SU20 SOUTH AFRICA

SUMMIT 2025

G20 SOUTH AFRICA 2025

Startup20 (SU20) Summit Report

13 - 14 November 2025

Theme: Empowering Startups and MSMEs: Championing Resilience, Innovation, and Sustainable Growth

Contents

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The SU20 South extends its sincere gratitude to all our sponsors for their invaluable support and partnership. Your commitment played a critical role in the successful delivery of the Summit, enabling meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and the advancement of entrepreneurship-led solutions aligned with the G20 agenda. We deeply appreciate your confidence in the SU20 platform and your contribution to strengthening South Africa's and the global startup and innovation ecosystem.

SU20 Summit in Numbers

Delegates in Attendance

772

guests attended the Summit overall

Speakers

47

Speakers

Media Representation

8

media organisations in attendance

Countries Represented

The summit hosted delegates from **18** **confirmed countries, namely:**

South Africa (host nation)	Saudia Arabia	United States	United Kingdom
Türkiye	Germany	France	Switzerland
India	Kenya	Tanzania	Lesotho
Nigeria	Canada	Brazil	Democratic Republic of Congo
Indonesia	Japan		

G20 Country Representation

11 countries represented

6 countries from the AU

2 countries from the EU

Academic Institutions Represented / Knowledge Partners

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

University of Johannesburg

Universiteit van Pretoria / University of Pretoria / Yunibesithi ya Pretoria

Nelson Mandela University

Executive Summary

Held on 13–14 November 2025 at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa, the SU20 Summit convened under the official theme, “Empowering Startups and MSMEs: Championing Resilience, Innovation, and Sustainable Growth.” The summit’s primary goal was to create a unified voice for the global startup and MSME community within the G20, advocating for policies and frameworks that foster a thriving environment for new ventures and micro, small to medium-sized enterprises. It served as a pivotal platform for dialogue, policy formulation, and international collaboration.

Discussions were structured around five core thematic pillars, each represented by a dedicated SU20 Taskforce. These pillars guided the agenda, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the startup landscape. The taskforces included: Finance & Investment, focused on innovative capital structures; Trade & Market Access, aimed at building inclusive frameworks; Township & Rural Entrepreneurship, dedicated to advancing underserved ecosystems; Inclusion & Sustainability, centred on equitable growth; and Foundation & Alliances, tasked with strengthening global innovation infrastructure.

The summit culminated in two significant formal outcomes that translate dialogue into action. The first was the landmark Adoption of the SU20 Communiqué, a formal policy recommendation document presented to G20 leaders. The second was the announcement of the SU20 South Africa Legacy Project, a tangible initiative designed to ensure the SU20 engagement groups’ impact endures long after its conclusion. This reflects the South African delegation’s ongoing commitment to advancing global entrepreneurship.

Ultimately, the SU20 Summit 2025 solidified the engagement groups role as an essential forum for shaping global policy and fostering a collaborative ecosystem for entrepreneurial success. By bringing together diverse voices from developed and developing economies, the summit championed a unified agenda for innovation, resilience, and sustainable growth. This high-level overview now transitions into a detailed examination of the summit’s context and proceedings.

1. Introduction: Setting the Stage for Global Entrepreneurship

As an official engagement group of the G20, Startup20 (SU20) holds a position of strategic importance, serving as the collective voice of the global startup ecosystem. The SU20 Summit 2025 in Johannesburg was a critical platform for this global dialogue, convening international delegates to drive entrepreneurial growth worldwide and influence the agenda of G20 leaders.

The summit's overarching theme, "Empowering Startups and MSMEs: Championing Resilience, Innovation, and Sustainable Growth," underscored a global commitment to supporting the enterprises that form the backbone of modern economies. This theme signifies a focus on creating durable, adaptable, and equitable systems where innovation can flourish, especially in the face of economic uncertainty. The choice of Johannesburg, South Africa, as the host city was significant, positioning it as a strategic gateway for innovation across the African continent.

This report is structured to provide a comprehensive and chronological account of the summit's proceedings. It will navigate through the keynotes, panel discussions, and strategic sessions of the two-day event, documenting the insights shared and the commitments made by a diverse array of global experts and stakeholders.

2. Day 1 Proceedings: Fostering Innovation and Investment

The first day of the SU20 Summit 2025 was strategically architected to address the foundational pillars of a thriving startup ecosystem. The agenda was designed as a cohesive narrative, beginning with access to finance and pathways to global scale before moving to the supportive policy frameworks and market access required for success. This logical progression ensured that each session built upon the last, creating a comprehensive framework for the more targeted discussions on inclusive growth planned for Day 2.

2.1 Keynote Address and Official Summit Opening

Honourable Minister Stella Ndabeni, Minister of Small Business Development South Africa

The keynote address, delivered by the Honourable Minister Stella Ndabeni, served as a powerful governmental endorsement of the SU20's mission. Her speech was both a celebration of Africa's rising role on the global stage and a direct call to action for entrepreneurs and policymakers to collaborate on building a more inclusive and innovative economic future. **The Minister's address centred on five primary themes:**

- Africa as a Co-Author of Global Solutions: She declared that hosting the SU20 on African soil marks a significant milestone, positioning the continent as a co-architect of global policy, not merely a recipient.
- The Centrality of Policy Engagement: Minister Ndabeni issued a direct call to entrepreneurs to become actively involved in policy development, arguing that politics and regulations can "make or break" their vision and that shaping their own future requires meaningful participation.
- Government's Role in Digital Enablement: She announced the upcoming launch of Seed4Pay, a government-led digital payment and financial inclusion platform. The initiative is designed to integrate micro and informal enterprises into the formal economy by focusing on accessibility, affordability, and availability of digital tools.
- Responsible Innovation: The Minister cautioned regarding the use of emerging technologies like AI and blockchain, emphasizing the need for African nations to build and mine their own data to avoid consuming biased information from external platforms.
- From Dialogue to Action: In her closing charge, Minister Ndabeni urged all stakeholders to move from ambition to action and from dialogue to delivery, calling for a new paradigm prioritizing partnership over

isolation.

2.2 Opening Remarks South Africa

Mr Vuyani Jarana, Chairperson SU20 South Africa

Mr Vuyani Jarana delivered the opening remarks, welcoming delegates and articulating the overarching vision for the summit.

As the Chairperson of Startup20 (SU20), Mr. Vuyani Jaana's opening address established the group's critical mission and the strategic stakes of its work. His perspective, as the leader steering the development of actionable policy recommendations for the G20, underscored the urgency of the moment and the need to transition from policy creation to tangible implementation on a global scale.

Mr. Jarana's central arguments established a clear mandate for the summit and its stakeholders:

- The New Economic Engine: He articulated a fundamental shift in the global economy, positing that job creation is no longer driven by large corporations and governments. He asserted that "small businesses and entrepreneurship are the only instruments" capable of generating mass employment.
  - Strategic Implication: This framing positions entrepreneurship not as a niche policy area but as the central pillar of future global economic stability and employment strategy, a significant rhetorical shift for a G20-level discussion.
- A Seminal Moment for Startups: He characterised the policy work produced by the SU20 group as a "remarkable human effort" and a "pivotal opportunity." He argued that if the recommendations are adopted by G20 leaders, they could "change the course of history" for the entire startup sector.
- The Imperative for Scale: Mr. Jarana issued an urgent call to solve for "scale," cautioning that bespoke, once-off interventions are insufficient to address widespread youth unemployment. "We need scalable interventions," he emphasised, to onboard a large number of prospective entrepreneurs efficiently.
- Beyond Recommendations to Implementation: He challenged the SU20 to build a sustainable capacity for engaging G20 governments on the implementation of adopted resolutions, arguing that the group must

move beyond the cycle of drafting new policy recommendations from one presidency to the next.

Mr. Jarana framed the group's output not as an end in itself, but as a critical first step that requires sustained international focus to transition from high-level policy to real-world impact.

- Ms. Salome Baloyi, Lead Coordinator for G20 Engagements: Situating Startup20 within South Africa's G20 Presidency

2.3 Reflection on the G20

Ms. Salome Baloyi, Lead Coordinator for G20 Engagement Groups

Ms Baloyi strategically situated the SU20's mandate within the core pillars of South Africa's G20 presidency. Her remarks connected the focus on entrepreneurship to the nation's broader vision for a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable global economy.

Ms. Baloyi outlined the key pillars and innovations of South Africa's G20 presidency:

Core Presidential Priorities: The presidency is guided by four priorities: inclusive growth and industrialisation for Africa, reform of the international financial architecture, a just energy transition informed by climate justice, and digital inclusion that positions Africa as a creator, not just a consumer, of innovation.

