India's G20 Presidency & Focus on Africa

Why in news?

India, through the G20 presidency, intends to be remembered as the voice of the Global South at the heart of which is Africa.

What is the significance of the African countries?

- Most of the 54 African countries are developing or least developed countries.
- To truly represent the South, it is essential to grasp the mood and changes in Africa, especially in its external partnerships.
- This will determine the contribution India can make to advance the African agenda.

What are U.S.'s attempts?

- In the recent U.S.-Africa summit 2022 (Washington, U.S.), 49 African countries and the chair of the African Union (AU) participated.
- Several important decisions were taken.
    - The U.S. announced its support for the AU to join the G20 as a permanent member.
    - The U.S. said it "fully supports" reforming the UN Security Council (UNSC) to include permanent representation for Africa.
- The first assurance is implementable immediately, provided the U.S. and India overcome likely resistance from the ASEAN and European Union.
- The U.S. announced new investments and initiatives, including $21 billion to the International Monetary Fund to provide access to necessary financing for low-and middle-income countries.
- The U.S. administration planned to invest $55 billion in Africa over the next three years, working closely with the Congress.

What are China's attempts?

- China has emerged as the largest trading partner and the fourth largest investor in the African continent, through its steady diplomacy and extensive economic engagement.
- In 2021, while U.S.-Africa trade stood at $44.9 billion, China-Africa trade exchanges stood at $254 billion.
- The U.S. and other nations can take a cue from the **Forum on China-Africa Cooperation** (FOCAC), established in 2000.
- The FOCAC is composed of ministers and leaders of Africa and China who meet once in 3 years, alternately in Beijing and an African capital.
- China has a full-fledged inter-ministerial mechanism to ensure the timely implementation of FOCAC decisions.
- The last meeting, held in Dakar (2021), expressed support for the Chinese agenda:

One-China Principle, Global Development Initiative, Belt & Road Initiative, and vision of “a community with a shared future.”
- Whatever flaws there may be in China’s economic diplomacy in Africa, its consistent attention to Africa contains a useful lesson.

What are the implications for India?

- India’s equity in Africa is older and richer than that of China and the U.S., but that should not be a source of satisfaction.
- In the past two decades, India has striven hard to strengthen its political and economic partnership with Africa at the continental, regional and bilateral levels.
- During the 2015-19 period, the Indian government created a momentum in arranging high-level exchanges and forging cooperation initiatives.
- Since then, COVID-19, the economic downturn, the war in Ukraine and border conflict with China may have contributed to a slowdown. This should be arrested quickly.
- The G20 presidency is India’s opportunity to ensure that the AU becomes a permanent member of this grouping and to reflect firmly **Africa’s Agenda 2063** for development.
- India and the U.S. should work closer together in Africa.
- Finally, the fourth India-Africa Forum Summit should be held in early 2024, lest the third summit held in 2015 becomes a distant memory.

Reference

1. The Hindu | Focus on Africa, the heart of the Global South

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