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Briefing Note 1: South Africa and the G20 Presidency

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This brief draws on a recent TIPS publication, *How South Africa's G20 Presidency can advance climate resilience, developmental regionalism in Africa, and an equitable multilateral trading system*.

On 19 November 2024, President Lula da Silva of Brazil handed over the baton of the G20 Presidency to President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa. This was a historic and poignant moment the leaders of two of the largest democracies in the Global South. Two weeks later, South Africa assumed the Presidency of the G20, a global forum of the largest economies in the world that came together for the first time in 2008 to address the global financial crisis.

For South Africa, this period provides President Cyril Ramaphosa the opportunity to mark his second term as President. It has been made clear that he will stand for the interests of the African continent as a priority in South Africa's G20 leadership. He will strive to build the solidarity of the Global South. In addition to work to build convergence with the G20's richer Northern economies and powers, based on the principles of multilateralism, equity, social justice, respect for diversity and development. President Ramaphosa will be conscious of the fact that this is the first G20 to be held on African soil, and the first G20 for the African Union and for the African continent to be full participants.

South Africa has a unique role to play in the G20 process, carrying forward and building on the contribution earlier made by developing country Presidencies to the G20 agenda and work programme. Critical elements have encompassed:

- Aligning the major systemic challenges of the world on trade, agriculture, and infrastructure with the UN Sustainable Development Goals – Indonesia;
- Reflecting the interests and voice of the South in each of the G20 working groups, including trade and investment, digital transformation, and the just energy transition – India; and
- A global commitment to work towards a sustainable planet, to recommit the G20 to an ambitious programme on climate action, and to build a Global Alliance against hunger and poverty - Brazil.

The G20 Presidencies have become increasingly focused on addressing issues related to climate change and finance. The agenda of the G20 has had to engage with the outcomes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings. It will be important for South Africa's G20 Presidency to look forward to the next COP to be held in Brazil as a continuation of its agenda, especially on climate change. The climate crisis requires a stronger focus on innovation in financial models to address the pressing needs of development finance and climate actions in mitigation, adaptation, resilience, and loss and damage. This includes the need to find creative ways to mobilise finance for development, especially for developing countries and Africa.

President Ramaphosa announced at the handing-over ceremony in November 2024 that South Africa's G20 Presidency will advance three high-level priorities, which will find expression in the work of the Sherpa and Finance Tracks. The first of these priorities is Inclusive Economic Growth, Industrialisation, Employment and Inequality. The second priority is Food Security. The third priority is Artificial

Intelligence and Innovation for Sustainable Development. South Africa's G20 Presidency will pursue progress on these three cross-cutting issues by establishing three dedicated task forces. In addition, Ramaphosa expressed the priorities of South Africa as strengthening disaster resilience, ensuring debt sustainability for low-income countries, mobilising finance for a just energy transition, and harnessing critical minerals for inclusive growth and development.