1. The "Social Summit" Innovation: Ms. Baloy described the introduction of the Social Summit, a groundbreaking initiative to co-create a "social declaration" with civil society. This "people's compact" is intended to ensure that the final G20 Leaders' Declaration reflects the "heartbeat of the society," not just the language of government.
2. Addressing Global Inequality: Referencing a new global inequality report presented to the G20, she warned of an "inequality emergency," noting that the world's richest 10% hold 74% of global wealth. This stark economic imbalance provides the critical context for Mr. Jahana's call for scalable entrepreneurship as the primary proposed solution to bridge the wealth gap.
3. Key Lessons from the Presidency: She shared three critical lessons learned: diplomacy must deliver tangible outcomes, policy coherence across all G20 tracks is essential, and inclusion is a "strategic necessity," not charity. This imperative for tangible results directly reinforces Mr. Jahana's demand that the SU20 move beyond recommendations to focus on implementation.

Ms. Baloy's high-level overview of the G20's strategic priorities provides the political context for the specific operational mechanisms detailed by the SU20 Secretariat, highlighting how tactical execution is designed to serve a broader diplomatic vision.

2.4 Reflections from the Secretariat

Ms Carmen Rudd, Project Lead, SU20 Secretariat

As the Project Lead for the SU20 Secretariat, Ms. Carmen Rudd offered an operational perspective on the strategic and logistical effort behind the summit. Her address provided an inside view of how the engagement group's ambitious vision was executed through a process rooted in collaboration and a commitment to creating lasting impact.

Ms. Rudd summarised the SU20 Secretariat's process and key achievements:

- Global South Representation: A primary goal was to build a "credible and coordinated process" representing not only South Africa's ecosystem but also the "wider aspirations of the Global South," connecting voices from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.
- Convening the Task Forces: Under South Africa's chairship, the Secretariat established five task forces, each producing tangible policy recommendations: Foundation and Alliance, Finance and Investment, Inclusion and Sustainability, Trade and Market Access, and Township and Rural Entrepreneurship.
- The Power of Collaboration: She articulated a key lesson from the process: that effective policy "emerges from collaboration between governments, entrepreneurs, academia, and investors." This multi-stakeholder approach was central to the group's success.
- Institutional Memory: Ms. Rudd emphasised that the work has built "institutional memory and a platform that future G20 presidencies can adopt and expand upon," framing the conclusion of South Africa's presidency not as an end, but as the "foundation for an enduring legacy."

Her remarks underscored the meticulous groundwork laid to ensure the SU20's recommendations are robust and representative, setting the stage for consideration by international partners.

2.5 Partner Address-eVision: A Commitment to Unlocking the Full Potential of Startups

H.R.H. Fahad bin Mansour bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz Al Saud President of the Saudi G20 YEA and Founder of Entrepreneurship Vision)

Representing the Saudi delegation and the SU20 International Secretariat, His Royal Highness Prince Fahad bin Mansour's partner address served as a powerful endorsement from a key international partner, cementing the political will for institutionalising the SU20.

The key messages highlighted a shared vision for the engagement group's future:

- Saudi Arabia as a Model: He presented Saudi Arabia's rapid economic and startup ecosystem growth under Vision 2030 as a "living example of how vision, determination and collaboration can transform a nation's economy."
- The Third Year Anchor: He stressed the critical importance of the summit in South Africa, marking the third year of the engagement group. He explained that after its initiation under the Indian presidency, formal recognition requires adoption by the next two hosts, Brazil and South Africa. He therefore framed the South African summit as the moment that serves to "anchor" the group's position within the G20, making it "the foundation for permanence and progress."
- A Vision for the Future: Looking ahead to the United States' G20 presidency, he articulated a vision to "gather in the heart of innovation, the Silicon Valley," to institutionalise the progress made and scale the group's global impact.
- The Engine of Prosperity: He concluded with a powerful assertion that with the full empowerment of G20 leaders, Startup20 will become "the engine driving global prosperity," capable of creating real solutions to global challenges.

His speech reinforced the growing momentum behind making the Startup20 a permanent and impactful fixture of the G20 architecture.

2.6 Partner Address- ABSA: Empowering Startups and MSMEs; Championing Resilience, Innovation and Sustainable Growth

Kgalaletso Tlhoaele, Executive – Sectors: Enterprise Development, Absa Business Banking)

Delivered a partner address that directly reinforced the summit's theme, highlighting the private sector's role in empowering startups and MSMEs. Providing the crucial perspective of the private financial sector, the Executive for Sectors and Enterprise Development at ABSA Business Banking outlined the indispensable role that financial institutions play in nurturing a thriving startup ecosystem. His speech detailed a philosophy of proactive partnership that extends far beyond traditional banking services.

The core tenets of ABSA's approach to supporting MSMEs include:

- Beyond Banking to Partnership: He framed APSA's role not merely as a financial institution but as a "growth partner" committed to enabling entrepreneurship, stating, "We are constantly asking ourselves how we can enhance and elevate our support to small and medium enterprises."
- Targeted Support Initiatives: The representative detailed a range of non-financial support mechanisms, including mentorship programs, facilitating access to markets, supply development initiatives to integrate SMEs into corporate value chains, and financial literacy training, with a particular focus on women and youth.
- The Collaboration Multiplier: A central theme was the "multiplier effect" of collaboration. He stressed that building a resilient SME sector requires the "collective effort of public, private, and civil society."
- A Call to Action: He characterised the Startup20 summit as more than a platform for dialogue, viewing it as a "call to action and commitment to shaping the future of entrepreneurship across the G20 and beyond."
- The executive's address affirmed the financial sector's readiness to act as a committed partner in the collective mission to empower startups and drive inclusive economic growth.

2.7 SU20 Finance & Investment Taskforce: Re-Invigorating MSME Funding through innovative and sustainable capital structures

This crucial session confronted one of the most persistent challenges for startups and MSMEs: access to capital. Titled "Re-invigorating MSME funding through innovative and sustainable capital structures," the panel was assembled to dissect new models for financing that can bridge the funding gap and fuel growth. The discussion convened a diverse panel of experts from venture capital, corporate development, government agencies, and angel investing who formed part of the SU20 Finance and Investment Taskforce for 2025

Speaker	Organistation
Vuyiswa Nzimande (Modera-tor)	Co-founder, Salmon Co.
Nonzuzo Makanda	Chairperson, Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDFA)
Jade Buckton	Senior Investment Associate, 27four Investment Managers
Melvyn Lubega	Partner, Breega
Maanda Milubi	Group Enterprise and Supplier Development Director, Tiger Brands
Kenneth Kayser	Founder and Angel Investor, Growthway Ventures

Core Recommendation: A Global Tax Incentive Framework

The panel's primary recommendation centred on establishing a global tax incentive framework to stimulate investment into the startup ecosystem. Nzimande introduced the framework as a tangible mechanism to activate the G20's prior commitment of allocating 1% of GDP to startup funding, using tax incentives to mobilise capital from both individual and institutional investors.

Kayser detailed the framework's origins, drawing from South Africa's Section 12J policy. He reported on its success in generating over $9 billion for the ecosystem but noted the policy was discontinued due to misuse. The key learning, he argued, was the need to leverage modern digital tools to track investments and prevent misconduct, ensuring any new framework has robust guardrails from the outset.

Lubega emphasized the necessity of harmonizing the framework's core principles while allowing for adaptation to the unique circumstances of each G20 country. He cited examples of national innovations that could be integrated, such as India's digital public infrastructure for credit and Brazil's "PIX" platform for low-cost payments. He reinforced Keza's cautionary note, stating that the lessons learned from Section 12J regarding monitoring and guardrails are vital for the successful localization of such a policy.

Core Recommendation: Inclusive Finance for Underserved Communities

The discussion focused significantly on ensuring new financial solutions are intentionally inclusive, particularly for women, youth, and rural entrepreneurs often excluded from traditional capital markets. Makanda framed this imperative by stating that startups are not just engines for innovation but for societal transformation. She argued that all financial solutions must be explicitly crafted to serve every segment of the market, ensuring no community is left unattended.

Milubi presented a powerful mechanism to achieve this: tokenization. He defined tokenization as the process of converting real-world assets, such as a guaranteed future harvest—into tradable digital tokens to raise capital. This approach, he explained, bypasses traditional barriers of collateral and credit history. He cited practical use cases in Kenya, India, and Brazil, and asserted that for such innovations to flourish, G20 member states must actively develop the supportive regulatory frameworks required.

Core Recommendation: The Role of Non-Financial Support

The panel strongly advocated for integrating non-financial services into all funding initiatives, arguing that capital alone is insufficient for sustainable success. Makanda positioned technical assistance as the "heart and the anchor" of financial funds, not merely an afterthought. She reasoned that providing business development support is crucial for building an investment-ready pipeline, ensuring funds have a steady stream of viable businesses to support. Furthermore, she stressed the need for standardized impact metrics to transparently measure whether capital is reaching its intended target market.

Concluding Insights from the Panel

The panelists' closing statements reinforced the session's core themes of innovation, inclusion, and implementation.

- Kenneth Keyser explained that an upgraded tax incentive is the starting point to attract capital, while tokenization offers a mechanism to drive down inequality by giving retail investors access to new asset classes.
- Manda Milubi argued that the future of MSME funding is not about bringing entrepreneurs to traditional platforms, but about digitizing and decentralizing finance to build systems that meet communities where they are.

