

G20 focus on Africa in Hamburg

G20 leaders meeting in Hamburg, Germany, discussed and agreed on various developmental issues that will benefit the African continent.



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President Jacob Zuma arrived back in South Africa the morning of 9 July from the G20 Leaders' Summit, and has described the Summit as successful and with positive outcomes to a large degree. The German Presidency of the G20 managed to build on the achievements of the last summit in China which had emphasised sustainable development in Africa.

“Despite disagreements on certain issues, the summit managed to discuss and agree on various developmental matters that would be of advantage to South Africa and the African continent including the launch of the G20 Africa Partnership. This programme was launched in recognition of the opportunities and challenges in the African continent as well as the goals of the United Nations Social Development Agenda 2030.

“It was agreed that this initiative would be based on equal partnerships and will be in line with the African Union Agenda 2063. The partnership will further serve our national interest as it will generate a sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development, contribute to create decent employment and economic advancement for women and youth as well as alleviate poverty and inequality,” Zuma said.

The partnership will include developmental projects such as G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment in developing countries with a focus on Africa. This initiative is intended to contribute to creating 1.1 million new jobs by 2022 and to providing innovative skills development programmes for at least five million young people over the next five years.

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The G20 Africa Partnership programme will also include projects such as the Women Entrepreneurs Financing Initiative housed at the World Bank, and establishment of the Business Women's Leaders Task Force to work with the G20's Women20 and Business20 initiatives as well as the launch of the #eSkills4Girls Initiative to promote opportunities and equal participation for women and girls in digital economy, in particular in low income and developing countries.

Rising inequality

Zuma said such developmental programmes were necessary to address the growing discontent by citizens, which is a big issue confronting the world.

“We are confronted by rising inequality within countries and a lack of quality jobs. It cannot be ‘business as usual’ where we simply take an approach to better explain the benefits of trade. It is imperative that the discourse and action acknowledges the benefits and costs of globalisation.” He said the summit also discussed thoroughly the issue of global economy, trade and investment, against the unfavourable background of the slow global economic growth.

“The summit agreed that despite improvements in trade and investment, the benefits of international trade and investment have not been shared fairly enough.”

The leaders agreed that trade and investment are key pillars of growth and development, therefore it would be appropriate to promote a fair and favourable environment that will ensure transparency, mutually beneficial trade relations as well as inclusive and sustainable global growth.

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“We further agreed on the improvement of the functions of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as well as full implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement which will provide technical assistance to developing countries.

“As South Africa we will take full advantage of these agreements and opportunities to address immediate challenges facing the country such as economic growth, creation of decent jobs as well as eradication of poverty and inequality,” Zuma said.

Amongst other issues discussed during the summit was sustainable development, climate and energy.

Climate change

Zuma said that despite differences on climate and energy matters including the decision of the United States to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the majority leaders remain committed to the agreement as it represents best opportunities to address the existential threat posed by climate change.

The President said the leaders reaffirm their strong commitment to the Paris Agreement and agree on full implementation of the agreement and also agreed to the G20 Hamburg Climate and Energy Action Plan for Growth.

“We must make good on past commitments, most importantly, the mobilisation of financial resources, including the Green Climate Fund, technology transfer and capacity building, to deal with both mitigation and adaptation needs, more especially in Africa, where we bear the brunt of climate change.

“Infrastructure investment in Africa is critical to development, with investment in renewable energy as part of an energy mix.

“We support G20 efforts towards a transition to sustainable and low greenhouse gas emission energy systems, in a manner that is technically feasible and economically viable, especially in developing countries. We also wish to re-iterate our support for cleaner fossil fuel technologies and nuclear energy,” the President said.

During the summit, Zuma also participated in the G20 Leaders Retreat meeting which discussed terrorism and extremism.

The President said South Africa noted with concern the alarming regularity and persistence of terror attacks across the world, causing death and devastation and impacting national and regional security.

“International coordination and cooperation in countering this threat is critical. As South Africa we maintained our full support of the global campaign against terrorism within the framework of the United Nations,” Zuma said.

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