

G20 LANDING: SUCCESSFUL

The summit drew to a close with world leaders lauding India's presidency for many tangible outcomes



BOWING TO THE MAHATMA: As the monsoon rains eased on Sunday, the G20 leaders visited the Raj Ghat memorial complex, the site of the eternal flame that burns for Mahatma Gandhi. US President Joe Biden, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, French President Emmanuel Macron, and others flank Prime Minister Narendra Modi in this picture

PHOTO: PTI

Balancing the redlines: How the declaration came about

ASIT RANJAN MISHRA
New Delhi, 10 September

The Indian side surprised everyone by coming out with the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration a day ahead of schedule when most experts thought the host would fail to drive consensus in the face of what appeared to be insurmountable differences over the Ukraine war.

However, the joint communique with "100 per cent consensus" followed 200 hours of gruelling negotiations and some fine balancing of redlines of each country.

The Russian side had complained that only the Ukraine war should not be picked up while many conflicts are happening around the world with global ramifications.

The joint communique took care of the Russian concern with the opening line in the "For the Planet, People, Peace and Prosperity" section: "We note with deep concern the immense human suffering and the adverse impact of wars and conflicts around the world."

While Russia is not mentioned in the context of war in the New Delhi declaration, the Bali declaration of last year, which had used strong words against Russia, is "recalled" in the second para along with resolutions adopted at the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly. However, the "war in Ukraine" phrase instead of "war against Ukraine" is considered another concession for Russia.

The G7 grouping led by the US wanted stronger condemnation of Russia for its aggression against Ukraine. However, from the very beginning, India had maintained that it wants to focus on developmental issues and that the war is not a priority for it.

However, the redline for the US was the threat of nuclear weapons, which was duly accommodated. "In line with the UN Charter, all states must refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition against the territorial integrity and sovereignty, or political independence of any state. The use, or threat of use, of nuclear weapons is inadmissible," the declaration read.

China had maintained from the beginning that G20 "is not the right forum to discuss geopolitical issues", while other countries have pointed out that such conflicts have wide-ranging ramifications for the world economy.

Views from across the divide were accommodated in a single sentence: "Reaffirming that the G20 is the premier forum for international economic cooperation, and recognising that while the G20 is not the platform to resolve geopolitical and security issues, we acknowledge that these issues can have significant consequences for the global economy."

The references on the war ended with Prime minister Narendra Modi's words that were incorporated in the Bali declaration: "Today's era must not be of war."

Speaking to news media company NDTV on Saturday night, India's G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant said India drew the redlines for each country and then worked on a draft, followed by several rounds of negotiations with each Sherpa. "Only last night (Friday), we gave the Sherpas the final draft and I told them this is the final document which we have produced, which is progressive, and based on the UN charters. I told them if anybody has a problem with it, then your leader can go and talk to my leader (Prime Minister Narendra Modi). We will not have a split paragraph, we will not have a footnote, and we will only have a consensus. All countries fell in line and they collaborated with us," he added.

Sustainable growth: Voice of India in New Delhi Summit

SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY
New Delhi, 10 September

Beyond the headline initiatives, such as the inclusion of the African Union into the G20 fold or the launch of the Global Biofuel Alliance, the much-negotiated final outcome document of the G20 New Delhi Summit has an extensive India footprint throughout.

A large number of initiatives adopted at various G20 forums and working groups held throughout the year have found their way into the declaration. These include the memorably named "Deccan high-level principles on food security", the "Goa road map for tourism", and the "Jaipur call for enhanced MSMEs".

The idea behind the first of these initiatives originated from the Voice of Global South Summit organised by India before its presidency, as G20 officials have mentioned. New Delhi had gathered input from as many as 125 least developed countries and emerging markets, and food security stood out as a common concern.

Lauded by the African Union, the "Deccan High-Level Principles on Food Security" outlines humanitarian assistance, increasing food production, food security net programmes, a climate-smart approach, inclusivity in the agriculture food system, a one-health approach, digitalisation of the agricul-

ture sector, and scaling responsible public, and private investment in agriculture.

Under the "Jaipur Call for Action for enhancing MSMEs" access to information, the text calls upon the International Trade Centre in Geneva to work on a detailed implementation plan in consultation with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) to address the informational gaps faced by MSMEs. MSMEs account for 60 to 70 per cent of employment and contribute 50 per cent to global GDP.

The text also acknowledges India's proposal of the One Future Alliance, a voluntary initiative aimed at building capacity and providing technical assistance and adequate funding support for implementing digital public infrastructure in low- and middle-income countries.

Focusing on sustainability

In line with India's overall vision of sustainable growth for the summit, many initiatives championed by India focus on continuous but feasible development.

Environmental groups have particularly praised the "Chennai high-level principles on a sustainable and resilient blue economy," which address coastal and marine pollution from all sources, including plastics, air pollutants, and other persistent pollutants, derived from

the maritime sector, unsustainable exploitation, and illegal activities affecting the marine environment.

"This is not only to acknowledge the role our oceans play in regulating the climate system but also to understand how the sustainable use of our ocean-based resources must be done well in advance of us damaging this critical resource and then attempting to clean it up," said Arunabha Ghosh, CEO of the Council on Energy, Environment, and Water.

Meanwhile, the "Gandhinagar implementation road map for land reclamation" aims to restore the landscapes of forest-fire-impacted areas and mining-affected areas to reinforce the G20 Global Land Initiative implementation. On a voluntary basis, it calls for countries to bring all forest-fire-degraded lands under effective restoration by 2030.

At a time when many countries continue to grapple with an influx of tourists as the post-pandemic travel rush continues, the "Goa road map for tourism" focuses on sustainable tourism, green tourism, digitalisation, skills, tourism MSMEs, and destination management.

The Indian presidency also played a key role in launching the Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy Industry Coalition. It commits to enhancing environmentally sound waste management, substantially reducing waste generation by 2030, and highlighting the importance of zero-waste initiatives.

India drives home its point, courtesy 'new spice route' Corridor seeks to counter China's BRI, cut losses on INSTC

SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY
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New Delhi/Mumbai, 10 September

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), announced on the sidelines of the G20 summit in New Delhi, apparently seeks to counter the controversial Belt and Road Initiative, a massive China-led infrastructure project that aims to stretch around the globe. The latest move, which analysts termed as a "new spice route", may also help India redeem some of the losses made in a similar project, which fell prey to geopolitical tensions, diplomatic experts indicated.

The IMEC will comprise an eastern corridor connecting India to the Gulf region, and a northern corridor connecting the Gulf region to Europe. It will include a railway and ship-rail transit network and road transport routes. Upon completion, it will provide a reliable and cost-effective network to sup-

plement existing routes, enabling goods and services to transit to, from, and between India, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Europe.

The IMEC may be seen as a pre-emptive move by New Delhi to cut its losses on the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which remains effectively closed, the experts said.

The INSTC was India's grand plan to cut short the time taken for trade shipments to reach Russia and Europe, and enter the central Asian markets. It included thousands of kilometres of all-weather highways from the Iranian port of Chabahar in the south, through Azerbaijan in the north, and onwards to Russia and Europe.

The route was part of India's efforts to establish greater connectivity and trade with the high-potential markets of the adjoining Common-wealth of Independent States countries.

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