- Melvin Lubega reaffirmed that MSMEs are the bedrock of inclusive growth and that financing frameworks must be intentionally inclusive, leveraging emerging technologies like tokenization to reach underserved areas.
- Nonzuzu Makanda concluded that the recommendations were designed with the end-user in mind, aiming to provide well-priced resources that enable MSMEs to scale and grow without being put in a difficult position.

With a clear set of recommendations on funding mechanisms established, the focus shifted to the governmental policy frameworks required to enable them.

2.8 Partner Address: Launch of Global Entrepreneurship Week

Jonathan Ortmans, Founder and President of the Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN)

Mr Jonathan Ortmans officially launched Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW). Ortmans described GEW as a bottom-up global movement designed to foster entrepreneurship at the community level. The GEW initiative comprises approximately 40,000 events aimed at encouraging potential entrepreneurs to connect with local ecosystems. The launch was supported by video messages from prominent entrepreneurs Sir Richard Branson and Mark Cuban, who offered words of encouragement.

2.9 Handover of the SU20 South Africa Communique

At the conclusion of her address, Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams formally received the SU20 Communiqué from SU20 Chair Vuyani Jarana and Lead Coordinator for G20 Engagement GroupsSalome Baloyi. This symbolic handover marked the official transfer of the task forces' policy recommendations which were presented at the G20 Leaders' Summit.

2.10 Scaling Global Entrepreneurship Through Funding and Enabling Platform-Based Innovation

The morning's strategic focus then shifted to how major global technology and business platforms can serve as enablers for entrepreneurial scaling. This session strategically convened senior leaders from influential companies to dissect the role of platform economics in democratising market access. They discussed the infrastructure, tools, and partnerships that allow startups to transcend local markets and achieve global reach.

Speaker	Organistation
Vuyani Jarana (Moderator)	SU20 Chairman
Simo Kalajdzic	Senior Operations Manager, Bolt
Mpho Modise	Head of New Seller Recruitment, Amazon
Lindo Mbanjwa	Head of Strategic Business and Partnership Development, Absa Business Banking
Charles Murito	Regional Director for Government Affairs and Public Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa, Google

Moderated by SU20 Chairperson Vuyani Jarana, this session pivoted from policy frameworks to practical execution. The discussion explored how large-scale digital platforms and financial institutions can remove complexity from the entrepreneurial journey, creating scalable pathways for millions to participate in the global economy.

Unlocking Global Markets via Digital Platforms

The panel examined how established e-commerce platforms can provide immediate and scalable market access for small businesses. Mpho Modise of Amazon explained that his company's mission is to take unique African products to the world by reducing barriers to entry. He detailed Amazon's practical support, including a low-cost seller account (R1/month) granting access to 19 global markets, brand protection programs, translation tools, and the power of Amazon's global logistics network to handle fulfillment.

Innovating Access to Capital for Platform-Based Businesses

The discussion addressed the need for the banking sector to evolve to better serve the digital economy. Lindo Mbanjwa from Absa argued for the necessity of open banking, where traditional banks collaborate with FinTechs and e-commerce platforms. He explained that these platforms hold rich transactional data on SMMEs, which banks can use to make faster, better-informed credit decisions. Citing the "aQuula" agri-tech app as a case study, he showed how this ecosystem approach can scale access to both markets and capital.

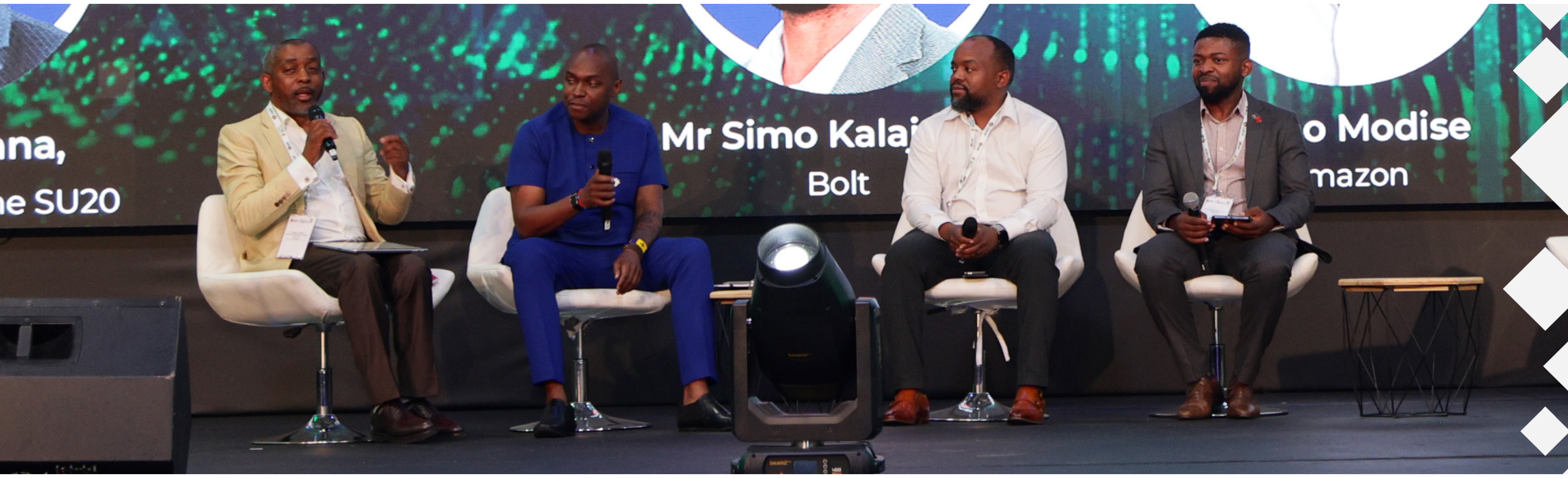
Building a Holistic Digital Ecosystem for Scale

The panel concluded by synthesising the key components required to build a truly enabling environment for digital entrepreneurship. Charles Murito of Google outlined a three-pronged approach:

- Infrastructure: The foundational need for affordable and widespread online access.
- Skilling: The importance of digital literacy and tools like Google's "Market Finder" to help businesses identify promising global markets.
- Product Relevance: The use of AI to provide predictive insights that help entrepreneurs create better, more relevant products.

Murito concluded by proposing a new paradigm for small businesses in the digital age, reframing MSMEs as "Micro, Multinational Companies" (MMNCs) that are enabled by global platforms to operate internationally from day one.

This forward-looking discussion provided a practical complement to the policy recommendations, setting the stage for the formal launch of Global Entrepreneurship Week.



2.11 Shaping Policy and Enhancing Market Access

The afternoon's agenda was dedicated to creating an enabling environment for startups, focusing on the dual levers of policy innovation and market access. The first panel, "Shaping Startup Policy and Innovation through the SU20," strategically convened a mix of international delegates and local corporate leaders. This composition was significant, ensuring the debate on crafting effective policy was both globally informed, drawing on insights from ERIA, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, and locally relevant, with perspectives from major South African entities like Telkom and African Bank.

Speaker	Organistation
Giulia Ajmone Marsan (Moderator)	Head of Startups and Inclusion, E-DISC, ERIA
Abdulaziz Al Saif	SU20 Saudi Arabia Delegate; Entrepreneurship Vision
Erkam Tuzgen	Head of Turkish SU20 Delegation; CEO of Bilişim Vadisi Science Park
Sameer Mahomed	SU20 Global Delegate; Managing director of BETA- Business
Tshepo Phetla	Head: Business Development, Telkom
Edna Montse	Group Executive: Transformation & Sustainability of African Bank

Moderated by Giulia Ajmone Marsan of ERIA, the discussion analysed three interconnected strategic themes that underpin the development of sustainable, high-growth startup ecosystems. These themes, which were consistently reinforced by speakers from diverse national contexts, are the foundational importance of social and economic inclusion, the stabilising role of mature and responsive government support, and the strategic imperative of global collaboration.

The Centrality of Inclusion in Entrepreneurship Policy

A strong consensus emerged that inclusion is not merely a social goal but a core component of effective startup policy, a view formalised as a "top policy priority" within the G20's Startup20 engagement group which is vividly illustrated by the South African and Indonesian delegations. Edna Montse of African Bank, drawing from the findings of the Startup20 Inclusion and Sustainability Task Force, explained the national mandate: "South African entrepreneurship policies are uniquely driven by the need to reverse historical exclusion and advance pressing social goals, like employment." She highlighted the active role of corporations, compelled by policy to invest in startups, but also detailed the operational challenges: "We face specific hurdles, including sustainability bars too high for new ventures, inadequate support for persons with disabilities, and a financial system that remains risk-averse towards new businesses."

The Role of Mature and Supportive Government Frameworks

The panel examined the critical role of government in creating a stable and nurturing environment for startups, using the United Kingdom as a key example of a mature ecosystem. The UK was presented as a market where the government has been historically supportive and responsive. This support has manifested through a range of programs, including digital assistance initiatives, the creation of the Startup Loans Company during the 2010 credit crisis to stimulate youth entrepreneurship, the Enterprise Investment Scheme to encourage private investment, and the introduction of an entrepreneur visa to attract global talent.

