



## Media Release

### **Driving Change with Purpose as B20 South Africa Highlights Food Systems and Industrial Resilience**

**Johannesburg, 1 August 2025** – This week's B20 South Africa virtual round table spotlighted the urgent need for global action on food systems, industrial resilience and inclusive trade as business leaders and task force chairs warned of rising economic and environmental fragility under South Africa's G20 presidency.

Hosted by B20 Sherpa Cas Coovadia, the briefing brought together Debra Mallowah, Chair of the Sustainable Food Systems and Agriculture Task Force, and Andrew Kirby, Chair of the Industrial Transformation and Innovation Task Force, to unveil early recommendations ahead of the final B20 recommendations due in September.

#### **Hunger, trade fragmentation, and a broken value chain**

"Food systems are at breaking point," said Debra Mallowah, Head of Africa at Bayer. "In just three years, global food insecurity surged by 150%, while productivity in agriculture has stagnated. Without coordinated action, we face deeper hunger, rising volatility and irreversible environmental degradation."

Mallowah called on G20 leaders to prioritise investment in regional food systems, improve access to digital and climate-smart technologies and unlock intra-African trade. "This is our moment to act. We must turn agriculture into an engine of resilience and inclusive growth starting with smallholders, women, and youth."

The Task Force's five recommendations span supply chain resilience, sustainable farming, trade facilitation and financial access backed by enablers like blended finance and digital innovation. "If we get this right," Mallowah noted, "we could unlock up to \$180 billion in intra-African agricultural trade."

#### **Industrial divide risks becoming permanent**

Andrew Kirby, CEO of Toyota South Africa Motors, warned that manufacturing sectors especially in low- and middle-income countries are under pressure. "Since 2019, manufacturing value added has declined by more than 10% in many emerging economies. Without a bold shift, we risk a two-speed global economy."

Kirby stressed that re-industrialisation must be inclusive, technology-enabled and climate-conscious. “We need new models that support SMEs, embed Industry 4.0 technologies, and build regional value chains. The alternative is stalled growth, deepening inequality, and greater exposure to global shocks.”

He added that while services have supported urban inclusion, they cannot create industrial jobs at scale. “We must revive manufacturing to close infrastructure gaps, generate employment, and future-proof our economies.”

### **Africa must lead, not just participate**

Cas Coovadia closed the discussion with a call to leadership: “This is not just South Africa’s G20 moment. It is Africa’s opportunity to shape global policy. Whether it’s food, trade or industry fragmentation is not a strategy. Coordination is.”

He emphasised that task force recommendations must translate into tangible reforms: “We don’t need new declarations we need delivery. It is not business unusual, We need business with purpose. But we need policy coherence, capital mobilisation and courageous leadership to move from ambition to action.”

The recommendations discussed will feed into the final policy package to be delivered to the G20 Presidency in early September, ahead of the B20 South Africa Summit in Johannesburg from 18–20 November 2025.

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### **Note to Editors: About B20 South Africa:**

The Business 20 (B20), the official G20 dialogue forum for the global business community, is set to convene in South Africa in 2025 under the leadership of Business Unity South Africa (BUSA). This marks a historic milestone as the first B20 summit hosted by an African nation, reinforcing the continent’s growing role in shaping global economic policy.

The B20 serves as a vital platform for G20 business leaders to develop actionable policy recommendations, which are presented to the G20 to foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The B20 Summit will bring together up to 3,000 business leaders, heads of international organisations, public policy experts from approximately 25 countries, fostering high-level dialogue and collaboration.

Under the theme Inclusive Growth and Prosperity Through Global Cooperation, B20 South Africa 2025 will focus on advancing policies that promote equitable economic development, strengthen international partnerships and address pressing global challenges.



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