



INFRASTRUCTURE TASKFORCE

# B20 leaders call for closing the infrastructure gap for sustainable growth in Africa

SIPHELELE DLUDLA

THE Business 20 (B20) Task Force leaders are calling for the continent to address the pressing need for improved infrastructure across Africa as well as sustainable economic growth.

Sim Tshabalala, chair of the Finance and Infrastructure Taskforce, said Africa holds significant reserves of critical minerals essential for the global energy transition yet currently collects only 40% of the revenue possible from these resources.

"However, Africa collects only about 40% of the revenue that could be generated by these resources. Now, I ask you, how about if we got 60%? We need the right business environment, the appropriate social and environmental regulation, and the necessary infrastructure," Tshabalala said.

"In other words, our capacity to drive the world's growth depends to a large extent on our ability to maintain and expand our infrastructure.

To use a South African example well known to everybody, we need to improve our rail and port infrastructure.

"According to data by the African Development Bank, Africa needs to spend about \$170 billion a year to meet our infrastructure needs."

Tshabalala was speaking during the roundtable of the B20 Task Force Leaders. The B20 serves as the official G20 dialogue forum with the global business community.

Each year, the B20 provides a plat-

form for companies and business organisations to articulate their perspectives on pressing global economic and trade issues, ensuring that the voice of the business community is heard at the highest levels of international economic governance.

The B20 is made of eight task forces that are developing evidence-based solutions on trade, energy, digital inclusion, climate, and more.

Tshabalala said they were able to mobilize about half of the required amount at the moment, creating an African infrastructure funding gap of \$85bn. He said for South Africa alone, that gap was \$29bn and for the world as a whole, it was roughly \$500bn.

"And so the core mandate of the Finance and Infrastructure Task Force is to work on ideas for the G20 and other key stakeholders to help close this massive infrastructure gap. To that end, we've developed ideas in three broad areas," he said.

Tshabalala said the first idea was to support the expansion of investable infrastructure projects.

This would be followed by improving access to capital by increasing the availability, effectiveness, and resilience of public, private, and philanthropic investment.

The third idea revolves around drafting proposals about how to enhance the flow of funds between investors, infrastructure projects, and the wider community.

"As we have worked to develop our

draft proposals over the last few months, we focused on a combination of long-term policy proposals and short-term actions to drive meaningful change. As one example of a critical long-term reform, we would like to promote greater coordination and cooperation among infrastructure programs, both within and between countries," Tshabalala said.

"This involves prioritizing strategic sectors such as energy and digital infrastructure, sectors which hold the highest potential to impact economic growth and can act as catalysts for development in other areas.

"In the short term, we are focusing on project preparation and support. This includes encouraging a stronger emphasis on conducting robust feasibility studies and developing comprehensive business plans, as well as streamlining regulatory processes to reduce bureaucratic hurdles, ensuring that projects are better prepared and more likely to succeed."

Mxolisi Mgojo, co-chair of the B20, reiterated that the G20 represents 85% of global GDP, 75% of trade, and two-thirds of the world's population.

Mgojo then questioned what should be Africa's unique value to the collective business sector of the G20.

"Africa is central to many of the global challenges. Issues of critical minerals, renewable energy, food security, and the world's youngest workforce that is emerging.

"We must shift the narrative from potential to progress, ensuring growth benefits all, not just the global North,"



B20 Task Force leaders (from left to right): Sim Tshabalala, chair of the Finance and Infrastructure Taskforce; Busi Mabuza, chair for the Trade and Investment Task Force; B20 Sherpa Cas Coovadia; and Mxolisi Mgojo, co-chair of the B20. | SUPPLIED

Mgojo said.

"Key priorities that Africa should be focusing on are, one, inclusive growth, advancing AfCFTA and regional value chains to unlock Africa's \$3.4 trillion market, bridging economic divides in sub-Saharan Africa, where 400 million-plus are in poverty is going to demand urgent attention and action.

"The second is global collaboration. In a fragmented world, Africa can be a bridge, balancing East-West tensions while securing supply chains. Public-private partnerships are critical to drive investment and stability.

"Thirdly, sustainability and innovation. Leveraging Africa's renewable energy potential, such as solar, wind, and

hydro, for just energy transitions is going to be very important. That's ensuring also digital inclusion to close the gap for SMEs and informal economies. And therefore, there is a real call to action. This is a collaborative effort."

The B20 Summit will be held on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Johannesburg in November 2025.