Sameer Mahomed, the SU20 Global Delegate with experience in the UK ecosystem, outlined this model: "The UK represents a mature ecosystem where the government has shown an 'ear to the ground.'" He cited historic responsiveness through programmes like the Startup Loans Company during the credit crisis and the entrepreneur visa, stating, "This consistent, multi-faceted support demonstrates how government can actively respond to the evolving needs of young people and the entrepreneurial community."

The Strategic Imperative of Global Collaboration

The panel presented a unified perspective that global collaboration has moved from a beneficial option to a strategic necessity for overcoming domestic market limitations, accelerating problem-solving, and driving competitive innovation. Speakers articulated a multi-faceted argument for breaking down jurisdictional barriers and fostering a more integrated global ecosystem.

- **Market Access and Efficiency:** Tshepo Phetla of Telkom emphasised necessity: "For a nation like South Africa with a 'shrinking domestic market,' global collaboration is essential to provide our startups with pathways to scale." Sameer Mahomed added the core argument for efficiency: "The most important reason for global collaboration is that it enables us to tackle large, shared problems together, reaching solutions faster and saving significant resources."
- **Knowledge Exchange and Efficiency:** Collaboration allows ecosystems to learn from each other's successes and failures, preventing the redundant expenditure of time and money. Examples cited include South Africa learning about alternative credit lender models. The core argument is that tackling major shared problems together allows countries to reach solutions more efficiently.

- **Driving Innovation through Diversity:** Abdulaziz Al Saif of the Saudi delegation framed collaboration as an innovation catalyst: "Innovation is a direct result of collisions between diverse perspectives. We participate in global forums to build bridges and attract international talent because this cross-pollination creates new opportunities."
- **Resource Pooling:** Partnerships can amplify impact by combining financial and intellectual capital. The UK-South Africa Tech Hub serves as a prime example, where both partners pool their budgets and expertise to co-create more impactful programs for the ecosystem.
- **Building a Global Hub for Connectivity:** Concrete initiatives are being developed to create physical centers for international collaboration. Erkam Tuzgen detailed Turkey's ambitious "Terminal Istanbul" project, a plan to convert an old airport into a premier international startup centre. He captured the vision: "The goal is to create a hub so central that investors will fly in with their private jets, land, have their meetings, and then fly back home," physically embodying the new paradigm of global connectivity.

2.12 SU20 Trade and Market Access Taskforce panel

This was followed by the SU20 Trade and Market Access Taskforce panel, which focused on the objective of "Enhancing Trade and Market Access – Building Inclusive and Standardised Frameworks for MSMEs and Startups." This discussion brought together a diverse set of stakeholders to identify pathways for breaking down barriers to trade and creating equitable market opportunities.

Cleola Kunene, the moderator, set the context for the discussion by noting that trade is often complex and expensive, especially multilateral trade, which has historically left many behind, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). She emphasised that the panel's conversation focused on solutions to ensure trade is accessible for every small business and startup across G20 countries. Cleola introduced the key recommendations outlined in the policy paper, including the establishment of a centralised digital trade platform, a startup passport framework, legislative procurement allocations, and the creation of tracking mechanisms: the Digital

Speaker	Organistation
Cleola Kunene (Moderator)	Head of SME Developement, Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE)
Loyiso Tyira	Chairperson of the Board, Technology Innovation Agency (TIA)
Pearl Maphumulo	Managing Director, The Business Development Agency
Milisa Mabinza	Director, UK-SA Tech Hub: British High Commission Pretoria
Dzinotyiwei	CEO and Co-Founder, Vambo AI
Telavukosi Mabasa	CEO, Vuhosi Consulting Group

Trade Equity Index (DTEI) and the Startup Trade Readiness Index (STRI).

Core Recommendation: Unlocking Trade via Centralised Digital Infrastructure and Standardisation

The panel first established the need for a foundational digital trade infrastructure to reduce fragmentation. Milisa Mabinza of the UK-SA Tech Hub argued that a centralised platform is critical to end regulatory disarray, stating, “It creates an environment for standardised processes and helps fix regulatory fragmentation, where different parts of government are not communicating.” She pointed to international exemplars like Turkey’s platform to show its feasibility.

Chido Dzinotyiwei of Vambo AI linked this directly to startup survival, noting, “Standardisation allows startups to overcome friction and fragmentation, and a centralised data space avoids duplication so they can conserve scarce resources.” Loyiso Tyira of TIA, chair of the taskforce, outlined the implementation pathway, stressing the necessity to “start with pilots between countries and regional blocks, establish governance mechanisms, and ensure a shared digital infrastructure” to move from proposal to practice.

Core Recommendation: Innovating Access with the Startup Passport and Diagnostic Indices

The conversation then turned to the tools designed to empower startups directly and measure ecosystem readiness. Pearl Maphumulo of The Business Development Agency championed the Startup Passport Framework as a transformative compliance solution, explaining, “It reduces both the time and cost spent by entrepreneurs on compliance. By harmonising aspects like tax codes, it removes a major hurdle and helps level the playing field.” Telavukosi Mabasa of Vuhosi Consulting Group detailed its operational prerequisite, adding, “The passport’s success hinges on a startup’s domestic compliance first. It then verifies and standardises their status across the G20.”

To enable targeted support, Maphumulo introduced the Startup Trade Readiness Index (STRI), a diagnostic tool that benchmarks critical factors from digital readiness to logistics. Chido Dzinotyiwei highlighted its strategic utility, noting the STRI "allows trade readiness to be transformed into a roadmap for capacity building," guiding where international incubation efforts should focus.

The panel concluded by synthesising the mechanisms to guarantee fairness, create markets, and ensure rigorous, accountable implementation.

- **Public Procurement as a Strategic Tool:** Loyiso Tyira delivered a powerful argument for using state purchasing power proactively, asserting that the recommended 30% minimum allocation for SMMEs "should be viewed as a floor, not a ceiling. Governments must use their immense buying power to stimulate the SMME base and enable them to scale."
- **The Digital Trade Equity Index (DTEI) for Fairness:** Milisa Mabinza explained the role of the DTEI as a guardian of inclusivity, stating it was created "to prevent market dominance or abuse by bigger players, ensuring the recommendations remain equitable across the G20. It also tracks implementation and allows for policy adjustments based on real-time feedback."
- **Governance and Long-Term Oversight**: Emphasising accountability, Tyira stressed the need for "tools to track implementation, measure progress publicly, and establish clear KPIs." Telavukosi Mabasa addressed the structural need for sustained oversight, suggesting "establishing a secretariat that works across the G20 to track implementation," as this pioneering policy requires new benchmarking from the ground up.

This discussion provided a concrete, implementable blueprint for transforming trade policy from rhetoric into measurable, equitable action. By combining foundational digital infrastructure, empowering entrepreneur tools, and rigorous accountability mechanisms, the session set a new operational standard for global collaboration, formally concluding the SU20's policy dialogue with a clear and accountable pathway for adoption.

3. The Startup20 Competition Pitch Showcase

The Startup20 pitch competition served as a dynamic platform celebrating the innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit shaping the African continent and beyond. This session provided a critical window into the next generation of ventures poised to address systemic challenges with scalable, technology-driven solutions. This report distils the core value propositions and strategic objectives presented by eight startup finalists, followed by an analysis of the keynote address that provided a macroeconomic framework for contextualizing their efforts.

Startup pitching is more than a presentation; it is a strategic mechanism for securing capital, forging partnerships, and achieving critical market validation. The eight ventures showcased in this session demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of this dynamic, each articulating a clear vision for solving a pressing market need. The following subsections deconstruct the pitches from these distinct ventures, evaluating their proposed solutions to critical gaps across technology, education, healthcare, finance, and environmental sustainability.

3.1 Startup pitch Presentations

+1 Code: Recoding the Favelas

- **The Challenge:** Brazil's technology market, the largest in Latin America, is characterised by a stark lack of diversity and accessibility. For underserved youth in the favelas, or peripheries, opportunities are geographically and financially out of reach, with tech education centers often being "three hours by public transportation just to get there." This creates a paradox where companies struggle to find diverse, qualified developers while a vast pool of potential talent remains untapped.
- **The Solution**: +1 Code is a free programming school designed "by the favelas to the favelas." Its curriculum moves beyond technical skills, combining coding with English and soft skills to prepare students for leadership

roles. The venture operates on a hybrid model of online and local classes, enhancing scalability while keeping operational costs low.

- **Business Model & Traction:** The company partners with universities and technology companies that sponsor each student's education. This model has enabled +1 Code to reach 5,000 students across Brazil, Portugal, and São Tomé e Príncipe. The program has successfully placed graduates in internships and jobs, with some alumni receiving industry awards, such as a student featured in a competition documented by Amazon Prime.
- **The Ask**: The startup is seeking strategic partners and investment to fund a national platform expansion, enhance its technology, and scale its training capacity to reach its goal of 10,000 students by 2028.

CareerKit: Reimagining Career Guidance for Africa's Youth

- **The Challenge:** South Africa faces a critical paradox where over 45% of its youth (ages 15-35) are unemployed, yet companies struggle to find skilled talent. This disconnect stems from a massive gap in effective career guidance, as most tools are "urban-centric, and internet-dependent," rendering them inaccessible to the majority of young people in rural and township communities.
- **The Solution:** CareerKit is an edtech venture that makes career guidance engaging and accessible through low-tech, gamified, and context-sensitive tools. Its flagship product is the RACEC board game, a physical psychometric tool based on Dr. Holland's career theory. This is complemented by specialised kits that simulate real-world careers and an AI-powered digital platform that merges the engagement of TikTok with the professionalism of LinkedIn.
- **Business Model and Traction:** CareerKit employs a multi-channel revenue model including product sales, advertising revenue, and subscriptions, targeting parents, schools, and corporate clients. The venture has already impacted over 15,000 learners, delivered more than 50 workshops, and secured grant funding from the Technology Innovation Agency.
- **The Ask:** The company is raising $50,000 USD to scale its impact, with the capital earmarked for reaching 100,000 learners and expanding its digital platform.

NetZero: Digitising Natural Infrastructure

- **The Challenge:** While urban infrastructure has been extensively digitised, natural infrastructure—such as forests—has been largely neglected. In regions like Saudi Arabia, the process of planting a tree is manually intensive, slow, and prohibitively expensive, costing over $100 per tree.
- **The Solution:** CNetZero has developed a fully digitised integration model that dramatically reduces the complexity and cost of afforestation, bringing the price down to just $18 per tree. Their proprietary technology includes a Tree Map for transparency, a Tree Wallet for community engagement, and a Tree Log mobile application that uses AI to capture detailed data on each tree's health, location, and ecological benefits.
- **Business Model and Traction:** The company operates a B2B model where corporations fund tree planting to

offset carbon emissions. In three years, and without any external funding, NetZero has generated $5.6 million in revenue, planted 1.5 million trees, and is now operational in seven countries. Its brand story is deeply rooted in community initiatives, including a marathon where trees were planted for steps taken, a "Baby Borns" program planting a tree for each newborn, and a children's literacy project that planted over 10,000 trees to celebrate one million pages read.

- **The Ask:** NetZero is seeking $1 million to accelerate its global expansion. The funds will be allocated to operations, product and customer success, and marketing.

Prevenir Care: Making Prevention the Norm in Healthcare

- **The Challenge:** Chronic diseases are a silent epidemic in G20 nations, responsible for 68% of early deaths among adults aged 30 to 69. Despite evidence that lifestyle changes can prevent a significant portion of these diseases, healthcare systems remain overwhelmingly focused on treatment rather than prevention, leading to staggering costs and lost productivity.
- **The Solution:** Prevenir Care is a digital platform designed to shift the healthcare paradigm from reactive to proactive. The solution identifies an individual's health needs and matches them with certified professionals specialising in lifestyle preventative medicine, offering a personalised bridge between users and expert care.
- **Business Model and Traction:** The startup targets companies and health insurers, who pay to provide preventative care access to their employees and members. A portion of profits is channeled into a CSR model to provide free access to low-income individuals. Since its launch in June, Prevenir Care has signed its first client within five weeks and is in discussions with two more.
- **The Ask:** The company aims to raise €5 million in two rounds. This capital will fund a pilot expansion into two additional G20 countries and the development of further medical and corporate partnerships, with a goal of capturing €30 to €50 million of the market within five years.

Pumpkin: Bridging the SME Capital Gap

- **The Challenge:** Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) across Africa face an annual funding gap of over $100 billion. Traditional lenders are ill-equipped to serve this market, as SMEs are often "credit file thin" and the economics of underwriting small loans are unfavorable for large banks. As a result, 80% of SMEs fail due to a lack of capital.
- **The Solution:** Pumpkin, presented by team member Zahir, addresses this structural issue with a unique "funding ladder" model. The company provides an initial small loan (50,000 ZAR) based on minimal data. By observing repayment behavior and interacting with the business, Pumpkin progressively offers larger loans with longer tenors, effectively building a credit history where none existed.
- **Business Model and Traction:** In 20 months, Pumpkin has supported over 65 businesses, issuing 240 loans. The model has proven effective, with a high retention rate of 70% and customers returning for an average of five subsequent loans.

- **The Ask:** Pumpkin is raising capital on two fronts: a 1 million in debt capital immediately to fuel its lending activities, with a target of raising an additional $5 million in debt over the next year.

Regxta: Fostering Financial Inclusion for Micro-Businesses

- **The Challenge:** Africa is home to 600 million micro-businesses, yet only 20% have access to bank loans, creating a financial inclusion gap projected to represent a $500 billion annual revenue opportunity. These businesses, with daily sales between $5 and $300, are the most neglected segment of the economy, often lacking the credit history, bank accounts, or valid IDs required by traditional financial institutions.
- **The Solution:** Regxta is an inclusive digital platform that provides simple and quick access to financial services for unbanked micro-businesses in remote locations. It operates through a network of trained community agents and a mobile app powered by advanced data science and AI to instantly underwrite and disburse loans to individuals with no prior borrowing history.
- **Business Model and Traction:** Revenue is generated through interest on loans, as well as processing and transactional fees. Since its launch in 2021, Regxta has disbursed over 600,000 USD in revenue. It currently serves an active base of 25,000 customers through 200 agents across Nigeria.
- **The Ask:** Regxta is raising a $2 million seed round to enhance its technology, fund marketing initiatives, and expand to other markets within Nigeria. The goal is to grow its customer base to over 100,000 by 2027.

ShipSider: Transforming the Maritime Industry with AI

- **The Challenge:** The maritime industry, responsible for over 90% of global trade, remains reliant on old-fashioned, manual processes. This inefficiency leads to significant financial losses—as exemplified by the Suez Canal blockage that disrupted the global economy by over $10 billion—and creates challenges for operators trying to comply with new decarbonisation goals like the EU ETS.
- **The Solution:** ShipSider is an AI-driven SaaS platform that simplifies and optimises maritime commercial operations. Its tools provide real-time voyage data tracking, automated calculation of port penalties (demurrage), and carbon emission tax calculations. The platform is designed to minimise freight revenue loss and support companies in achieving their decarbonisation targets.
- **Business Model and Traction:** The company operates on a B2B subscription model, supplemented by a percentage of AI-assisted savings and fees for customised enterprise services. ShipSider is already generating revenue (1.2 million. It is operational in eight countries and has onboarded Qatar's largest maritime company as an enterprise customer.
- **The Ask:** The startup is raising a $2.6 million seed round and is specifically seeking strategic investors who understand the power and potential of the maritime and logistics industry.

TeknoKurgu: Making Digital Farming Accessible to All

- **The Challenge:** Digital farming offers immense potential to increase efficiency and sustainability, but its high cost makes it a luxury that is inaccessible to the vast majority of small and mid-sized farmers. These farmers, who represent over 90% of farms in Turkey and 70% globally, cannot afford to replace their existing equipment with expensive new machinery.
- **The Solution:** TeknoKurgu has developed Rota, a modular retrofit platform that transforms traditional tractors and implements into smart, connected, and sustainable agricultural tools. The platform includes manual and auto-steering systems, variable-rate fertilizer applicators, and an AI-supported digital farm portal to track savings, efficiency, and CO2 emissions. This allows farmers to save up to 40% on inputs without investing in new equipment.
- **Business Model and Traction:** The company has sold over 200 devices across Turkey and is working with more than 120 farmers. It has already begun its international expansion, with two devices sold in Bulgaria and export discussions underway for other Eastern European markets.
- **The Ask:** TeknoKurgu is seeking investment to strengthen its team, scale up mass production, expand its AI decision-support system, and deploy pilots in three new international markets. While the specific funding amount was not mentioned during the presentation, the strategic objectives are clear.

The pitches collectively revealed three dominant trends: the application of AI to modernise legacy industries (ShipSider, TeknoKurgu), the development of low-tech, accessible solutions for last-mile inclusion (CareerKit, Regxta), and a focus on building new, data-driven credit models for underserved markets (Pumpkin, Regxta). Their collective vision provides a powerful backdrop for the keynote address, which frames these individual efforts within a broader global development context.

3.2 Interactive Dialogue: ”Entrepreneurship Frontiers: Why a Multidimensional Lens Matters”

Dr Pali Lehohla, Director of the Economic Modelling Academy and former Statistician-General of South Africa.

Dr. Pali Lehohla, the former Statistician General of South Africa, delivered a keynote address that was importantly an important call to action. His remarks moved beyond conventional paradigms, challenging the efficacy of past and present development frameworks with statistical rigor and undisguised frustration. He called for a new framework for assessing progress—one that is essential for contextualising African innovation and entrepreneurship. His address served as a powerful charge, urging leaders to adopt a multidimensional lens to truly understand and confront the intertwined challenges of poverty, climate change, and inequality.

