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Corporate Leaders Group Africa

B20 South Africa Recommendations: Get Real and Get Granular

A position paper on overlapping issues in B20 task forces

The University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL)

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Corporate Leaders Group Africa

CLG Africa convenes thought leadership platforms for corporate leaders in African countries to engage policy issues, with a focus on sustainable development in the local and regional context. We carry out our work through chapters. We currently have two chapters: the Corporate Affairs Leadership Forum (CALF) in South Africa and the Sustainability Leadership Forum (SLF) in Kenya. All our chapters are run in partnership with locally based organisations. In South Africa, we have partnered with the Wits School of Governance and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

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1. Introduction and purpose

Global governance and the principle and practice of multilateralism stand on the cusp. As South Africa hosts the G20, the challenge is whether it can secure real progress on the most important issues of the day, despite the geopolitical shifting sands and uncertainty. The G20 process is now entering the most challenging part of the year – the final passage to the leaders' summit in November. A huge amount of work has been done, by myriad working groups, ministerial meetings and task forces. The next stage of the process is an attempt to funnel this towards the final communique that will be the subject of deliberation by the leaders of the world's 19 most significant economies, as well as the EU and the African Union (AU) and around 40 other delegations.

As Pretoria seeks to keep the diplomatic wheels on, there is a risk that the recommendations that are emerging now from the working groups could be watered down at a time when we need to get past the platitudes and get granular about the action that needs to be taken on the sustainability agenda. As a B20 network partner, CISL has contributed to the process by acting as a peer reviewer of the various draft papers and recommendations, focusing on three of the eight task forces established under the B20, namely:

- Energy Mix and Just Transition[i]
- Industrial Transformation and Innovation[ii]
- Finance and Infrastructure[iii].

This paper seeks to join the dots between the three task forces' recommendations to the B20. It aims to analyse the overlapping issues and suggest ways in which key stakeholders can respond, especially the corporate affairs and sustainability practitioners who are members of CISL's Corporate Leaders Group Africa.

The agendas of the three task forces are not standalone silos: they are profoundly and structurally interdependent. The future of inclusive industrialisation hinges on massive investments in reliable infrastructure, resilient supply chains, affordable climate finance and a skilled workforce ready for systematic global shifts, especially relating to the 'green' economy.

Emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs) stand at the front line of the global push for net zero. They are home to the bulk of the world's critical minerals, the largest share of projected population growth and the biggest untapped potential for industrial expansion. However, EMDEs remain deeply constrained by grave climate vulnerability, substantial infrastructure gaps, high cost of capital, exaggerated and often misconceived or misinformed risk assessments, profound fiscal constraints, institutional weaknesses and skills deficits, and limited policy coherence.

Africa holds more than 70 per cent of the world's cobalt, large shares of platinum group metals, lithium and rare earths.[iv] It has abundant solar and wind potential yet faces the world's highest rates of energy poverty. The youth population is growing, and while this presents an opportunity, it can also become a challenge as the demand for public services and infrastructure, especially in rapidly growing cities, increases. Deliberate, integrated strategies are necessary to ensure that the opportunity is not missed to

avoid its current low-value extractor status and move into more high-value goods production – a potentially structurally fundamental 'whole economy' transition.

For the African continent, this is the moment, argues renowned African economist Professor Carlos Lopes, to escape the clutches of what he calls the "legacy economy".[v] Until now, Lopes argues, Africa's agency has been exercised defensively. Africa and other EMDE economies must now get on the front foot to seize the opportunity of the moment by, as Lopes argues, "building for itself".

This is an important lodestar to guide thinking about the work of the G20, including the B20. How have the policy and other ideas that have been put forward to the G20 help Africa to turn threats into opportunity and risk into reward – leading to developmental progress and climate resilience?

