

# Rio, a Capital for G20 in Brazil

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**Abstract:** Rio de Janeiro will be the capital of G20 Brazil in 2024, doing its part in securing a diplomatically relevant, intellectually innovative, and economically transformative legacy for the country, with hosting responsibilities matching high expectations in terms of logistics, hospitality, and safety. Rio wants to be the platform for engagement for stakeholders interested in positively influencing the most anticipated event of world politics in 2024.

**Keywords:** G20 Brazil; Rio G20 capital.

In November 2024, Rio de Janeiro will host the G20 Leaders Summit, which Brazil will preside over for the first time. Rio—a three-letter synthesis of many faces of Brazilianess—is globally known as a frequent host of international events on sports (Rio 2016 Olympics, Brazil 2014 World Cup Final, 2007 Pan American Games), music (Rock in Rio, Carnaval Parades and the largest New Year’s eve celebration on the planet), and sustainability (1992 UN Earth Summit, 2012 Rio+20 Summit). A former capital of Brazil often nicknamed “The Wonderful City,” the city will now add the G20 Leaders Summit to a list any major city in the world could envy. By the end of 2024, only Rio and London will have hosted the Olympics and the G20.

But is that it?

The G20 is presided over by country members, and its Summits are in-person events hosted by cities. Heads of State participate in a highly political year-long consensus-building process. At the same time, mayors support a two-day gathering of 20 delegations led by heads of State and government, plus invited countries and international organizations (leading up to 40). Finance and Foreign Ministers conduct G20 financial and diplomatic (or Sherpa) tracks, respectively. Cities push their departments of traffic and public utilities to prepare grounds for visitors with high expectations towards the Summit—and the city itself.

But more than a pleasant destination and a haven for high-level and demanding tourists for two days, is there any strategic role or legitimate interests that cities can represent at the G20? What path will Rio take to reach the Summit?

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## G20 IN RIO, RIO AT THE G20: REVAMPING MULTILATERALISM WHILE HARVESTING BILATERAL BONUSES

The G20, the Group of Twenty, consists of the world’s 19 largest economies, the European Union, and the African Union from 2023 on. The group’s

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origins trace back to 1999 when Finance ministers and Central bankers gathered to coordinate policy responses to regional financial crises and their systemic risks for the global economy. In less than a decade, the forum transitioned from an economic policy forum to a meeting led by national leaders. Since 2008, these high-level leaders convene annually under a rotative Presidency, issuing communiqués that garner substantial media attention and, more crucially, establish global frameworks for guiding and harmonizing national and international policies to ensure global financial stability.

As a Global South representative with a historical commitment to multilateralism, Brazil starts its G20 presidency conscious that no country alone can set a self-centered agenda exclusively derived from its foreign policy goals.

Building upon the Indian and Indonesian Presidencies of G20 (2023 and 2022, respectively), in 2025 Brazil will hand over the baton to South Africa, completing a cycle of four G20 Presidencies by developing countries. For its Presidency, Brazil has set its three priorities for the G20 cycle starting December 1, 2023: social inclusion and the fight against hunger; energy transition and sustainable development in its social, economic, and environmental aspects; and the reform of the global governance institutions.

In order to conduct relevant dialogues and results upon these matters, Brazil glimpses from the beginning a convergence between the political and financial tracks, as it believes that it is pointless for countries to define what they consider to be the best public policy if they do not also allocate the necessary resources for its implementation. In early December, Sherpa and Financial Track meetings will be held on dates close to one another, precisely to bring them together in between to start aligning expectations and perspectives (Moreira 2023).

The G20 motto under Brazil—*Building a Just World and a Sustainable Planet*—could not better reflect the 30 years since the “Spirit of Rio” became a paradigm for United Nations conferences: multi-stakeholder participation in negotiation processes, open events for the general public and the media, and the challenge to interpret and encourage economic development acknowledging and addressing climate change, loss of biodiversity and increasing inequality between classes and countries. Rio92—known as the Earth Summit or Eco92—helped shape the framework for the contemporary climate agenda and a comprehensive meaning for multilateral diplomacy. Two decades later, at Rio+20, the city would return to the stage to welcome the Conference that laid the foundations for the 2030 Agenda for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework.

Building upon the experiences of Rio92 and Rio+20, the city will transform into a year-long co-laboratory for the G20: the City Hall has been mobilizing national and international partnerships for impactful side events and Engagement Groups meetings. From partnering with local and global universities and think tanks to hosting major international meetings on sustainable finance and bioeconomy, Rio is eager to contribute to a Summit that revamps multilateralism while maintaining that same 1992 spirit.