A Critique of Global Development Models

Dr. Lehohla's address began with an analysis of the international development agenda, arguing that decades of pledges have failed to produce meaningful change, particularly for Africa.

- He asserted that decadal development plans, from the 1960s through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have consistently failed to lift Sub-Saharan Africa from its position at the bottom of development indices.
- He warned that the current G20 process lacks the necessary statistical rigor for true measurement and accountability.
- He highlighted a critical gap in the process: the absence of national statisticians. "You don't have S20, which is Statistics 20," he noted, arguing that without the architects of measurement at the table, development goals risk being little more than performative gestures.

The Case for a Multidimensional Lens

At the core of his argument was an urgent call to adopt a multidimensional framework for understanding and measuring poverty and well-being.

- Drawing on the work of Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, he emphasised that "deprivation of very different kinds have to be accommodated within a general overarching framework."
- He championed the importance of SDG indicator 1.2.2, which measures the "proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions," as a critical tool for a more holistic assessment of progress.
- This lens, he argued, allows policymakers to move beyond simplistic income-based metrics and to measure what truly matters in improving human lives.

The Vicious Cycle of Poverty and Climate Change

Dr. Lehohla underscored the dangerous intersection of poverty and climate change, presenting stark data to illustrate the scale of the challenge.

- Globally, 1.1 billion people live in acute multidimensional poverty.
- A staggering 78% of this population, or 887 million people, live in regions exposed to at least one significant climate hazard such as high heat, drought, or floods.
- More than half of the multidimensionally poor face the threat of two or more concurrent hazards.
- He stated unequivocally that this vicious cycle of poverty and climate vulnerability disproportionately impacts the African continent.

A Call for Decolonised, African-Led Innovation

In his final thematic point, Dr. Lehohla issued a powerful call for African nations to break from dependency and forge their own development path through localised innovation.

- He argued that Africa must develop its own R&D, manufacturing capabilities, and "decolonised solutions" rather than looking to the Global North for answers.
- As a concrete example, he presented an evaporative cooling technology he co-developed, based on established thermodynamic principles but innovatively designed, as a homegrown African solution to a pressing global problem: the immense energy required to cool data centres for the growing AI industry.
- He issued a stern warning against accepting "Trojan horse" policies, citing the duplicity of Global North nations encouraging South Africa to close its coal mines while simultaneously opening their own.

His address concluded with a profound charge: "Inequality is a choice. It is not inevitable and can be reversed with political will." This final statement encapsulated his core message that true progress requires not only entrepreneurial spirit but also a fundamental shift in how we measure, understand, and govern our interconnected world.

3.3 AI Masterclass, GEN Founder Academy

Thembelani Sigala, Technical Instructor, Amazon Web Services

The AI Masterclass was an initiative of the GEN Founder Academy, designed to equip entrepreneurs and startup founders with practical, hands-on skills in artificial intelligence (AI). The session was championed by the Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN Global), the worldwide network dedicated to supporting and empowering entrepreneurs through access to resources, mentorship, training, and global opportunities.

The Founder Academy is a specialised entrepreneurial development platform that provides structured learning, mentorship, and capacity-building programmes for founders and startup teams, enabling them to transform ideas into scalable, high-impact ventures.

Delivered by Thembelani Sigala, Technical Instructor at Amazon Web Services (AWS), the session focused on practical AI applications for startups and businesses. Attendees explored responsible AI deployment, human oversight, data-driven decision-making, and the use of AWS tools, while being guided on ethical considerations and strategic clarity as essential elements for leveraging AI to drive productivity, innovation, and competitiveness.

The key take-aways of the session included: The session aimed to provide a practical and accessible overview of artificial intelligence (AI) for businesses and startups, with a focus on real-world application rather than technical complexity.

- It was emphasised that AI is not intended to replace human workers, but to augment human decision-making. Human oversight ("human in the loop") remains essential to ensure accuracy, accountability, and ethical use.
- The speaker highlighted that AI solutions are entirely data-driven and operate on the principle of "garbage in, garbage out," making data quality, cleansing, and validation critical to reliable outcomes.
- Examples were cited where organisations faced operational failures or financial penalties due to over-reliance on AI without sufficient human review, reinforcing the need for responsible AI deployment.
- Participants were advised that not all business problems are suitable for AI solutions, and that organisations should start with small, clearly defined use cases before scaling AI adoption.
- The evolution of AI was outlined, noting that while the concept dates back to the 1950s, modern adoption has been enabled by advances in cloud computing platforms such as AWS, alongside the emergence of generative and agentic AI.
- Practical use cases of AI were highlighted across multiple sectors, including social media recommendations, digital assistants, content moderation, streaming platforms, reporting, analysis, education, and creative content generation.

- The speaker stressed that AI is not limited to technical users and can be applied across business functions such as administration, project management, proposal development, and data analysis.
- AWS tools such as Amazon Bedrock and PartyRock were introduced, with PartyRock highlighted as a free platform that allows users to experiment with generative AI through prompt-based interactions.
- It was noted that the quality of AI outputs is directly influenced by the quality and specificity of user prompts, and that iterative refinement improves results.
- AWS's broader AI enablement ecosystem was outlined, including in-person skills centres and online training platforms designed to build AI literacy and capability.
- The session concluded with an emphasis on ethical considerations, skills readiness, and strategic clarity as essential factors for organisations seeking to leverage AI for productivity, innovation, and competitiveness.

Day 1 successfully laid the groundwork by addressing the core mechanics of the startup ecosystem, setting an analytically robust stage for Day 2's focus on inclusive and sustainable growth.

4. Day 2 Proceedings: Championing Inclusive and Sustainable Growth

The agenda for the second day pivoted from the foundational pillars of finance and policy towards a critical examination of inclusive and sustainable growth. The morning began with "Reflections from Day 1," alongside partner addresses from eVision and SEDFA, which set the stage for the day's thematic deep dives. Discussions were strategically focused on ensuring that the benefits of entrepreneurship extend to all corners of society, with a particular emphasis on underserved ecosystems, such as townships and rural areas, and on building the robust global alliances necessary to support this vision.

4.1 Reflections from Day 1

Ms. Qinisile Delwa the Deputy Director-General: Enterprise Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the DSBD

The second day of the SU20 Summit 2025 commenced with a strategic reflection on the foundational discussions and momentum generated during the inaugural sessions. This period of review was essential for grounding the day's proceedings in the collective understanding and ambitious agenda established on Day 1, ensuring that subsequent deep-dive panels would build upon a coherent and shared vision.

Ms. Qinisile Delwa the Deputy Director-General: Enterprise Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the DSBD, synthesised the key takeaways from the previous day. Her reflections crystallised the summit's core objectives and the progress made:

- **Overarching Goal**: The central mission of the SU20 is to accelerate cross-border market integration, foster digital transformation, and ensure equitable access for developing economies, particularly those in the Global South.
- **The Role of Digital Platforms:** A consensus emerged on the critical need to adopt digital platforms, including artificial intelligence, to enable MSMEs' access to markets, finance, and business development support.
- **Harmonised Digital Trade:** The vision presented by the Trade and Market Access Task Force for a harmonised digital trade architecture—encompassing a Startup Passport Framework and a Digital Trade Equity Index—was recognised as a powerful enabler for cross-border operations.
- **Informing National Policy:** The deliberations and sharing of best practices have proven invaluable to South Africa, directly shaping and enriching the development of its own national startup policy.
- **Ensuring Continuity:** There is a firm commitment among the International Secretariat and participating nations to institutionalise the momentum of the SU20, ensuring its growth and the inclusion of all G20 countries in this vital movement.

With these foundational principles reaffirmed, the summit was poised to transition from high-level strategy to the specific, actionable recommendations of its thematic task forces.

4.2 SU20 Township & Rural Entrepreneurship Taskforce: Advancing Township and Rural Entrepreneurship- Finance Policy and Capacity for Inclusive Growth

This session addressed the vital need to foster entrepreneurship beyond traditional urban hubs. The panel, titled "Advancing Township and Rural Entrepreneurship – Finance, Policy, & Capacity for Inclusive Growth," explored tailored strategies to unlock the economic potential of these communities. The discussion brought together a diverse group of experts with experience spanning corporate foundations, academia, angel investing, and grassroots entrepreneurship.

Speaker	Organistation
Xoliswa Daku (Moderator)	CEO, Daku Group Companies
Octavius Phukubye	Managing Director, Mr Price Foundation
Sanjay Soni	Chief Visionary Officer, Jozi Angels
Dr Ayanda Sibiya	Lecturer, University of Johannesburg
Tsholofelo Papi Mothibi	Chairperson, Black Management Forum
Neo Mohlabeng-Cholo	Chief Executive Officer & Founder, Mosetsana Pads

Moderated by Xoliswa Daku of Daku Group Companies, who contextualised the challenge by noting the global similarity of communities from favelas to urban villages, this session pivoted from broad inclusion goals to targeted execution.This panel served as a crucial examination of the specific financial, educational, infrastructural, and regulatory barriers that continue to marginalise these vital economic actors, proposing a slate of targeted reforms to unlock their potential. The discussion contextualised this challenge globally, recognising similar communities from the favelas of Brazil to the urban villages of China.

