

**Ambassador Anil Sooklal's talk on G20 and Africa**

**Welcome Note for Pradeep S. Mehta**

**December 17<sup>th</sup> 2024, New Delhi**

- **Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,**
- **I am pleased to welcome you all to this Dinner Talk hosted by CUTS International, with Ambassador Anil Sooklal, High Commissioner of South Africa to India, as our honoured speaker tonight.**
- **The theme of today's discussion—"The Future of G20 and Africa"—is not just timely but profoundly significant. South Africa's leadership, as the next host of the G20 Summit, offers a critical opportunity to spotlight Africa's rightful place in the global governance system.**

**Ambassador Anil Sooklal's Distinguished Role**

- **Ambassador Sooklal is uniquely placed to guide us on this subject.**
- **Before taking charge as High Commissioner to India, he served as the G20 Sherpa for South Africa, contributing immensely to shaping South Africa's role in this key global forum.**
- **His deep understanding of multilateral processes and Africa's priorities will undoubtedly enrich our perspective this evening.**

**I am also delighted to mention that we are joined this evening by two distinguished Indian diplomats: Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia, a Distinguished Fellow at Gateway House and a seasoned diplomat with demonstrated experience of Africa and India's relations with her.**

**Furthermore, we are also grateful for the presence of Ambassador Harsh Shringla, former Foreign Secretary and former Chief Coordinator of G20 India.**

**Their insights on global governance and Africa's role in the G20 will add great value to tonight's discussion.**

### **Africa and the G20 – A Critical Relationship**

- **The integration of Africa into the G20 system is an issue close to CUTS International's and my heart. We have been involved in T20, B20, and C20 during India's and Brazil's presidencies.**
- **While Africa collectively accounts for about 17% of the world's population and is the most youthful continent, its representation in global governance mechanisms remains limited. The African Union's recent inclusion as a permanent member of the G20 was a step in the right direction. This outcome reflects persistent advocacy and strategic engagement by stakeholders across regions.**
- **However, Africa's future engagement with the G20 must go beyond representation to genuine, meaningful integration—something that tonight's discussion aims to explore further.**

### **CUTS International's Contribution to Africa Since the Early 2000s**

- **At CUTS International, we have been working closely with African countries since the early 2000s. Our initiatives have spanned areas such as trade, economic governance, competition policy, regional integration, South South cooperation and sustainable development.**
- **Through partnerships and collaborations with policymakers, think tanks, and civil society organisations across the continent, CUTS has played a catalytic role in addressing critical issues:**
  - 1) Facilitating Africa's participation in global trade and multilateral platforms,**
  - 2) Supporting regional economic integration efforts,**
  - 3) Mainstreaming African priorities in global forums such as the WTO, UNCTAD, ILO, WIPO, UNDP, UNECA and the G20**

- **In fact, during one of our recent dialogues, experts underscored the need to mainstream and integrate the African continent into the G20 system—a theme that resonates deeply with tonight’s discussion.**
- **CUTS remains committed to supporting Africa’s economic transformation and ensuring that platforms like the G20 serve as a vehicle for inclusive growth and sustainable development across the continent.**

### **Looking Ahead – South Africa’s Leadership**

- **As South Africa prepares to host the G20 Summit next year, the focus must remain on amplifying Africa’s voice, addressing systemic challenges, and forging partnerships that can bridge critical gaps in trade, finance, infrastructure, digital payment systems, and technology.**
- **Ambassador Sooklal, with his vast experience and insights, will undoubtedly shed light on how Africa can leverage the G20 presidency to advance these priorities.**

### **Conclusion –**

- **With that, it is my honour to invite Ambassador Anil Sooklal to share his perspectives on the future of G20 and Africa—a conversation that promises to inspire, inform, and guide us as we look towards a more inclusive global future, driven by the spirit of Ubuntu. ‘I am what I am because of who we all are.’**
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