From the recommendations by the task forces, there are several enabling factors: de-risked climate finance flows, investable project pipelines, resilient and modern infrastructure, strong governance, predictable regulations, local value chain addition, and credible social benefits for communities. These relate to South Africa's three G20 themes of solidarity, equality and sustainability. Translating these enabling factors into concrete outcomes requires coordinated leadership from all stakeholders. In particular:

- **Governments** must create clear, stable rules and credible roadmaps. Market incentives, such as subsidies and penalties – the carrots and sticks of regulation – must be redesigned.
- **Communities** must see a tangible and equitable distribution of benefits of transition and long-term positive impacts that outlast short project cycles, as social 'buy-in' will be essential to reassure political leaders that they are acting in step with the interests of their constituents.
- **Companies** must bring capital, technology and know-how, but also humility, transparency and an openness to co-design solutions with local partners.

The greater task now, however, is to ensure that the recommendations are sufficiently tangible and granular as to be not only credible but also actionable.

2. Context for the B20's work

The three B20 policy papers underscore that fundamentally, finance and infrastructure, energy mix and just transition, and innovation and transformation are interconnected. A country cannot attract advanced manufacturing industries without reliable, affordable power. It cannot produce green hydrogen or process critical minerals at scale without modern ports, robust logistics and high-capacity rail corridors. And it cannot build resilient, inclusive supply chains without investing in reskilling and skilling people to adapt to automation and digitalisation and the green economy.

Geopolitics and geoeconomics, however, are reshaping the international landscape with a major trend towards nearshoring supply chains to ensure that supply chains are exposed to fewer risks. In some contexts – like the US – nearshoring is focused on a complete decoupling from risky supply chains, leading to the enactment of the United States Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Under the Trump administration, this has been taken even further towards a consistent trade interventionist strategy including the heavy use of

tariffs. In addition, in other regions such as the EU, geopolitics have also led to friendshoring, characterised by *some* decoupling from risky supply chains such as Russian gas supply chains due to the Ukrainian war. In addition, in the current geopolitical supply chain, China is also regarded as a risk – with its increasing control, especially in mineral processing supply chains that are critical for a just transition coupled with some geopolitical risks around China's foreign policy. About 90 per cent of rare earths processing occurs in China. For example, it controls about 74 per cent of lithium processing. This makes China the centre of mineral processing which controls the global chains that distribute these resources worldwide.[vi]

In the same context, the EU is also pushing to decarbonise, which has resulted in reshaped trade patterns and investment flows – in both negative and positive ways. For example, the EU is rewriting the rules of global trade through their Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms (CBAM), local content requirements, and industrial policy packages like the EU Green Deal Industrial Plan.[vii]

Some of these frameworks are a mixed bag of laws aimed at localising green industries and securing domestic supply chains for critical minerals, batteries and low carbon technologies. There is thus, an urgency for EMDEs to adapt to avoid being locked out of the high-value segments of these new markets, especially in sustainability.[viii] While there is a simultaneous rush towards oil and gas dominance not only in parts of Africa but also in the US, the sustainability and competitiveness of these supply chains stands to be tested against the commitments of the Paris Agreement.

For Africa, this is both a threat and a historic opportunity. Countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa are sitting on mineral reserves that are indispensable for electric vehicle (EV) batteries, solar panels, wind turbines and hydrogen fuel cells. But if these resources continue to be shipped abroad for processing, the continent will remain trapped at the bottom of the value chain.

The B20 Energy Mix and Just Transition Task Force policy paper stresses that the energy transition must be fair. The Industrial Transformation and Innovation Task Force's policy paper shows that manufacturing-led growth is important for job creation and for capturing value chains. The Finance and Infrastructure Task Force's paper underlines that unlocking private investment at scale requires predictable rules, blended finance instruments and credible pipelines of investable projects.

This paper highlights the essential, overlapping recommendations for business. Corporate affairs practitioners must seize the opportunity to shape national policy debates, craft partnerships with governments to attract capital at competitive rates, and develop ways to communicate value to regulators, shareholders and the societies in which they operate.

3. The climate finance gap

3.1 The scale of the funding challenge

According to the Energy Mix and Just Transition paper, EMDEs will need to mobilise an additional two to four trillion US dollars per year in clean energy investments alone by 2030 to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. Yet current flows fall drastically short.

The Industrial Transformation paper makes a parallel point: industrial upgrading from basic commodity extraction to mid- and high-value manufacturing requires substantial upfront capital.