Core Recommendation: Reimagining Finance with Alternative Data and Catalytic Capital

The panel established that unlocking capital in non-traditional economies requires fundamentally new models. Discussions centred on moving beyond conventional credit scoring, which systematically excludes entrepreneurs without formal financial histories, and on deploying targeted, de-risked funds. Octavius Phukubye of Mr Price Foundation argued for this shift, stating, "We must champion the use of alternative data such as mobile money usage and retail transaction history to create more relevant and inclusive creditworthiness models." To practically channel this capital, Sanjay Soni of Jozi Angels detailed a key recommendation: "A decentralised $50 million urban fund using a blended finance model is essential. This catalytic capital, anchored by partnerships with DFIs and MNOs, must be paired with transparent selection and robust technical assistance to ensure success."

Building Foundational Capacity Through Integrated Education

The conversation highlighted that sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems are built on knowledge and skills developed from an early age. The panel underscored the necessity of embedding entrepreneurship into formal education systems to foster an innovative mindset, while ensuring equitable access to practical training and resources regardless of geography. Dr. Ayanda Sibiya of the University of Johannesburg emphasised this systemic integration, arguing, “Entrepreneurial education must be critically and systematically integrated into both high school and tertiary curricula.” She further stressed the need for “equitable access to innovation hubs, technology labs, and mentorship programs in both rural and urban areas,” developed through collaboration to ensure solutions are “research-based and tailored to solve local market problems.”

Enabling Infrastructure and Supportive Regulatory Reform

The panel concluded by synthesising the critical physical, digital, and policy frameworks without which entrepreneurship cannot thrive. This dual focus addressed both the tangible barriers to operation and the systemic policy hurdles that stifle growth.

- **Bridging the Physical and Digital Divide:** A foundational barrier identified was the lack of essential infrastructure. Tsholofelo Papi Mothibi of the Black Management Forum distinguished between vital physical needs and digital exclusion, issuing a clear call: “We need universal digital infrastructure in all marginalised communities by 2030. This goal can be driven by public-private partnerships, like the Vodacom and Starlink model, to enable global market access.”
- **Dismantling Systemic Policy Barriers:** Beyond infrastructure, the discussion turned to regulatory reform designed to support, not hinder, small businesses. Neo Mohlabeng-Cholo of Mosetsana Pads focused on actionable policy levers, recommending that “land reform be leveraged to provide non-financial assets for entrepreneurs.” She also proposed direct support to reduce compliance burdens, stating, “Accessible, local compliance offices must be established within townships and rural areas to provide direct assistance and demystify processes like tax regulation.”

This forward-looking discussion provided a concrete, multi-pronged blueprint for advancing inclusive entrepreneurship at the grassroots level. By aligning innovative finance, integrated education, essential infrastructure, and supportive regulation, the panel set an actionable agenda for ensuring townships and rural areas become engines of sustainable economic growth, naturally leading to the broader discussion on national and international ecosystem support.

4.3 Partner Address – eVision: Saudi Government Enablement for Tech Ecosystem

Mr. Khalid Almutawa of the National Technology Development Program (NTDP)
The success of a global innovation movement depends heavily on the commitment of international partners and national entities dedicated to fostering technological growth. This address provided a compelling perspective from Saudi Arabia, a nation actively transforming its economy through a dedicated focus on startup enablement.

Mr. Khalid Almutawa of the National Technology Development Program (NTDP) shared Saudi Arabia's ambitious national vision for a future driven by innovators and entrepreneurs. He outlined the core mission of the NTDP: to transform the kingdom into a global technology hub. This is being achieved through a multi-faceted strategy that includes direct financial support, grants, and co-investment mechanisms for startups and SMEs. Mr. Almutawa extended an open invitation to global startups and innovators to visit the Saudi pavilion, engage with its ecosystem leaders, and explore tangible opportunities for expansion into the kingdom.

This showcase of national commitment to technological advancement led into a complementary address from the host nation's primary development finance institution.

4.4 Partner Address – SEDFA: Empowering Early-Stage Businesses: Driving Inclusive Innovation and Sustainable Growth in South Africa

Ms. Nonzuzu Makanda, Chairperson of SEDFA

National development finance institutions (DFIs) play a pivotal role in nurturing early-stage businesses, especially those that are often overlooked or excluded by traditional commercial funding channels. The address from the Small Enterprise Development Finance Agency (SEDFA) offered a powerful blueprint for fulfilling this essential mission.

Ms. Nonzuzu Makanda, Chairperson of SEDFA, articulated the agency's strategic mandate and operational approach with clarity and conviction. Her presentation can be analysed through four key principles:

- **Core Mandate:** SEDFA's mission is unambiguously clear: to "finance the unfunded, enable the excluded, and transform the entrepreneurial landscape." This purpose-driven approach positions the agency as a direct instrument of inclusion and economic transformation.
- **Catalytic Funding:** The agency's model goes beyond simple financing. It strategically infuses business development support with access to finance, providing catalytic funding designed to help businesses

transition from being "survivalist to sustainable."

- **Strategic Alignment:** SEDFA ensures its funding models are not designed in a vacuum. They are deliberately aligned with South Africa's national strategic priorities, such as the National Development Plan, to address deep-seated structural economic challenges.
- **The Power of Partnership:** Ms. Makanda emphasised that no single institution can solve the vast challenges facing small businesses. She issued a powerful call for collaboration across the ecosystem, citing the principle that "it takes a village to support one business."

SEDFA's mandate to finance the unfunded and enable the excluded provides the institutional foundation for the specific financial instruments and inclusive frameworks proposed by the SU20 Inclusion and Sustainability Taskforce.

4.5 SU20 Inclusion and Sustainability Taskforce: Advancing Inclusion and Sustainability – Financing Innovation and Digital Infrastructure for Equitable Growth

Building on the theme of equitable growth, this taskforce focused on the broader principles of inclusion and sustainability within the startup ecosystem. The panel's objective was to outline strategies for "Advancing Inclusion and Sustainability – Financing, Innovation, and Digital Infrastructure for Equitable Sustainable Growth." The conversation centered on ensuring that startups not only succeed commercially but also contribute positively to social and environmental goals.

Speaker	Organistation
Danson Gichini (Moderator)	Lead – Social Entrepreneurship, World Economic Forum
Mbali Nwoko	Chief Executive Farmer, Green Terrace
Dr Jabulile Msimango-Galawe	Senior Lecturer, Wits University
Mahlatse Tolamo	Board Member, Global Shapers
Veronica Motloutsi	Chief Digital Transformation and Innovation Officer, Small Enterprise Development & Finance Agency (SEDFA)

The long-term viability, social impact, and global relevance of the startup ecosystem are fundamentally dependent on the principles of inclusion and sustainability. The urgency of this imperative was starkly framed by moderator Danson Gishini, who cited a World Economic Forum report indicating that MSMEs contribute to roughly half of business sector emissions, yet only a third have ever been offered green finance incentives. The task force's recommendations, therefore, serve as a comprehensive roadmap for embedding these values into the core of entrepreneurial activity, moving them from peripheral concerns to central business drivers.

Mobilising Green and Inclusive Finance

The panel established that unlocking dedicated capital is the first critical step to incentivise sustainable business models. The discussion detailed the need for innovative financial instruments that directly address the specific barriers such as lack of collateral and formal records that exclude green and social entrepreneurs from traditional funding. Dr. Jabulile Msimango-Galawe of Wits University elaborated on a core structural recommendation, explaining, “A Green Credit Guarantee Scheme is essential to de-risk lending to green MSMEs, particularly those led by women, youth, or in underserved areas, by overcoming the very barriers that currently lock them out.” To ensure these financial tools are accessible, Mahlatse Tolamo of the Global Shapers focused on the demand side,

creating simplified digital claims portals that informal businesses can use and proposing targeted relief, like VAT exemptions on green assets, to make sustainability financially viable from day one.”

Embedding ESG and Sustainable Education

The panel demystified the concept of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) readiness for small businesses, framing it within a practical “people, planet, and profits” framework. A key recommendation is to create democratised, digital ESG reporting tools The conversation underscored that access to capital must be matched with the capacity to use it responsibly, necessitating a fundamental shift in entrepreneurial mindset and capability. Dr. Jabulile Msimango-Galawe advocated for this pragmatic integration, stating, “We must simplify ESG for small businesses through a ‘Triple P’ framework People, Planet, and Profits.

This makes it an operational toolkit, not an abstract burden.” She also proposed the creation of an “African Sustainability Data Hub” to provide critical market and climate data directly to entrepreneurs. Mahlatse Tolamo emphasised the need to seed this mindset early, adding, “Sustainability principles must be embedded into entrepreneurship education from a young age. We are cultivating a generation of founders for whom this is intrinsic to their business DNA, not a bolt-on."

Building Digital Public Infrastructure

The panel concluded by synthesising the critical, cross-cutting role of digital technology as the foundational enabler that makes both financial inclusion and verifiable sustainability possible. Thus a powerful theme emerged: digital infrastructure is the "front door to inclusion." The task force articulated the critical importance of providing MSMEs with a digital identity and footprint, making them "visible, verifiable, and traceable."

