



From Consensus to Coalitions: The Think Tank Agenda for the G20 Handover

Tuesday, 22 September 2026

Baha'i International Community | New York City



During United Nations General Assembly High-Level Week, the Global Solutions Initiative hosted a roundtable in partnership with the [T20 U.S.](#) and the Africa Europe Foundation, ahead of the T20 U.S. Summit on 18-19 November at the Ford Foundation Center for Justice and UN HQ in New York. Think tanks and others engaged in the T20 network convened to take stock of the agenda under the U.S. presidency, define what should carry into the handover to the UK presidency, and improve coordination on the issues where coalition-based cooperation is most urgent. With the T20 U.S. Summit approaching, this was a rare opportunity to convene think tanks from across the G20, G7, and BRICS tracks, many of whom will not otherwise be in one room before the T20 summit in November.

Guiding Questions:

- Can coalition-based, variable-geometry cooperation become a practical complement to universal multilateralism? If so, which existing coalitions are durable, legitimate, and capable of delivering results, and what made them so?
- Where can the G20, G7 and BRICS work in parallel, and where can they work together? What forms of coordination across these groupings would strengthen continuity, legitimacy and delivery?
- What should the think tank community put into the hands of the incoming G20 U.K. presidency? Which priorities, coalitions and practical proposals should be carried forward through the T20, particularly on climate and on AI and digital governance?

Summary:

Participants emphasized that effective coalitions should bring together the countries best equipped to tackle a given problem, rather than depending on broad membership or full consensus. This approach would not replace multilateralism or create exclusive blocs, but it could complement existing institutions by bringing together the countries best positioned to make progress on a given issue, even where broader consensus is out of reach. This shift could produce more concrete actions through multilateral organizations, make it easier to track commitments and their impact, and allow coalitions to start with a core group of essential countries and then grow as others choose to

join. At the same time, participants stressed the need for transparency and safeguards vis-à-vis smaller coalitions potentially addressing challenges by shifting costs or harms onto other countries.

The conversation also highlighted the need to connect international cooperation to tangible outcomes that citizens can see and understand. AI and digital governance emerged as an area where countries are already identifying common challenges and agreeing on recommendations for how these technologies should be governed, but where, at the same time, putting those recommendations into practice remains a significant gap. Participants discussed opportunities for cooperation on AI regulation, digital capacity, skills and employment, public-sector innovation, and the development of mechanisms to promote AI stability. Climate change and inequality were also identified as areas requiring cooperation among countries with different capabilities and interests. Some hold the financial resources, technology, and technical expertise needed to drive solutions, while others face the most severe impacts and have the greatest stake in outcomes but fewer resources to respond. Middle powers may be well positioned to convene cooperation in areas such as AI, as they can often bridge divides between major powers. However, the same geopolitical pressures that lead many of them to hedge between competing powers can also make it harder to build consensus. Participants further emphasized the need for continuity between successive T20 presidencies and the value of the T20 network as a co-created space for developing practical solutions and connecting different international initiatives. As the U.S. presidency hands over to the UK, sustaining this momentum will be critical to ensuring that the ideas and partnerships built this year (2026) translate into lasting impact.

Recommendations:

Participants proposed the following actions to advance a more solution-driven approach to international cooperation:

- **Start from the problem, not the forum:** Rather than beginning with existing institutions or membership, speakers urged identifying the specific challenge first, determining which countries have the capacity needed to address it, and convening those countries around the issue. Existing multilateral institutions can then be mobilized to support implementation, with commitments and outcomes monitored over time.
- **Build coalitions that can grow:** A coalition of willing states can move cooperation forward on urgent issues and expand as more countries are ready to join, without abandoning multilateralism or creating new arrangements. Participants described a three-tier architecture: consensus where possible, broad consensus where feasible, and coalitions of willing countries, where necessary. This allows cooperation to move forward without waiting for consensus.
- **Align existing initiatives before creating new structures:** Wherever possible, participants favored coordinating and building on initiatives already underway rather than adding new frameworks and institutions to an already crowded landscape.
- **Keep coalitions transparent, open, and accountable to outsiders:** New coalitions should operate transparently, remain open to broader participation, and pay close attention to how their actions affect countries outside the coalition, in order to maintain both representational and performance legitimacy.
- **Position the T20 as a coalition-mapping resource for the incoming UK presidency:** The T20 could support the transition to the UK presidency by mapping potential coalitions of willing countries and groups, identifying areas of common ground and key barriers to cooperation, and developing practical recommendations, in 2027, for the G20 U.K. and T20 presidency.