global South Centre of Excellence by India may help support the Southern economies with new citizen-centric measures that India has introduced. The focus on good governance,

leveraging digital technologies for the delivery of services and faith in women-led development has helped India reduce multi-dimensional poverty. The Global South Center of Excellence would aim at sharing development solutions. In this regard, efforts are already being put in for making these engagements follow the typical South-South Cooperation principles, viz. the process of engagement being consultative, outcome oriented, demand-driven, people-centric, and respectful of the sovereignty of partner countries. South should also develop its own narrative for development.

Lifestyle for Environment

India's G20 agenda has been inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive and aims for promoting the feeling of 'oneness' inspired by our theme of "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" or "One Earth, One Family, One Future" in the face of evolving global challenges.

As the world grapples with interconnected crises, the G20's proactive stance, led by the Indian Presidency, showcases the potential of international cooperation and forward-looking strategies to navigate an increasingly complex global landscape. One of its manifestations is seen in the LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) focus. To aligning the misplaced priorities of economic growth fuelled by resource extraction, Prime Minister Modi highlighted the significance of LiFE in his remarks at the G20 summit in Bali on 15 November 2022. "For the safe future of the planet, the sense of trusteeship is the solution. LiFE campaign can make a big contribution to this. Its purpose is to make sustainable lifestyles a mass movement".

India's approach to G20 Presidency highlighted the concept of LiFE emphasising on the importance of environmentally sustainable and responsible choices, both at the level of individual lifestyles as well as national development, leading to globally transformative actions resulting in a cleaner, greener and bluer future.

The current practices, both production and consumption cannot go on for very long without becoming detrimental to sustainability of our planet and it is time for us to move towards a framework of sustainable development that encourages environment-friendly lifestyle and peaceful co-existence.

Accordingly, sustainability related efforts were also taken to people. Prime Minister Modi gave a call for galvanising all citizens of the world to imbibe the spirit of individual contribution through sustainable and healthy lifestyles to ensure a safe future for the planet. Given the transformative potential of LiFE for global wellness, India has placed sustainable lifestyle on the G20 agenda. G20 accounts for 80 per cent of global GDP as well as 80 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. In India's view the G20 is equipped to make LiFE a global movement for green lifestyle. Mission LiFE will also help the world in its fight against climate change and lead to a sustainable way of life to achieve the target of Sustainable Development Goals set by the UN.

The motto of India's G20 presidency encapsulates the essence of pro-Life planet and people, the mission LiFE is indeed a clarion call to take action for citizens and governments to save the planet. As mentioned, the Indian Presidency has also underlined the need for providing added impetus to the effective implementation of Agenda 2030, called achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Emphasis has also been on reforming multilateral institutions and people-centric growth model.

The nine principles adopted at the Development Ministers' Meeting in Varanasi chart out the pathways to promote interlinkages between development, environment and climate agendas and their associated goals which are at the heart of Lifestyles for Sustainable Development approach. Together with these High-Level Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development, led by India, the G20 has also adopted the seven-year action plan to accelerate the SDGs.

Forging constructive and consensus-based solutions to a host of challenges such as reviving global growth, stronger climate action and robust global health architecture, promoting food and nutrition security have also been an important priority as the pandemic pushed millions of people into poverty. With its core strength in information technology, India has laid stress on making digital architecture inclusive so that it can become a catalyst of socio-economic transformation. Thus, promoting inclusive growth and financial inclusion are the key priorities.

Under, the Indian G20 presidency a unique Think 20 (T20) task force on Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) was also constituted. Task Force 3 on *LiFE, Resilience and Values for Wellbeing,* primarily focused on holistic aspects of Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE), one-health and trans-species balance, integrated development through rural-urban balance, creating resilient infrastructure and how to bring in ethics and value system in our economic models of financing and technology. The Task Force also discussed issues of going beyond GDP based measures of economic progress and the need for new wellbeing measurement metrics incorporating value derived from biodiversity and natural resources.

