Comment on G20 outcomes for Forbes Africa
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Focus on African development

One of the strongest assertions emerging from South Africa's Presidency of the G20 this year is that this G20 must be an African G20 and that its policy recommendations must focus on proposals to unleash African growth and development.

Africa is rich in natural resources – minerals, sunlight and people and fair financing of African infrastructure, mining, health and education projects can be socially and economically transformative.

In particular, there must be changes to stop the unfair manner in which global finance has operated to impoverish and under-develop Africa. Many African countries are stuck in a debt trap and there needs to be a resolution to this crisis where more than half of African countries are spending more on debt repayments than on socio-economic development.

Reforms required

Global ratings agencies need to be better regulated with the objective of ending the way in which they systematically distort and overestimate risk and under-estimate returns in Africa. The IMF must subject itself to an independent review to establish how African voices can be strengthened and less-costly finance can better be mobilised for African development and industrialisation.

It is only through a sustained process of inclusive growth that we will be able to reduce poverty and inequality. So if reforms proposed by the G20 to make it easier for South Africa and Africa to growth – through fairer trading rules, improved access to finance and investment and technology transfer then this will have the potential to reduce inequality.

For Africa the most important thing is that there must be fairer access to finance. Many African countries are stuck in a debt trap and there needs to be a resolution to this crisis where more than half of African countries are spending more on debt repayments than on socio-economic development.

So a key structural reform that we hope comes out of this G20 meeting is for less-costly finance to better be mobilised for African development and industrialisation. Africa's population is young and is growing, finance is needed for investment in electrification, infrastructure, education and health in Africa. This is why South Africa has fashioned this G20 as an African G20 to advance this agenda on the global stage.

Geo-political context

One of the key strengths of the G20 is that it brings together a diverse range of countries from the Global North and the Global South. It is more diverse than the G7 (of rich countries) and BRICS (the Global South). This is a strength of the G20.

The fact that the US is refusing to participate in the G20 in South Africa is a sign of the fragmentation of geo-politics that you mention. There are serious risks involved with such fragmentation – nuclear non-proliferation, avoiding climate change, free and fair trade, human rights, and global peace and stability all require multilateral cooperation.

A world based on rules, and not 'might is right' is what is needed. It is important that Africa continues to promote a multi-lateral, rules-based order. By hosting the G20 under the theme of 'Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability' Africa is signalling that kind of world that is possible and necessary for humanity and our planet.