

India's G20 Legacy: The World is One Big Family

As India hosts the G20 summit in New Delhi, the world is confronted with challenges of unparalleled magnitude. But India's G20 presidency promises to be a game-changer in forging unique solutions to these challenges, says Prof. Dennis J. Snower, President of the Global Solutions Initiative, Berlin. In a wide-ranging conversation with India and The World, Prof. Snower says that if India can help the G20 understand that "we have no choice but to consider ourselves one family only with regard to the global problems where we need to cooperate globally, we would be making great progress." (Excerpts from the interview)



Q) What are the major challenges before India as it hosts the G20 Summit in September?

A) The major challenges will be to address the issues of climate indebtedness, biodiversity, food, and energy in which all interact and are dependent on one another. These are handled in separate silos, and India's particular challenge is to make sure that these different silos are acting in coordination with one another. Unfortunately, this is an unprecedentedly large challenge because time is running out with regard to climate change. We have made very little progress. In fact, we have regressed during the COVID pandemic in addressing the issue of giving everyone on earth a satisfying livelihood. Therefore, India's challenge is of proportions that have not been seen before, and the need to solve the problem is greater than it ever has been.

Q) One of the important themes of India's G20 presidency is the Global South and along with that the idea of inclusion and the forging of an inclusive world order. How do you see India advancing the formation of an inclusive world order?

A) Inclusion is an important topic for the G20 even though the issues related to inclusion have been traditionally assigned primarily at the national level. Therefore, the issues of inclusion have generally been considered national problems rather than global problems except in issues where there is a grand bargain to be made. For example, with regard to climate indebtedness, there is a grand bargain to be made, and the West would like movement on climate which it is not going to get unless it has cooperation from the Global South, who want the support of the West to make this happen on the livelihood front.

Q) Geopolitics is obstructing consensus in the G20. What is the way forward?

A) The big danger is to let these particular issues become infected by geo-political conflicts that are not directly associated with these issues. Because one is in a political conflict, a potential military conflict in one regard may prove to be unhelpful in resolving issues that have nothing to do with that conflict. It would be very important for the G20 to articulate the nature of this problem and to agree in principle that those issues before the G20 which are the global issues that countries need to cooperate on must be addressed without ideological or political preconditions. That is what is not happening currently. In principle, the G20 could help enormously by addressing these global issues.

Q) Ukraine continues to be a divisive issue. How will geo-political contestation play out on this issue? What could be a possible resolution of this contentious issue?

A) In the end, military conflicts end either through negotiations or in rare cases through the unconditional defeat of one side. Since the parties relevant to this conflict are nuclear powers on both sides, unconditional defeat is not something that can be contemplated. Therefore, if this conflict is to end in a way that both sides consider

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satisfactory, it will need to be negotiated, and the quicker both sides reach that conclusion, the fewer lives that will be lost. Speedy negotiations could then replace long periods of wars of attrition. My hope is that this point will be reached soon on both sides.

Q) Looking forward, there are many unique and singular features of India's G20 presidency. In your view, what would be the enduring legacy of India's G20 presidency?

A) One thing that would make a major difference to the way we handle multiple crises is if India could infuse the remainder of its G20 presidency with its "One Earth, One Life, One Future" motto through its distinctive approach to lifestyles, frugality, and material sufficiency, and help pave the way for a systemic change that will prepare future politicians to adjust governance in order to make economies in societies operate in a way that doesn't destroy the planet and undermine communities.

Q) How do you see India's unfolding rise as a global power?

A) India is a huge country, which will remain the most populous country on earth for the rest of the century. We live in a world that is neither unipolar nor multipolar, which is in a state of

geopolitical transition where what particular leaders do will make a very big difference to the time-path that the entire world follows. And this happens at a time when the earth is on fire, the threat of nuclear war and the dangers of biochemical conflict are on the rise again, identities have become more fragmented, and people have become more inward-looking than ever. On this account if India can help the G20 understand that we have no choice but to consider ourselves one family only with regard to the global problems where we need to cooperate globally, we would be making great progress. ■

Dennis J. Snower is President of the Global Solutions Initiative, Berlin; Professorial Fellow at the Institute for New Economic Thinking, Oxford University; and Non-resident Fellow at Brookings. He is an expert on labor economics, socio-economics, public policy and inflation-unemployment trade-offs. He is currently working on a new paradigm for economics with David Sloan Wilson. He is the author of a major report on digital governance with reform with Paul Twomey. He has been a visiting professor at many universities around the world, including Columbia, Princeton, Dartmouth, Harvard, the European University Institute, Stockholm University, and the Vienna Institute of Advanced Studies.