However, the biggest hurdle is not the absence of capital. Globally, trillions of dollars are in circulation around global markets seeking returns, but there is a perceived risk attached to deploying them in EMDEs.

3.2 The role of blended finance and de-risking

The Finance and Infrastructure paper proposes practical solutions to address this. For example, the need for blended finance combining concessional capital (such as low-interest loans, grants, or guarantees from development banks and donors) with commercial capital from institutional investors and banks to help de-risk projects by absorbing early-stage losses, providing political risk insurance, or offering credit enhancements that improve bankability.

Yet despite its potential, blended finance remains underused. One reason is that many EMDEs lack robust project preparation facilities (PPFs) that can turn an idea into an investment-grade proposal with clear feasibility studies, risk assessments and governance structures. The B20 papers argue for scaling up these facilities, expanding the Global Infrastructure Facility and strengthening regional development banks to provide technical assistance. CISL recently published a review of best practice in blended finance – highlighting the perceptions and misunderstandings holding back expansion and how they can be addressed.

The papers also recommend country platforms that align donor funding, public budgets, private investors and project pipelines under a single, credible national plan.

3.3 Domestic resource mobilisation

The B20 papers highlight the need for stronger domestic financial ecosystems. Unlocking domestic pools of capital requires regulatory reforms that encourage institutional investors to allocate a portion of their portfolios to infrastructure and green industry. It also needs better credit rating frameworks, improved data transparency, and robust environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards that reassure international investors about governance and impact.

3.4 Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and inclusive access to capital

The Industrial Transformation paper points out that MSMEs form the backbone of local supplier networks, create most jobs and often drive innovation. Yet they face the highest hurdles to accessing affordable credit. Targeted effort should be made to address this, including for example for blended finance vehicles to include SME-focused credit lines, micro-guarantees, and technical support to help local firms reach bankable status.

3.5 Implications for business

- Companies must actively engage with policymakers and industry bodies to shape taxonomies and regulatory frameworks that expand access to green finance. They should support predictable carbon pricing, clear sustainability standards, and tax incentives that attract blended finance investors.
- Investors increasingly expect companies to have credible net-zero strategies, science-based targets and transparent reporting.
- Companies should build partnerships with multilateral banks, development finance institutions (DFIs) and local financial institutions.
- Clear communication of how investments deliver local economic and social benefits, from jobs and supplier opportunities to community reskilling, can strengthen trust with regulators, host governments and communities.
- It is important to shape narratives that support de-risking.

4. Infrastructure and connectivity

4.1 The infrastructure paradox

The B20 Finance and Infrastructure Task Force argues that without investable, well-prepared, bankable infrastructure pipelines, no amount of concessional climate finance or ambitious industrial policy will succeed. The continent continues to suffer from under-built, ageing or inefficient infrastructure. Transport networks face similar hurdles. Ports are congested and often outdated, rail systems are underdeveloped, and roads are poorly maintained or non-existent in rural areas. Poor infrastructure increases costs for manufacturers, making locally produced goods less competitive than imports, and eroding investor confidence in large-scale industrial zones. The B20 Finance and Infrastructure Task Force points out that as many as nine out of ten infrastructure projects in Africa fail to progress from concept to financial close.

4.2 Strategic infrastructure for green industry

The Energy Mix and Just Transition Task Force and the Industrial Transformation Task Force papers both stress that infrastructure investment cannot simply be about plugging gaps; it must be strategic and forward-looking. For example, new grids must be able to handle variable renewable energy sources, not just legacy coal or hydro generation. Transmission corridors should enable cross-border energy trade through regional power pools to improve reliability and resilience.

Equally, industrial corridors and special economic zones should be designed with the energy transition in mind. For example, positioning green hydrogen production near coastal export hubs and co-locating renewable energy generation with mineral processing plants can reduce costs and emissions.

4.3 Building resilience into infrastructure

The Infrastructure Task Force recommends embedding nature-positive principles into design, integrating green spaces for flood management, using resilient materials, and factoring climate projections into construction standards. So-called 'green infrastructure' can often offer win–wins – delivering nature protection, increased resilience and wider social and economic benefits.

Failure to build resilience now will lead to costly repairs, project downtime or stranded assets later, all of which deter investors and drive up insurance costs.