Throughout the year, Rio is willing to join its voice with other cities and non-state actors in setting the stage for the Leader's Summit in November 2024. Better public and private finance for local governments and support for cities' plans for adaptation and mitigation to climate change resonate with Brazil's foreign policy priorities and its strategy to build bridges between the G20 in Rio and COP30 in Belém. Fair energetic transition, research and development in the Global South, and boosting the potential of bioeconomy<sup>1</sup> are key to the economic development of Rio and Brazil.

The G20 in Brazil is set to have more than 80 official events across 17 cities, with the expected participation of more than 20,000 delegates starting in December 2023. Rio City Hall has defined for itself challenging goals to be matched during the Brazilian Presidency of the group: hosting at least 30 official events organized by the Federal Government and official Engagement Groups, supporting 60 associated events ranging from cultural, artistic, and community initiatives led by the civil society, and attracting ten main side events of international relevance.

A successful G20 in Rio also means harvesting bilateral bonuses from intense virtual and in-person exchanges between Brazilian stakeholders (in business, social movements, academia, and governments) and their counterparts, from Argentina to Japan. In 2024, the Brazilian diplomatic calendar also celebrates important milestones, such as the 50th anniversary of the bilateral relations between Brazil and China and the 200th anniversary of relations between Brazil and the United States.

In the meantime, the G20 and its members are striving to find new ways to invest, trade, research, and do international politics. Some numbers tease the opportunities ahead of Brazil: G20 members embrace about two-thirds of the global population, account for around 85% of the world GDP and over 75% of the global commerce. Equally important are the knowledge production and the

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1. Bioeconomy is an innovative paradigm that Brazil will bring to the table. Besides ensuring the protection of forests and remuneration for ecosystem services, the bioeconomy can be more profitable than traditional agricultural activities, guaranteeing greater social well-being by offering an alternative to deforestation for the local population. Thus, Brazil wants to attract financing and investments to consolidate this model, considering that it benefits the country and the whole world. Standing and responsibly productive forests are one of the most efficient forms of climate mitigation and meet the high standards of consumer markets in several G20 countries. Therefore, there is an opportunity cost for the entire world if the bioeconomy does not take off, with the great potential to cause socioeconomic losses.

development of a changing mindset in Brazilian society based on the priorities that will be addressed by the mobilization of 87 from the 100 best universities of the world, 90% of the Nobel Prize winners, and 97% of patent applications in the world that G20 encompasses.

It is time for Brazil—and Rio—to lead the G20 as a platform to launch a new cycle of development—public and private, local and national—benefiting from bilateral opportunities while renewing the meaning of our commitment to multilateral global governance.

## **G20 TRACKS: A YEAR-LONG AGENDA FOR MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT IN RIO**

Over time, the G20's scope has broadened to include a wide range of global issues, extending beyond its initial financial and economic policy agenda to reach security and the climate crisis. Recognizing an international context of growing technological complexity, political polarization, mistrust against elites, and fragmentation of international behaviors and rules, the G20 became a year-long go-to forum for stakeholders interested in international engagement. Businesses, social movements, think tanks, and scientists, to name a few, bring diverse and sophisticated global governance perspectives, from vaccines to artificial intelligence and women's rights to youth employment.

Many tracks lead to the Summit. Led by an experienced diplomat—a Sherpa—devoted almost exclusively to G20 working groups, task forces, initiatives, and ministerial meetings, the diplomatic track organizes dozens—from education to health, climate to labor—of closed-door meetings for delegates and international organizations leading up to the leader's Summit. Adding up to the Sherpa's Track, the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank lead the financial track. A third track also leads to the Summit, which gets more people into the room.

Benefiting from an environment that is both multilateral (consensus-based decision-making) and informal (as the G20 has no permanent Secretariat), the G20 meetings count on Engagement Groups that countries have officially recognized as legitimate actors to prepare and influence state-led deliberations. These independent collectives represent different segments of society and provide input to the G20 by developing their own agenda and task forces, publishing policy papers, holding their own Summits, and issuing a communiqué submitted to the host country's chief negotiator (the Sherpa) for consideration. Business 20 (B20), Startup 20, Science 20 (S20), Civil 20 (C20), Labour 20 (L20), Think 20 (T20), Women 20 (W20), Youth 20 (Y20), and Urban 20 (U20) are increasingly relevant acronyms in multilateralism.

