G20 Performance Possibilities

G20 Performance on Development

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Courtney Hallink, director of the South Africa office of the G20, BRICS and G7 Research Groups, assesses the G20’s historic compliance on commitments on development.

Given that the G20’s founding mission includes ensuring that globalisation benefits all, development has been a major focus for the G20 leaders since their first summit in 2008. Development embraces health, migration and refugees, and food. Since the 2008 Washington Summit, the G20 leaders have made more than 462 commitments covering development, health, food and migration.

Commitments

Since the Washington Summit in 2008, the G20 leaders have delivered a total of 268 commitments on development, 57 on health, 23 on migration and 114 on food. Across 13 summits between 2008 and 2017, the G20 leaders made as many commitments on these issues as the G7 made over 44 summits since 1975, putting the G20 slightly ahead of its G7 counterpart.

At the first G20 summit in 2008, the leaders made four development commitments. None were made on health until the 2014 Brisbane Summit, where the G20 leaders made 33 commitments. The first commitments on food were made in 2009 at the Pittsburgh Summit, with three. This increased to 36 commitments at Cannes in 2011. The first commitments on migration were made at Antalya in 2015. At the 2017 Hamburg Summit, there was a record high of 16 migration commitments.

Compliance

Of the 268 development commitments, the 48 assessed for compliance by the G20 Research Group average compliance of 66%. Compliance was led by the United Kingdom, at 87%. Six health commitments have been assessed for compliance, with an average of 73%, led by the United Kingdom and the United States, both with 100% compliance. They are followed by Canada, France, Germany, Japan and the European Union, each with 92% compliance. Six commitments on food have also been assessed, with an average of 70%. This has been led by Brazil, France and the United States, all with an average of 92%. Two migration commitments have been assessed, with an average of 77%, led by Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Italy, Turkey and the European Union, each with 100% compliance.

Causes and consequences

G20 leaders are usually prompted to act on development, health, food and migration as a result of a shock. The G20’s founding mission in 1999 was to promote financial stability and to ensure that globalisation benefits all, as a result in part of increasing international attention on the least developed countries and the world’s poorest. G20 leaders made development commitments at every summit since Washington in 2008. The Ebola outbreak in 2014 prompted them to issue a separate declaration and to make a record-high 33 health commitments.

At Brisbane, the G20 leaders declared they were “committed to do what is necessary to ensure the international effort can extinguish the outbreak and address its medium-term economic and humanitarian costs”. Similarly, as a result of the refugee crisis, G20 leaders made their...
first commitments related to migration. At Antalya, they pledged to “continue further strengthening [their] support for all efforts to provide protection and assistance and to find durable solutions for the unprecedented numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons in various parts of the world”.

At the height of the global food crisis in 2011, they made their first food commitments and issued the Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture at the Cannes Summit.

**Corrections**

G20 compliance on development commitments has been relatively weak. At only 66% overall, average compliance falls behind the G20’s overall average of 70%. The G20 must improve its compliance on development by delivering clearly defined commitments at the Buenos Aires Summit and maintaining contact among themselves to ensure that all members are delivering on the collective commitments they make there.

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Global Solutions Initiative. This article was originally published in [G20 Argentina: The 2018 Buenos Aires Summit](mailto:gtmediagroup.com) by GT Media Group and the [G20 Research Group](mailto:gtmediagroup.com), 2019. View the original article.*