Financial Architecture – Credible Roadmap on Reforms, Access and Inclusion

The world order created after the World War II has become increasingly archaic and suffers from fatigue. This has adversely impacted the capacity of global institutions to respond to emerging crises. In this context, making global financial governance institutions more democratic and representative of ongoing shifts in the world order has been a major priority of India under its G20 presidency. Institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF continue to remain the bastion of the West and need to provide greater representation and weight to emerging and developing

countries in order to stay relevant. Multilateral institutions and international financing institutions, including development banks, need to reform urgently in view of the rise of emerging economies. The first part of the report by the G20 Expert Group on "Strengthening Multilateral Development Banks" (MDBs) instituted under India's Presidency, is an effort in that direction.

The focus has been to address global economy and risks, strengthening Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), managing global debt vulnerabilities, financing climate action and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and building resilient, inclusive and sustainable cities of tomorrow.

In an era of unprecedented macro-economic challenges, the G20, under Indian Presidency, set a remarkable precedent for global collaboration and innovation. The focus on strengthening Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to tackle 21st-century global challenges demonstrates the group's commitment to evolving strategies. This includes endorsing a roadmap for implementing capital adequacy frameworks and promoting the coordinated debt treatment necessary for the distressed economies of the Global South.

At the 3rd G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) meeting under the Indian Presidency deliberations prioritized Sustainable Finance and Infrastructure, International Financial Architecture, International Taxation, and Financial Sector & Financial Inclusion. Members endorsed the 'G20 Report on Macroeconomic Risks Stemming from Climate Change and Transition Pathways'. Under the priority of strengthening Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to address global challenges of the 21st century, members recognised the urgent need to strengthen and evolve the MDB ecosystem.

Managing global debt vulnerabilities is a significant priority area for 2023, reflecting the Indian Presidency's endeavour to voice the concerns of the Global South with deliberations on how

to strengthen multilateral coordination to effectively address the deteriorating debt situation and facilitate coordinated debt treatment for debt-distressed countries. Simultaneously, the G20's emphasis on addressing the macro-financial implications of crypto assets exemplifies its readiness to navigate complex financial landscapes and prioritize the concerns of emerging economies.

While noting that harnessing DPIs can help countries to leapfrog their development trajectories, the members unanimously endorsed the 'G20 Policy Recommendations for Advancing Financial Inclusion and Productivity Gains through Digital Public Infrastructure'.

India's resonance with digital transformation is evident through its Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) agenda. Acknowledging the profound role of DPI in enhancing financial inclusion and productivity, the G20 endorsement of policy recommendations paves the way for inclusive growth and technological advancement.

The Indian G20 Presidency has also brought climate finance discussions to the forefront. With the commitment to scale up sustainable finance, members also welcomed the Analytical Framework for SDG-aligned finance. On the infrastructure agenda ,the members showed strong support for work under the Indian Presidency's priority of 'Financing the Cities of Tomorrow'. The Principles designed by the Indian Presidency will enable cities to develop customised policies that encourage alternative financing sources and enable greater public-private collaboration to bridge the infrastructure financing gap in our cities.

Climate finance discussions and efforts to bolster pandemic prevention and response underscore the G20's comprehensive approach to global challenges. Additionally, the unwavering commitment to tax transparency, combatting financial crimes, and enhancing tax coordination reaffirms the G20's role in shaping a more just and accountable financial architecture.

Digital Economy

As part of the G20 Presidency, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has spearheaded the G20 Digital Economy Working Group (DEWG), propelling an ambitious agenda in the digital realm. The DEWG's three priority areas—Digital Public Infrastructure, Security in the Digital Economy, and Digital Skilling—highlight India's commitment to shaping a future-ready economy. Marking the final stretch of deliberations, the fourth DEWG meeting, held in Bengaluru, was pivotal in crystallizing the G20's stance on these critical issues. The group underscored the need for inclusive and impactful action in these priority areas.