4.4 Regulatory bottlenecks and permitting

One of the most important priorities highlighted in the B20 papers is regulatory streamlining. Project developers often navigate multiple ministries, overlapping jurisdictions and opaque rules. In some African markets, it can take years to secure permits for a single renewable energy project or industrial park.

Solutions proposed include a single window permitting a streamlined, digital portal where all applications are processed under clear timeframes; clear standards that have standardised technical codes, environmental guidelines, and procurement rules to reduce uncertainty; and capacity building to strengthen public sector capacity to negotiate fair contracts, manage public–private partnerships and monitor compliance.

4.5 The importance of regional co-ordination

Regional integration through infrastructure connectivity multiplies economic potential, as seen in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTFA). The B20 papers recommend prioritising cross-border infrastructure corridors as catalysts for regional industrial clusters. Corridors linking mineral-rich inland regions with coastal ports can support beneficiation industries and green export hubs.

4.6 Local economic participation

The B20 papers argue that infrastructure investment must deliver local economic multipliers instead of excessively relying on foreign contractors. This means setting targets for local procurement of materials and services is important, ensuring local workforce participation through training and apprenticeships, and designing fair benefit-sharing mechanisms for communities affected by land use and resettlement. Without this, communities may resist projects or demand compensation, causing costly delays and reputational risks for companies.

4.7 Implications for business

- Recognise that the infrastructure agenda intersects with a range of other issues, including operational risk, supply chain resilience, reputational trust and stakeholder relations.
- Engage early with regulators, local governments and community groups to anticipate bottlenecks.

- Demonstrate that private infrastructure needs to align with national development strategies, climate goals and regional trade frameworks.
- Support public–private partnerships that share risks and unlock co-financing for large projects.
- Communicate how projects contribute to community resilience – for example, by building climate-proofed roads or off-grid renewables for underserved areas.

5. The value trap

Africa exports nearly 80 per cent of its minerals in unprocessed or semi-processed form.[ix] The Industrial Transformation paper argues that this pattern must change and can change if countries pursue smart industrial policies and create the enabling conditions for local value chains to flourish.

5.1 Local value addition

Mineral beneficiation and advanced manufacturing require stable, affordable energy; modern logistics and ports; skilled workforces; technology transfer; research and development investment; and predictable trade and investment frameworks to compete with established players in Asia, Europe or North America.

5.2 Trade shifts, geopolitics and geoeconomics

The global landscape for industrialisation is changing fast. Major economic power blocs like the US, China and the EU are each implementing policies that have a significant impact on trade and are creating new trade barriers. For example, in the case of the US, EMDEs risk paying tariffs that erode competitiveness.

At the same time, geopolitical competition over critical minerals is intensifying. New supply chain alliances, such as the US-led Minerals Security Partnership, aim to reduce reliance on China for refining and processing, but risk sidelining producer countries if their voices are not included. This creates an urgent imperative for producer countries to invest in local value addition and negotiate better trade terms that do not lock them out of future green and technology markets. In addition, it also calls for more regionalisation to build resilient supply chains.

5.3 The role of industrial clusters

The Industrial Transformation paper highlights the importance of industrial clusters and special economic zones (SEZs), which facilitate the co-location of producers, suppliers, logistics hubs and service providers. Clusters reduce costs, enable knowledge spillovers and attract anchor investors.

5.4 Technology transfer and innovation ecosystems

Another overlapping theme is the need for technology partnerships. Building a local EV battery industry, for example, requires not just raw minerals but access to global research and development (R&D), patented manufacturing processes and advanced machinery.

5.5 Local content and community inclusion

The B20 papers caution that industrialisation must be genuinely inclusive. Too often, local communities see minimal benefit from mining or processing operations while bearing social and environmental costs.

Local content policies, when designed well, can help ensure that a share of jobs, procurement and ownership stays local. However, these policies must strike a balance between ambition and practicality as unrealistic local content targets can deter investors or result in costly delays.

Transparency and community consultation are important. Companies must show how industrial projects can deliver visible, fair benefits, not just promises on paper.

5.6 Implications for business

- Advocate smart, predictable industrial policies that incentivise beneficiation, supplier development and technology transfer without deterring investors.
- Facilitate joint ventures, licensing deals and local supplier networks that align company growth with national value addition goals.
- Build trust by communicating clear, credible stories about local job creation, skills transfer and environmental safeguards.
- Monitor trade policy shifts like CBAM and bilateral agreements to manage exposure to tariffs or market access risks.

6. Workforce and skills ecosystem

Industrialisation and infrastructure can unlock capital flows and position countries for greener, more resilient growth; however, people are an important enabler of any transition. The B20 task forces all echo these sentiments: if skills systems lag, millions risk being left out of the benefits of the new economy or risk being actively displaced by it.

6.1 The skills transition imperative

The Energy Mix and Just Transition paper estimates that while the global energy transition could create up to 30 million new clean energy jobs by 2030, about seven to eight million fossil fuel jobs will be lost or transformed. Managing these shifts is not only an economic question but also a social and political one. Similarly, the Industrial Transformation paper points out that the next wave of manufacturing growth will rely heavily on automation, digital integration, artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced materials.

The world is not only transitioning from fossil to green economies but also transitioning from routine labour to knowledge-intensive, tech-led industries. If EMDEs cannot build a skilled workforce that matches this future, their competitive advantage will be limited to low-skill work that is highly subject to automation and replacement, leaving growing parts of their populations unemployed.

6.2 The skills context

Skills mismatches are widespread. Many EMDEs face high unemployment, especially among youth and women, and local industries struggle to find enough qualified electricians, welders, engineers, digital technicians, and managers with project and compliance expertise. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems are often underfunded, outdated or disconnected from industry needs.[x]

6.3 Green skills ecosystems

The B20 Energy Mix and Just Transition paper emphasises the concept of "green skills ecosystems". This is not just about training workers for solar installation or wind turbine maintenance, it is also about developing whole pipelines of competencies that span grid modernisation and smart meter management, green hydrogen production and distribution, battery manufacturing and recycling, sustainable construction techniques, energy efficiency auditing for industrial facilities, ESG reporting and sustainability compliance roles.

Green skills also overlap with digital skills. This implies combining traditional technical training with digital literacy and data skills.

6.4 Industry-led partnerships

A recurring message across the B20 papers is that skills development cannot be left solely to governments. Companies, industry associations, universities and local communities must collaborate to design curricula, offer apprenticeships and ensure that training is linked to real, decent jobs. South Africa's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) is a good example; it requires developers to invest in local skills development as part of their bids.

6.5 Reskilling fossil fuel workers

A politically sensitive dimension of the skills transition is what happens to communities that are dependent on fossil fuels. Just transition strategies must include tailored plans for coal miners, oil rig workers and fossil fuel plant operators, etc. This will require early and transparent engagement with affected communities, reskilling programmes linked to new industries in the same region, income support during transitions and local industrial diversification to replace lost revenue.

Without these measures, communities can become vocal opponents of decarbonisation, slowing policy progress and risking social unrest.

6.6 Gender inclusion

The B20 reports also underscore the need to close gender gaps. Globally, women make up only about 32 per cent of the renewable energy workforce and an even smaller share in technical and leadership roles.[xi] Barriers range from unequal access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education to unsafe working conditions on remote sites.

Companies that proactively support women's participation in industrial jobs through safe accommodation, mentorship, fair promotion pathways and family-friendly policies can tap into a wider talent pool and improve community buy-in.

6.7 Implications for business

- The workforce agenda is more than corporate social responsibility; it is a material business risk and opportunity.
- Companies that ignore local skills development may face community resistance or accusations of a lack of impact on communities.
- Investors and regulators increasingly expect robust disclosures on workforce diversity, local hiring and reskilling.
- Local supplier development depends on skilled workers who can meet quality standards and certifications.
- Practitioners should broker partnerships with technical colleges, universities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Where possible, companies should anchor local training centres near major projects.
- Clear, credible messaging on how the company is building future-ready local workforces can strengthen trust with governments, communities and shareholders.

7. Governance, policy coherence and platforms

Without strong, coherent governance and robust institutions, the ambitions set out in the B20 task forces will be difficult. The B20's Finance and Infrastructure Task Force underscores that investor confidence depends on regulatory certainty and institutional credibility. Countries with clear, transparent and stable policy environments consistently attract more investment at lower cost than countries with fragmented, opaque or unpredictable rules.

7.1 The co-ordination problem

In many EMDEs and particularly in Africa, governance fragmentation is a hidden but powerful barrier to the just transition. Responsibility for climate, industrial policy, energy planning, skills development and infrastructure often sits across multiple ministries and agencies, each with overlapping or competing mandates.

For example, an industrial park project may require approval from multiple government agencies, including an industry ministry, an energy regulator, an environmental agency, a land commission and a

municipal authority, each with its own rules, timelines and fee structures. This creates duplication, delays and opportunity for corruption or political interference.

7.2 Country platforms: aligning interests

One major recommendation across the B20 papers is to institutionalise country platforms.

Country platforms offer several benefits. They can operate to co-ordinate donor and private capital, reducing duplication and competition; help governments to prioritise projects and ensure alignment with national development goals; provide investors with a clearer sense of the pipeline, timelines and policy commitments; and create channels for stakeholder engagement, including communities, unions and local businesses.

However, country platforms are only as good as the institutions and people that manage them. They need clear governance structures, transparent reporting and robust safeguards against political capture or mismanagement.

7.3 Predictable rules and fair enforcement

Investors and companies need to know that rules will not change unpredictably, that contracts will be honoured, and that disputes can be resolved fairly. This applies to everything from mining licences and energy feed-in tariffs to environmental permitting and tax incentives.

The challenge for governments is to balance legitimate demands for local benefit and environmental protection with the need to uphold the rule of law and respect contractual stability.

7.4 Standards, taxonomies and disclosure

Another recurring theme in the B20 papers is the need for clear sustainability standards and taxonomies. Global investors increasingly want verifiable, comparable data on emissions, supply chain impacts and ESG performance. Global financial regulators increasingly are looking to understand the exposure of investments to potential systemic risks like climate change and nature loss.

Inconsistent reporting frameworks or poor data quality can limit a country's access to green bonds, sustainability-linked loans or preferential trade deals. Regional harmonisation also matters – common standards make it easier for firms to operate across borders.

7.5 Governance at the community level

Governance is not only a national challenge. Many projects stall or face costly opposition when communities feel excluded or see benefits flowing elsewhere. Transparent, inclusive local governance is vital. Community development agreements must set out clear benefit-sharing and grievance mechanisms that help address conflicts before they escalate. Local authorities also need to develop the capacity to monitor compliance and enforce safeguards. Failure to get this right can result in protests, strikes or legal battles that can derail multi-billion-dollar investments.

7.6 Implications for business

- Identify which ministries, regulators and agencies hold decision-making power. Understand their mandates and align corporate messaging accordingly.
- Actively participate in country platforms, donor forums and industry bodies to shape policy frameworks and investment roadmaps.
- Ensure the company's sustainability reporting aligns with emerging taxonomies and meets investor expectations for transparency. Also use it to understand the company's risk exposure to sustainability impacts and responses.
- Develop scenarios for potential policy shifts such as new local content rules, carbon pricing or beneficiation mandates, and prepare board-level advice on how to respond.
- Support clear community agreements, invest in local governance capacity and embed grievance mechanisms into project design.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

Countries must integrate climate ambition with developmental imperatives, global competitiveness with local beneficiation, and rapid decarbonisation with fair reskilling and community benefit. For Africa and its peers, success depends on a rare blend of vision, credible policy, investor confidence, strategic partnerships and active community buy-in.

The three B20 task force papers reviewed in this report underscore that climate and transition finance flows cannot be unlocked without smart innovative blended finance approaches, new forms of guarantees and customised governance mechanisms such as country platforms that align local priorities with global investors. But a more structurally fundamental transformation to the global finance ecosystem will be needed to shift capital away from its habitual destinations to where it is most urgently needed and at a scale commensurate with what the science is telling us.

Infrastructure corridors, regional grids and special economic zones can transform raw mineral wealth into processed products and advanced manufacturing hubs. Skills ecosystems and community inclusion can turn large industrial projects into engines of broad-based prosperity rather than isolated enclaves of extraction.

This requires co-ordination and trust across stakeholders who do not always share the same time frames, incentives or risk appetites. There is a complex political economy to be navigated, which will require courageous and far-sighted leadership.

Governments must create clear, stable rules and credible roadmaps. Market incentives, such as subsidies and penalties – the carrots and sticks of regulation – must be redesigned.

Communities must see a tangible and equitable distribution of benefits of transition and long-term positive impacts that outlast short project cycles, as social 'buy-in' will be essential to reassure political leaders that they are acting in step with the interests of their constituents.

Companies must bring capital, technology and know-how, but also humility, transparency and an openness to co-design solutions with local partners.

8.1 B20 recommendations

The B20 has a unique role as a bridge between policy and business. Given the scale and depth of the global crisis – as well as the opportunities that could emerge with the right action and finance – it is necessary to get past the platitudes of old and to be specific and granular in the recommendations that emerge from Africa's first G20.

To support the three task forces and to advance their inter-locking recommendations, the focus should be on practical business-driven pathways that mobilise investment, de-risk and re-design markets in a way that rewards those companies that are willing to contribute positively to a sustainable development pathway, and which scale inclusive green value chains to deliver clearly defined public goods.

Accordingly, and with the imperative of getting as granular as possible, CISL makes the following recommendations:

8.1.1. Mobilise climate finance and de-risk investments

The B20 should advocate strongly for expanded blended finance mechanisms that combine concessional and commercial capital to unlock projects in emerging markets. This requires scaling up project preparation facilities (PPFs) that can turn ideas into investment-ready pipelines. The B20 can also promote corporate participation in country platforms that align donors, DFIs and governments around transparent national plans and strategic priorities. In this way, a country can arrive at the kind of 'development bargain' that development economist Stefan Dercon has argued is necessary for a country to develop economically.

As we argue in our forthcoming paper on *Leadership and Country Platforms in Africa and Beyond:*

> If development is to be "done differently" through Country Platforms, and indeed if they truly become the conduits for scaled investment into Africa and the global South more generally, the co-benefit will be the creation and fostering of cohorts of global South leaders, adept at the steps inherent in CPs all the way from setting the strategic development goal to measuring the development impact post implementation. Work now needs to be done to consider how best to enhance leadership capability whilst respecting country autonomy and the foundational principle of a demand-driven approach to development finance. The potential benefits are vast. But the leadership challenge cannot be underestimated.

To enjoy sufficient social legitimacy, as well as technical capability, country platforms will need to be carefully designed and different 'tiers' of leadership skill will need to be cultivated and deployed – from the political level, through the mid-to-senior tier technical, to the multi-stakeholder engagement domain.

8.1.2. Infrastructure corridors for green growth

The B20 should emphasise the design of strategic infrastructure corridors, grids for renewable energy integration, logistics hubs for mineral processing and cross-border transport systems aligned with AfCFTA. Business can bring expertise in PPPs and supply chain resilience. The B20 should recommend digital 'single window' permitting systems to cut red tape and accelerate renewable and industrial projects while upholding sustainability standards. Infrastructure projects should embed nature-positive design and local procurement targets to build resilience and social acceptance.

8.1.3. Local value chains and industrial clusters on the back of the transition to renewable energy

The greatest potential lies in accelerating the clean energy transition, where dramatic cost reductions and rapid technological advances – particularly in solar, wind and storage – have made renewables the cheapest source of new power in most regions. Investments in adaptation and resilience can also deliver consistently high returns. **A 'whole economy' transition should be the over-arching ambition. To break Africa's 'value trap' of exporting raw materials, the B20 should call for industrial clusters and Special Economic Zones to co-locate suppliers, processors and logistics facilities.** These hubs should integrate renewable power and be designed for export competitiveness. The B20 should also promote technology transfer partnerships (licensing, joint ventures, R&D consortia) to support local beneficiation and supplier upgrading. Local content rules must be balanced and ambitious yet realistic, to encourage both investor confidence and community benefits.

8.1.4. Skills and workforce development

The B20 should spearhead an industry-led green skills agenda, promoting business–academia–community partnerships to build the skilled and capable workforce needed by new and growing industries. Drawing from examples like South Africa's REIPPPP, the B20 should recommend embedding training obligations in industrial and energy contracts. Businesses must also commit to gender inclusion, addressing barriers that slow or prevent women from entering technical and leadership roles in the economy.

8.1.5. Governance, trust and community buy-in

Finally, the B20 should emphasise governance innovations, clear sustainability standards, robust reporting frameworks and transparent grievance mechanisms at the community level. Business must model transparency, scenario planning for policy shifts (e.g. increased tariffs and protectionism, geopolitical polarisation, environmental regulation and carbon pricing) and co-design community development agreements. Corporate affairs leaders should drive messaging that demonstrates credible social and economic value creation, beyond profit margins, to strengthen trust across stakeholders.

The B20's contribution should be to provide business-led and investable solutions that translate global policy aspirations into bankable pipelines. Its focus must remain on de-risking capital flows, accelerating infrastructure for industrialisation, embedding local skills and supplier development, and building community-inclusive governance platforms.

8.2 G20 recommendations

The G20, as the convening forum of the world's largest economies, should go further than the B20 by creating enabling global rules, incentives and financing frameworks that can structurally shift markets in favour of a just and inclusive transition.

Hence, CISL makes the following recommendations directed at the G20 as a whole:

8.2.1 Reform global finance for climate and development

The G20 should prioritise reforms to the global financial architecture to redirect capital to EMDEs at scale. This includes recapitalising multilateral development banks (MDBs), expanding the use of Special Drawing Rights (SDR's) and embedding blended finance mandates across institutions.

The G20 should champion the scaling of country platforms that align donor, government and private priorities with standardised reporting to reduce fragmentation.

Importantly, G20 members should commit to risk-sharing instruments such as political risk insurance, green guarantees and first-loss facilities that lower the cost of capital in high-potential but (perceived) high-risk markets.

8.2.2 Align trade and industrial policy

The G20 must ensure that growing protectionism from major economic blocs like the US does not lock out developing economies. Instead, they should be paired with transition finance, preferential trade terms and support for local value addition in producer countries. The G20 should promote fair, rules-based trade frameworks that incentivise beneficiation of critical minerals in Africa and other EMDEs, rather than reinforcing extractive models. Establishing global standards for low carbon goods and mutually recognised sustainability certifications would help EMDE producers remain competitive in those industries.

8.2.3 Infrastructure as global public good

The G20 should launch a Green Infrastructure Accelerator that pools finance, technology and expertise for cross-border corridors, regional grids and climate-resilient ports. Such an initiative could be linked to AfCTFA and other regional integration efforts. By treating infrastructure not just as a national asset but also as a global public good that underpins climate and trade goals, the G20 can catalyse investments that no single EMDE can undertake alone.

8.2.4 Skills and just transition strategies

The G20 should commit to global skills compacts that link financing and technical assistance to national training programmes, especially in renewable energy, advanced manufacturing and digital integration. Dedicated funding should be allocated for reskilling fossil fuel workers and supporting regions heavily dependent on coal and oil. Gender-responsive policies should be mainstreamed, with G20 members setting targets for women's participation in STEM and green jobs. This would help manage social risks of decarbonisation and unlock broader talent pools.

8.2.5 Governance, standards and inclusion

The G20 should advance harmonised sustainability standards and disclosure frameworks, including a G20 Due Diligence Framework. This reduces compliance costs and boosts investor confidence while creating a level playing field. The G20 should also encourage governments to adopt transparent community development agreements and grievance mechanisms as conditions for international project finance. By embedding community voices into global frameworks, the G20 can help ensure that energy and industrial transitions are politically and socially sustainable.

The G20 must go beyond signalling ambition to enacting systemic reforms in finance, trade and governance. Its task is to reshape global rules so that wider societal goals like action on climate change align with industrial upgrading in EMDEs, while also embedding fairness, inclusivity and resilience. The G20's leadership will determine whether EMDEs can leapfrog into a modern, green economy or remain trapped at the bottom of the value chain of the 'legacy economy'.

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