

SA will use G20 to promote and strengthen Africa's interests

NALEDI PANDOR

voices@citypress.co.za

The G20 Summit, which will be held in Osaka, Japan, on Friday and Saturday, will be an opportunity for the world's leading developed and developing economies to reflect on the past 20 years of the G20's existence. The grouping was formed in 1999 after the Asian financial crisis raised fears of a worldwide economic meltdown.

The G20 economies account for 85% of the world's GDP, 80% of world trade and two-thirds of the world's population. One of the salient achievements of the G20 has been its endorsement of the internationally accepted standards and codes aimed at improving economic and financial transparency, as well as strengthening financial systems.

The G20 is the pre-eminent global agenda-setting body in international relations outside of formal UN structures. The discussions at the G20 often reflect present global political and economic challenges and, therefore, as a collective body, tend to carry a significant profile and influence.

As the "premier global forum for international economic cooperation", the G20's value is based on its global leadership role and on bringing together advanced and emerging economies. This could be used as a platform for

advancing much-needed global governance reforms and orienting the international development agenda.

The role of the G20 continues to evolve. Of late, its agenda has expanded beyond economic and financial issues. It now encompasses issues of peace and security, global governance, international terrorism, the environment, refugees, and other geopolitical and foreign policy-related matters. With the summit in Japan focusing on new technology such as artificial intelligence and digital trade, South Africa will be looking for opportunities that will support Africa in bridging the digital divide and leapfrogging to the fourth industrial revolution.

South Africa will use its participation at the G20 to promote and strengthen the interests of Africa and of the "global south" - the grouping of low- and middle-income countries, most of which are in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Although South Africa is the only African member of the G20, Africa's participation in the organisation includes the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which are invited as observers.

South Africa will continuously seek to ensure the G20 implements its commitments to Africa, including the G20 support for industrialisation in the least developed countries, agreed to in 2016 in Hangzhou, China. Our own

efforts to ensure our economy utilises the digital innovation of the fourth industrial revolution will benefit from countries that are ahead of us, such as Japan.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in January, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzō Abe said this G20 summit should be "long remembered as the summit that started worldwide data governance". He said that "world-wide data governance" entails the ability "to put our personal data and data embodying intellectual property, national security intelligence and so on under careful protection, while, on the other hand, we must enable the free flow of medical, industrial, traffic and other most useful, nonpersonal, anonymous data to see no borders".

South Africa is also focusing on technology advances. In April, President Cyril Ramaphosa appointed the Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is tasked with helping government tap into opportunities presented by the digital revolution. The commission will identify relevant policies, strategies and action plans that will position South Africa as a competitive global player.

The participation and contributions of South Africa in multilateral forums, such as the G20, are informed by a desire to contribute to a humane and equitable global order.

Pandor is the minister of international relations and cooperation