With over 100 delegates from G20 member nations, invited countries, and esteemed international organizations like OECD, ITU, UNDP, World Bank, and UNESCO, this meeting signifies global collaboration at its finest. The G20's dedication to advancing the digital landscape is evident in the adoption of the "G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Declaration," which is a product of rigorous discussions among experts. This declaration is set to become a roadmap for the G20's digital journey. As the G20 aligns with innovation, the Digital Innovation Alliance (DIA) Summit, serves as a dynamic platform.

Connecting Youth and Women Led Development

Another unique feature of the India's G20 Presidency is to take forward the idea of connecting with youth by involving them in fostering dialogue on various international issues. As part of this endeavour, a special G20 University Connect prorgramme was launched. As of date, 97 lectures have been organised across different states and union territories of India. The target is to reach to a total of 101 universities. The focus has been to familiarise students and researchers with major areas and priorities of what

India seeks to achieve during its G20 Presidency. This received an overwhelming response from the faculty and students. This has also given impetus to the idea of involving youth, specially the students in the G20 process as the brand ambassadors of India's G20.

With India leading the G20 Presidency, women-led development has emerged a key priority area of our Presidency to ensure that gender considerations are mainstreamed into G20 discussions and translated into the G20 Leaders' Declaration.

Women are an integral part of our society and without their progress the overall progress of the society will come to a halt. In Prime Minister's words "From financial inclusion to social security, quality healthcare to housing, education to entrepreneurship, many efforts have been made to put our Nari Shakti at the forefront of India's development journey. These efforts will continue with even greater vigour in the coming times".

India has made significant progress when it comes to empowering women. Some of the notable schemes that have been launched by the government in this sector are the Ujjwala scheme, Nirbhaya Scheme, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, PM Awaas Yojana, Sukanya Samriddhi Accounts, etc. Economic empowerment of women is extremely important as it plays an extremely vital role in providing them with an equal stature in the society. Out of the ₹19 trillion in loans disbursed through the Mudra scheme to small businesses across the country, 70 per cent has been received by women entrepreneurs.

In a virtual address to the first-ever US-India Alliance for Women's Economic Empowerment Shatter Summit in January 2023, the Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Smt. Smriti Irani said, "There's a cause for all of us to celebrate, as India leads the G20 presidency. I am proud that Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi has made women-led development one of the main agendas and not limited to a side-line."

The G20 Ministerial Conference on Women's Empowerment was inaugurated in Gandhinagar, Gujarat from 2nd to 4th August 2023. At the Ministerial Conference on Women's Empowerment, the Hon'ble Prime Minister summarized India's vision of women-led development: "When women prosper, the world prospers. Their economic empowerment fuels growth, their access to education drives global progress, their leadership fosters inclusivity, and their voices inspire positive change."

At the G20, through consensus-building on the global stage, India modelled a vision for progress in uplifting women worldwide with six in-person conferences and 86 virtual international meetings that witnessed the participation of over 300 delegates from 18 G20 countries and 7 Guest countries.

India has also added focus on the empowerment and recognition of women at the local or community level. Indeed, this was recognized by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, who stated that empowerment of women is the bedrock of our society's development and their leadership, especially at the grassroots, is crucial for our inclusive and sustainable progress.

With women-led development as the guiding light, India's G20 presidency outlined solutions tailored for women across education, entrepreneurship, technology, finance and beyond. Partnerships were strengthened, mindsets shifted, and policies transformed through camaraderie, consensus and teamwork. India calibrated efforts toward education with a focus on STEM and one of the critical contributions of its presidency included 'TechEquity', a Digital Inclusion Platform through which girls and women can skill, upskill and reskill themselves in digital literacy, financial literacy and other technical subjects.

Gender equality has been called "the greatest human rights challenge of our time", and through its presidency, India advanced the G20's role in meeting this challenge. Its legacy lies in enabling

women's contributions across all levels of the economy and society through a presidency which is inclusive, decisive and action-oriented for 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' for the upliftment of not just women but humanity.

"In the 20th Century, the developed countries were the drivers of the global economy. Clearly, in the 21st Century, global growth will come from countries of the South. I think that if we work together, we can set the global agenda."

Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

RIS
Research and Information System
for Developing Countries
विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली