Africa's Financial Voice: From Inclusion to Influence on the Global Stage

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This G20 marks a historic milestone: for the first time, the G20 summit is being held on African soil, with South Africa holding the presidency. But this is more than symbolic — it is a defining moment and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take up Africa's role in global finance. It signals a shift from wanting a seat at the table to driving the agenda, as the African continent moves from acceptance of the status quo to driving the agenda to make our global financial system more equitable, fair and just.

The Global South is pushing for a more equitable world order, as the effects of climate change and systematic under-development play out. Africa would like to be a co-creator of the rules that will define our future, with our vast infrastructure backlogs and the spin-offs of poverty and under-development, such as political and fiscal instability.

Africa's development challenges are well known: it is estimated that Africa needs up to $170 billion in infrastructure investment each year, yet the continent faces an annual shortfall of $100 billion. These are not just technical deficits — they are also barriers to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Finance is an essential component to changing this reality. But the changes needed must be transformational for the people of Africa. At Nedbank, as a purpose-led organisation, we have had a clear north star in directing R189 billion of our lending book toward SDG-aligned investments. This includes R47 billion in renewable energy, R29 billion in agriculture, and R3 billion in water and sanitation. These investments are designed to build resilience, unlock opportunity, and support inclusive growth.

Finance must do more than move money — it must move societies forward, address political instability on the continent, and contribute to a more inclusive world premised on the values of this year's G20 theme: solidarity, equality and sustainability.

From inclusion to influence

The shift from inclusion to influence is not theoretical; this G20 experience has shown it is happening in real time. Under South Africa's G20 leadership, African policymakers and financial institutions have had the opportunity to co-create a new framework that reflect our own regional and local realities that inform our priorities.

Across the continent, collaboration has become central to the progress we wish to see. African development and commercial finance institutions have become stronger through the sharing of expertise, blended finance and the conviction that sustainable development cannot take place without solidarity. In other words, it has been important that those of us for whom the constraints facing the Global South are not unfamiliar, that we be at the forefront of the deals being negotiated to achieve a better future. At Nedbank, our partnerships across SADC and East Africa are built on this principle. We focus on markets we know, ensuring that capital is being directed to programmes that put Africa's best interests at the centre of its key performance indicators. But addressing Africa's infrastructure backlogs, and the achievement of the UN SDGs will be difficult if not impossible to achieve without the reform of our financial systems.

Rebuilding Africa's growth confidence

South Africa's G20 presidency arrives at a moment of several competing interests. Fiscal constraints, climate commitments and rapid digital shifts are sharpening our resilience in different ways, often all at once. South Africa's GDP rose just 0.8% quarter-on-quarter in Q2 of 2025, a sobering reminder of the work ahead. Yet there are signs of recovery. With repo rates down to 7%, conditions are improving for investment and credit growth, while corporate advances have increased by 8.1%, indicating renewed private-sector demand. The choices made now will determine not just how Africa grows, but how global markets adapt to that growth. What matters most is whether we continue to finance other people's priorities or build a future that reflects our own.

Confidence will define the decade ahead. Investors and citizens alike are looking for proof: policy that holds, decisions that make sense and delivery that inspires belief. Across our network, that confidence is already visible. Capital is beginning to follow credibility rather than speculation, a quiet shift that few have yet priced in.

Africa's message to the world

Africa's message to the world is clear. We are capable, credible and collaborative. We are not waiting for change; we would like to co-create the development we need through innovation, investment and inclusive leadership. The strength of our financial institutions gives substance to this progress. Our purpose remains constant, as Nedbank and the continent: to use our financial expertise to do good for our people, for the planet and for our shared prosperity.