For instance, Rio will co-preside U20 Brazil with the city of São Paulo within the global urban policy conversation. Brazil, especially from the perspective of its two largest cities since the mid-20th century, has witnessed the many impacts of urbanization as a local-global phenomenon transforming the very meaning of politics, demographics, infrastructure, and economics. Increasingly, international relations are produced in the context of cities and their local governments, acknowledging that the Argentinian Presidency of the G20 and the City of Buenos Aires, in 2018, created the U20 having permanent two city networks as conveners and technical advisors to its rotating presidents, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and C40. Thirty-eight cities and metropolitan areas from the G20 are represented in the U20 by their own city–Sherpas under the leadership of mayors, governors, and CEOs (a few of the many possible titles for chief local authorities).

More than attracting delegates and events fostering the post-covid recovery of tourism in Rio, the City Hall has been creating opportunities for a broader engagement process with the G20 not only through its leadership of the U20. With a whole-government approach, the municipal leadership for women and youth rights, economic innovation, science and technology, and environment, to name a few, have been collaborating with Brazilian Engagement Groups and their Brazilian organizers, such as W20, Y20, Startup20, B20, S20, and T20.

## **AN INTENDED LEGACY: RIO AFTER THE G20**

Rio's hosting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Eco 92) in 1992 and the Rio+20 Summit in 2012 have clearly influenced a positive feedback loop of Rio's engagement in sustainable development initiatives. Similarly, hosting G20 and its official and side events has the potential to foster deep dialogue and articulation opportunities in Brazilian and Rio's society for sustainable development, social and financial inclusion, and business opportunities. At the same time, Rio is already leading and engaged in many agendas, mainly in combating climate change, as it is already formulating and implementing public policies and programs for a resilient and inclusive city, which can leverage the priorities set by Brazil for the G20.

Rio was the first Brazilian capital city to formulate and publish a bold Climate Action Plan, accounting for more than 800 targets to 2030 based on SDGs and technically supported by local NGOs, universities, city networks, and UN-Habitat. Rio is home to Latin America's most extensive community urban garden and has already accumulated almost 3,500 hectares of reforested areas. Floresta da Tijuca and Pedra Branca are the two most extensive urban forests in the world—and both benefited from reforestation programs. Rio is the most bio-



diverse megacity in the C40 network and the first to preside over the prestigious network from the Global South. Rio has a plan to fight climate change, starting from where investments are needed the most.

In 2023, Eduardo Paes—mayor of Rio during the 2016 Olympics and Rio+20—joined forces with mayor Anne Hidalgo from Paris and the economist Jeffrey Sachs to head the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Global Commission for Urban SDG Finance, a UN initiative to develop innovative financial solutions for local governments pressured by the climate crisis and the urge to fight poverty. The SDSN Commission will handle its final report at the U20 Summit in Rio.

Rio leads a global alliance to enable better private and public finance for projects in areas such as public transportation and energetic transition (like solar panels installed and run by community-based businesses) in cities. For cities to thrive and pay lower interest rates for good SDG projects, many local, national, and international reforms need to be addressed—including the reform of multilateral development banks (MDBs) and a G20 agenda.

Rio has been experimenting with bold solutions to the climate crisis, proving that the Global South can develop scalable mitigation projects. The city became the first municipality in Latin America to sign a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), ensuring 100% renewable energy supply to the central municipality headquarters and avoiding around 40,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the next five years, as well as rendering savings in the order of US\$ 5 million in the same period. In 2024, Rio City Hall intends to sign a PPA for hospitals, schools, and more administrative buildings, scaling up an intelligent solution that lowers emissions while saving money. The Rio PPA inspires other Brazilian municipalities, opening an avenue for cities to fund a nationwide energy transition in a country already recognized as having the cleanest energy matrix in the G20.

*Being the capital of the G20 goes further than welcoming official meetings and helping to prepare a Summit: Rio wants to be the platform for engagement for stakeholders interested in positively influencing the most anticipated event of world politics in 2024.*

According to a World Resources Institute (WRI) study, if all G20 countries set ambitious emissions-reduction targets for 2030 and commit to reaching net-zero emissions by mid-century, global temperature rise could be limited to 1.7 °C in 2100,

keeping the Paris Agreement 1.5 °C goal within reach. Considering that tackling climate change is primarily about historical reparation and social justice, G20 in Brazil has the unique opportunity to address inequalities while fostering climate-resilient and inclusive socioeconomic development in Rio—a city that has been active, at least since 1992, in the consolidation of the very concept of sustainable development.

Rio will be the capital of the G20 in 2024. The responsibility to host starts with matching high expectations regarding logistics, hospitality, and safety with close cooperation with competent State and Federal level authorities. Being the capital of the G20 goes further than welcoming official meetings and helping to prepare a Summit: Rio wants to be the platform for engagement for stakeholders interested in positively influencing the most anticipated event of world politics in 2024. By doing so, Rio will do its part in securing a diplomatically relevant, intellectually innovative, and economically transformative legacy for Brazil. 🇧🇷



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