

Keynote Address

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Ministerial Meeting of the G20 Food Security Task Force

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Excellencies,

Fellow Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates,

Colleagues and friends,

It is a privilege to address you today at this G20 Food Security Task Force Ministerial Meeting. Yesterday, ministers met under the Agriculture Working Group to advance the priorities of agricultural cooperation and to adopt the Agriculture Working Group Ministerial Declaration. Today, we meet in a different but equally important configuration to endorse the Food Security Task Force outcomes, which will set out the political commitments and shared principles needed to strengthen food security and nutrition at the global level. While the two tracks are distinct, they are complementary, ensuring that both the technical and political dimensions of agriculture and food security are fully addressed under South Africa's Presidency.

Food security has always been central to South Africa's development and to the stability of our continent. For us, this is not an abstract debate—it is about the daily reality of affordability, accessibility, and nutrition for our people. South Africa ranks fifty-ninth on the Global Food Security Index, not because of a lack of food, but because of weaknesses in sustainability and adaptability. Across Africa, hunger remains widespread, with more than 300 million people affected in 2024. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region alone, 48 million are in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 crisis level of food insecurity. Though South Africa is not one of the nine most severely affected countries, the spirit of Ubuntu—"I am because you are"—tells us that this suffering diminishes us all.

Over the course of this year, the Food Security Task Force has made important progress. We held our first meeting in March, setting out initial concepts and deliverables. Later that month in Durban, we secured agreement on the proposed

outcomes. In September, at our meeting in Cairo, we reached consensus on the Ubuntu High-Level Principles that will stand as a legacy of South Africa's G20 Presidency.

The basis for our discussions has been enriched by the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report, published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which estimates that between 638 and 720 million people faced hunger in 2024: one in 11 people globally, and one in five Africans. This alarming figure reinforces the urgency for collective action and informed dialogue to address the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition globally.

The studies commissioned under our Presidency have provided an essential evidence base. The FAO analysed the macroeconomic drivers of global commodity price volatility and their impact on affordability and access. The UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the University of Massachusetts examined the feasibility of commodity price stabilisation at global and regional levels. The FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Committee on World Food Security (CFS), Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), and our national knowledge partners assessed the food security policy instruments and systems approaches that are most effective, sustainable, and climate resilient. Together, these studies give us the tools to address hunger not as a symptom of scarcity, but as an outcome of price shocks, input costs, climate disruptions, and market speculation.

Delegations also rightly emphasised the need to diversify healthy diets. The European Union (EU), the United Kingdom (UK), Norway, and others stressed the role of sustainable fisheries and aquatic foods in the context of food security, and the urgency of tackling illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and harmful subsidies. The entry into force on Monday of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies is a milestone in this regard. By eliminating subsidies that fuel overfishing and illegal and unregulated practices, this agreement helps ensure that fisheries remain a sustainable source of nutrition, livelihoods, and economic opportunity, aligning trade rules with the goals of food security and environmental stewardship.

From this collective work, we have developed a suite of concrete proposals. The Ubuntu High-Level Principles set out shared actions and approaches to deal with excessive price volatility and persistent food inflation. Our policy recommendations stress the need for sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food systems; evidence-based

risk planning, including climate-responsive early warning systems; and nutrition-centred approaches that put human well-being at the heart of food systems. Our strategic action areas emphasise social protection, fair and transparent markets, inclusive cross-sector planning, and climate-resilient agriculture.

To this end, we must make better use of transparent communication platforms such as the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) to strengthen trust, provide reliable information during shocks, and avoid unintended consequences. We must ensure that food reserves, when used in exceptional circumstances, are designed to be targeted, effective, and non-distorting. Furthermore, we must promote policy coherence across sectors, recognising that agriculture, trade, climate, health, and finance must work hand-in-hand to achieve real results.

Techniques for improving food security are already clear. We need to invest in climate-smart agriculture: drought-tolerant seed, efficient irrigation, and soil-water analytics that make farming more adaptive. We must invest in the diversification of food sources, including fisheries and aquatic foods, and strengthen local and regional value chains to reduce reliance on imports. We must support smallholder and family farmers with inputs, extension services, and access to finance. We must tackle post-harvest losses through storage, cold chains, and logistics, and we must diversify cropping towards more nutrient-rich foods. We must also embed social protection, from school feeding programmes to targeted transfers, as a core investment in stability and human development.

Our presidency has also been about forging new partnerships beyond the G20. Through the Africa-Brazil Dialogue on Agriculture, we are working together on regenerative farming, nutrition, and land restoration. Through the B20, we are ensuring that business and finance walk with us, not behind us. Together with our partners, we have proposed five joint initiatives to translate principles into investment: a blended finance compact, a climate-smart insurance facility, a digital trade accelerator, a rural energy partnership for cold chains, and a skills and inclusion deal for youth and women. These are designed to ensure that what we agree on today is matched tomorrow by capital flows, jobs, and livelihoods.

For South Africa, these efforts mean new export opportunities, stronger resilience against shocks, and greater inclusion of youth and women in agriculture. For Africa, they mean that for the first time, under an African Presidency, the G20 has placed hunger and affordability at the centre of its agenda.

Looking ahead, our work does not end here. In Johannesburg this November, leaders will adopt a communiqué that elevates the Ubuntu Principles into the global framework. At the WTO, we will continue pressing for fairer agricultural rules that reduce distortions and protect the interests of farmers in developing countries. Moreover, through the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 and the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) framework, Africa will carry this momentum into the coming decade, ensuring that global commitments translate into regional and national action.

Colleagues, the value of this presidency will not be measured by how many declarations we pass, but by the resilience of the farmers who plant tomorrow, the sustainability of fisheries in our communities, the nutrition of the children who eat tomorrow, and the stability of the markets we leave behind. Our legacy must be that Ubuntu is no longer just a philosophy but a global practice in food security.

Let us leave this meeting united in purpose, ambitious in action, and committed to ensuring that the G20 delivers not only for the wealthiest, but for the most vulnerable in our society.

I thank you.