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G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration: Sense of the consensus

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Written by [Shubhajit Roy](#)

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G20 leaders attend the first session of the Summit at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Saturday. (ANI)

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G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration: Sense of the consensus

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The leaders at **India's showpiece G20 Summit** arrived at a joint communique — called the **G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration** — after months of work and, in the last stretch, five sleepless nights of negotiations.

The big **sticking point was the Ukraine-Russia conflict**, which was addressed in detail in seven paragraphs. This is much more elaborate than the Bali Declaration, which had just two paragraphs.

The consensus at the Bali declaration frayed and broke down within a month of the Summit in November last year, and the last nine months witnessed acrimony on both sides — the G7 grouping on one side and Russia-China bloc on the other.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during Session-2 on 'One Family' of the G20 Summit 2023 at the Bharat Mandapam, in New Delhi, Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023. (PTI)

But, brick-by-brick, through many conversations over countless coffees, and hours of painstaking negotiations, the two sides built a consensus formula, with the help of four diplomats, and guided and led by Sherpa Amitabh Kant, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, and Finance Minister [Nirmala Sitharaman](#).

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Delivering a win-win on the [Ukraine](#) question

The [Russia-Ukraine](#) paragraphs did not condemn Russia for its actions, nor did it call it an “aggression”. But the West also got what it wanted.

As a G7 diplomat put it, “to achieve a language of consensus on a subject as divisive as [Ukraine](#), we had to be able to reaffirm what we said in Bali, which we have done by recalling the Bali conversation; we had to refer to the United Nations texts, which are indeed mentioned; and then we had to affirm a few obvious points for us, but which are not necessarily obvious for everyone, i.e., that a war of territorial conquest is unacceptable, that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states must be respected, and that a just and lasting peace must respect these principles”.



Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) at the Session-2 on 'One Family' during the G20 Summit 2023 at the

Bharat Mandapam. (PTI)

“All this is well incorporated in the text and, as was our main objective at this Summit, enables us to look ahead to what should be the solution for a just and lasting peace at the end of the war in [Ukraine](#).”

The diplomat added: “The statement says that all states must refrain from conquering territories by force. Russia is the only country to have done so. All this helps to build consensus for the future.”



Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) appears on a screen as he attends “Session II: One Family” at the G20 summit in New [Delhi](#), India, Sept. 9, 2023. (AP/PTI)

The G7 diplomat underlined the special role that India played in this process. “India has assumed a kind of power and an ability to bring countries together. Not many countries are in a position to negotiate as India has done, i.e., to take on board comments from everyone, and to work out a compromise proposal. This is something important,” the diplomat said.

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Range of deliverables, presented imaginatively

The Russia-Ukraine paragraphs in the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration have captured global attention, but the communique is filled with deliverables on a range of issues. It is also crafted in a different way — not the usual paragraphs that are structured in a joint declaration.

Instead, it starts with a preamble, and then has 10 chapters, and ends with a conclusion.



Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) shows a mural of Konark Sun temple wheel from Indian state of Orissa to U.S. President Joe Biden upon his arrival at Bharat Mandapam convention center for the G20 Summit, in New [Delhi](#), India, Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023. AP/PTI

In fact the Russia-Ukraine paragraphs are at the beginning, just after the [preamble](#), and “For the plant, people, peace and prosperity”.

The chapters are numbered A to J, in 10 chapters, based on themes.



Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) with his Japanese and Italian counterparts Fumio Kishida and Giorgia Meloni during bilateral meetings, on the sidelines of the G20 Summit 2023, in New [Delhi](#). (PTI)

Progress for all; focus on education, health

The first chapter is titled “Strong, Sustainable, Balanced, and Inclusive Growth”, and talks about the global economic situation, advancing financial inclusion, and fighting corruption.

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It vows to implement the Action Plan against Fugitive Economic Offenders that will help strengthen international cooperation and information sharing among law enforcement agencies to combat corruption.

The next chapter is on “Accelerating Progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” — which is about eliminating hunger and malnutrition, health collaboration and delivering quality education among others.



Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) greets President of the Union of the Comoros and Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Azali Assoumani after the Union became permanent member of the G20. (PTI)

One of the important elements is on how future pandemics can impact the economy, which also brings out the gaps in the existing pandemic response mechanism, including institutional and funding arrangements.

On education, it talks about enhancing teachers' capacity, improved curricula, content in local language, and access to digital resources, which will ensure that all children, including the most marginalised, are provided with the essential building blocks for all future learning.



Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) talks with British Prime Minister [Rishi Sunak](#) upon his arrival at Bharat Mandapam convention center for the G20 Summit, in New [Delhi](#), India, Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023. Evan Vucci/Pool via REUTERS

Future is now: Sustainability, chips...

The chapter on “Green Development Pact for a Sustainable Future” stresses the need to implement clean, sustainable, just, affordable, and inclusive energy transitions.

One important element is the mention of the need to build reliable, diverse, responsible, and sustainable value chains of critical minerals, semiconductors, and related technologies.



The declaration agrees on a “WHO-managed framework to build a comprehensive digital health ecosystem in compliance with respective data protection regulations”. (PTI Photo)

The chapter on “Multilateral Institutions for the 21st Century”, speaks of reforming international financial institutions. One of the most important elements is that reform of the UN Security Council was agreed to for the first time in the G20; and there was a strong push towards reforms for better, bigger, and more effective Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs).



Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) welcomes Director IMF Kristalina Georgieva upon her arrival at Bharat Mandapam convention center for the G20 Summit, in New [Delhi](#), India, Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023. Evan Vucci/Pool via REUTERS

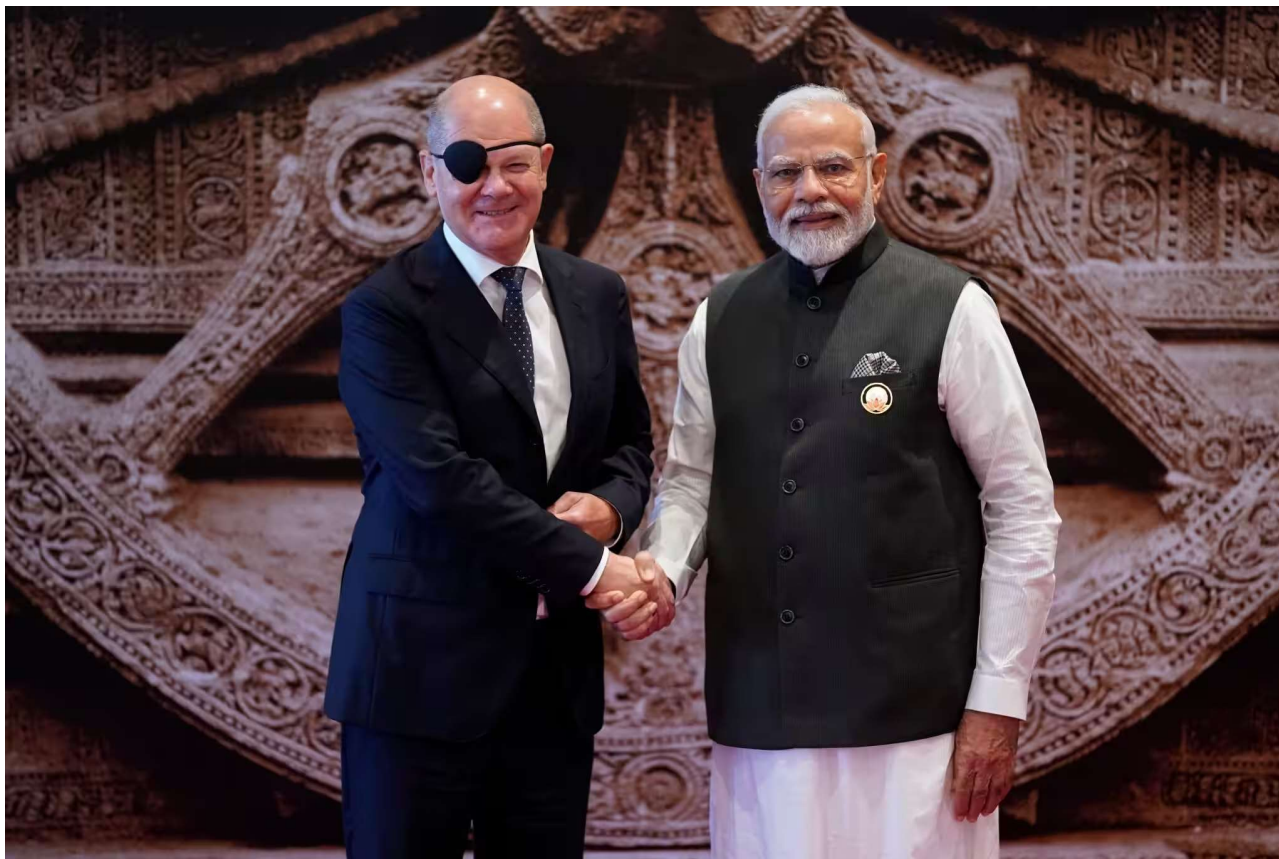
...Digital infrastructure, and a safe, secure Internet

The chapter on “Technological Transformation & Digital Public Infrastructure”, contains elements of building digital public infrastructure, crypto-assets, and harnessing Artificial Intelligence (AI) responsibly for Good and for All.

The G20 leaders agreed on a G20 framework for digital public infrastructure and Global Digital Public Infrastructure Repository (GDPIR).

Also Read | G20 commits to halve digital gender gap by 2030

The Leaders' Declaration also talks about a comprehensive toolkit which is aimed at improving cyber education and cyber awareness for the protection and empowerment of children and youth, especially considering the growing digital footprint of children and youth, and the increasing risks associated with it.



Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) welcomes Germany Chancellor Olaf Scholz upon his arrival at Bharat Mandapam convention center for the G20 Summit, in New [Delhi](#), India, Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci,Pool)

Focus on gender equality, terror in G20 crosshairs

In the chapter on “Gender Equality and Empowering all Women and Girls”, the Declaration promotes equal rights to economic resources, property ownership, financial services, and inheritance for women, while supporting women’s organisations and networks, and closing gender gaps in agricultural access.



Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) welcomes Italy Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni at the Bharat Mandapam on Saturday.

Under India's G20 Presidency, a decision to create a full-fledged working group on women's empowerment has been made. The group will prioritise gender equality, women's empowerment, and leadership, and bring convergence across sectors at all levels.

The chapter "On Countering Terrorism and Money Laundering", contains a strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and a positive message towards international peace and security.



Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) welcomes Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau upon his arrival at Bharat Mandapam convention center for the G20 Summit, in New [Delhi](#), India, Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci,Pool)

Welcome aboard, Africa; a diverse, tolerant grouping

The last chapter on “Creating a More Inclusive World”, has two important elements.

One, India’s G20 Presidency has paved the way for the African Union’s permanent membership in the G20. This will make G20 more inclusive, deepen cooperation with Africa, and help realise its developmental aspirations.

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Second is a commitment to promote respect for religious and cultural diversity, and deploring all acts of religious hatred, including against religious symbols and holy books.



Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) greets as waits to welcome leaders of the G20 countries, in New Delhi, India, Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023. Evan Vucci/Pool via REUTERS

From [Delhi](#), a vision for Brazil, South Africa, US

Officials said that, in conclusion, **there were a few broader takeaways that this Summit projected: a strong commitment for future Presidencies including for the new cycle beginning in 2026 — Brazil in 2024, South Africa in 2025, and the US in 2026.**

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There was recognition of all Engagement Groups and Initiatives of India's G20 Presidency. Recommendations of Engagement Groups — B20, S20, SAI20, Startup20, T20, U20, W20, Y20, C20, P20 and L20 — and Initiatives — EMPOWER, Research Initiative, SELM, CSAR, and G20 Cybersecurity Conference — were welcomed. And, by conducting over 200 meetings in 60 cities across India, New Delhi has set a new template — and a high bar — of taking G20 to the people: indeed, the democratisation of diplomacy is a key takeaway from the successful exercise.

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