This digital trail is essential for accessing green finance, participating in sustainable value chains, and connecting with regulatory support. By establishing this foundational infrastructure, G20 nations can create a transparent and connected economy where opportunities are accessible to all.

- **Digital Identity as the Gateway to the Formal Economy:** Veronica Motloutsi of SEFA powerfully framed digital infrastructure as the non-negotiable starting point, asserting it is the "front door to inclusion." She elaborated, "A digital footprint a unique identity makes an MSME visible, verifiable, and traceable. Without this, they remain invisible to financiers, partners, and the support ecosystem, locked out of the formal economy."
- **Digital Tools for Green Compliance, Finance, and Transparency:** Motloutsi further detailed how this infrastructure directly enables sustainability goals. "Digital records, supply chain traceability, and compliance data are the essential prerequisites for an MSME to prove its green credentials and access dedicated green finance," she explained. To democratise this process, she championed the development of a "standardised digital ESG tool for small businesses across G20 markets, enabling consistent impact reporting without the need for expensive consultants."

This discussion provided a implementable blueprint for building a genuinely inclusive and climate-smart global MSME ecosystem by 2030. By aligning the pillars of targeted catalytic finance, foundational capacity building, and enabling digital public goods, the panel set a clear and actionable agenda. It affirmed that the entrepreneurial engines of the future must be commercially strong, socially equitable, and environmentally regenerative by design, thereby laying the essential groundwork for subsequent discussions on the global collaborative frameworks needed to bring this vision to scale.

4.6 Foundation and Alliances Taskforce: Building a Global Innovation Ecosystem: Strengthening Digital Infrastructure, Cross Border Collaboration and Startup Policy

The SU20 Foundation and Alliances Taskforce convened to discuss the macro-level architecture required for a truly interconnected and supportive global startup environment. The session's focus was on "Building a Global Innovation Ecosystem: Strengthening Digital Infrastructure, Cross-Border Collaboration, and Startup Policy." Panelists explored how to build robust digital backbones, facilitate international partnerships, and harmonise policies to reduce friction for startups operating across borders.

Speaker	Organistation
Chrystèle Sanon (Moderator)	Founder & President UAEFI - United Afro Experts for Innovation; QWAMPUS
Prof Thobekani Lose	Director and Senior Researcher, Nelson Mandela University's Africa Hub for Entrepreneurship
Hilton Theunissen	Managing Director South Africa and VP Global Partnerships, Growth Wheel
Sbusiso Buna	CEO & Founder, Jobox
Tshegofatso Motaung	Managing Director, Cedarlab Africa
Ercilia Ubisse	Regional Chapter Head: Southern Africa, Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE)

Moderated by Chrystèle Sanon, this session explored the practical architecture of collaboration required to transcend fragmented national ecosystems. The conversation centred on translating the collective intelligence of the G20 into a tangible framework for policy harmonisation, ethical technology governance, and cross-border operational infrastructure, setting a foundational agenda for global entrepreneurial cohesion.

Establishing the Cultural and Governance Foundation for Collaboration

The panel first established that a functional global ecosystem requires a shared cultural mindset and ethical guardrails. Professor Thobekani Lose of Nelson Mandela University emphasised the profound link between policy and culture, stating, “Policy shapes culture. Our recommendations must foster a tangible culture of entrepreneurship accessible to all, from villages to cities, built on a deep understanding of diverse regional perspectives.” He championed collaboration over competition among ecosystem actors.

On governance, Hilton Theunissen of Growth Wheel addressed the urgent challenge of Artificial Intelligence, warning of the risk of digital exclusion. “With the Global South contributing only 4% of the data training today’s AI, we risk deepening inequalities,” he argued, calling for “harmonised global AI policies to balance innovation with fairness and transparency, and to accelerate the inclusion of women in tech.”

Building Foundational Digital Infrastructure

The Startup ID The discussion then turned to the critical need for interoperable digital infrastructure to solve practical founder pain points. Articulating the entrepreneur’s perspective, Sbusiso Buna of Jobox highlighted the debilitating friction in scaling globally. “Founders face the inefficiency of submitting the same information repeatedly to banks, regulators, and partners in every new market,” he explained.

His solution was a direct, founder-led call for a unified digital identity: “We need a universal Startup ID or digital passport. This would simplify cross-border registration, banking, and fundraising, letting entrepreneurs focus on building rather than navigating redundant paperwork.” This proposal directly operationalised the earlier call for a digital footprint made by the Inclusion and Sustainability Taskforce.

Operationalising the Vision: The Global Ecosystem Exchange (GEX) and Policy Coherence

The panel concluded by synthesising the mechanisms to implement this vision, focusing on a tangible exchange framework and the political will for policy harmonisation.

- The Global Ecosystem Exchange (GEX) as an Implementation Framework: Ercilia Ubisse of ANDE detailed the proposed GEX, designed to ensure continuity beyond annual G20 presidencies. “Ecosystems don’t connect themselves; people do,” she stated, outlining a hybrid structure. “The GEX combines a digital platform with physical ‘gateway nodes’ in each G20 country. These nodes act as real-world labs to pilot policies like the Startup Passport and share local best practices globally.”
- Enabling Policy Coherence and Strategic Alliances: Tshegofatso Motaung of Cedarlab Africa addressed the political and practical hurdles to implementation. She pointed to existing frameworks like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as real-world testing grounds for policy harmonisation. Noting the

tension between national interests and multilateral goals, she stressed that "policies must be practically implemented to enable tangible outcomes, like the free movement of products." She concluded with a strategic imperative: "For the SU20 to maximise impact, close collaboration with the B20 (Business 20) is a necessity to access larger networks, influence, and budgets."

This panel's examination of how to build a collaborative ecosystem set the stage for the final discussion on the practical lessons of scaling startups within it.By aligning a collaborative culture, ethical governance, practical digital infrastructure, and an implementable alliance framework, the panel set the essential groundwork for all subsequent discussions. It established that the future of scalable entrepreneurship depends on a consciously built global architecture that reduces friction and amplifies access for founders everywhere.

4.7 Scaling Startups: Lessons from Ecosystem Builders in Developed and Developing Economies

The final panel discussion of the summit, "Scaling Startups: Lessons from Ecosystem Builders in Developed and Developing Economies," was designed to facilitate critical knowledge sharing across different contexts. It brought together high-level delegates from international organisations and national agencies to share proven strategies and cautionary tales. The goal was to distill universal principles for scaling startups while acknowledging the unique challenges and opportunities present in diverse economic environments, thereby reinforcing the summit's commitment to global collaboration through shared learning.

Speaker	Organistation
Gianluca Riccio (Moderator)	Chair of the Business at OECD (BIAC) Finance Committee
Christopher Rachal	Minority Business Development Agency; SU20 United States of America Delegate
Peter Mebert	Founder and CEO, Merbert Group
Sbusiso Buna	Merbert Group
Franziska Teubert	Managing Director, German Startups Association
Tshembani Khuphane	Senior Manager: Seed Fund, Technology Innovation Agency (TIA)
Tom Mkhwanazi	Chief Executive Officer, Wholesale & Retail SETA (W&RSETA)

Moderated by Gianluca Riccio of Business at OECD, this session provided a fitting conclusion to the thematic discussions, transitioning the summit towards its final outcomes and forward-looking commitments. For any startup, scaling is the ultimate test of its model, team, and resilience. This process is profoundly shaped by the unique characteristics of its home ecosystem, including market dynamics, access to capital, and regulatory frameworks. This panel offered a comparative analysis of the distinct challenges and enablers for scaling startups in developed and developing economies. A universal tension emerged from the discussion: the conflict between the benefits of strong, nationally-nurtured ecosystems and the persistent friction of cross-border scalinga central challenge the SU20 aims to resolve.

Scaling in Developed Ecosystems: Navigating Fragmentation and Culture

The panel first examined the sophisticated yet complex environments of mature economies, where abundant capital and infrastructure are counterbalanced by regulatory fragmentation and high cultural barriers. Franziska Teubert of the German Startups Association highlighted Europe's paradox: *"While national ecosystems in Germany and France are strong, scaling across EU borders means starting registration and compliance from scratch in each new country."* She noted the lesson from the South African presidency to "think continentally," a mindset Europe must adopt to overcome its fragmentation.
From the U.S. perspective, Peter Mebert of the Merbert Group outlined a dual reality: *"The U.S. offers the world's largest VC market and a vast support infrastructure, but success demands a specific entrepreneurial spirit self-reliance, courage, and the initiative to 'just go and do it.'"* He detailed that international founders must overcome both *"hard barriers like visas and legal systems, and soft barriers like cultural norms and networking codes."*

Scaling in Developing Ecosystems: Building Foundations and Expanding Reach

The conversation then turned to the dynamic growth and distinct challenges of maturing ecosystems, where foundational support and market expansion are critical. Tshembani Khuphane of TIA charted South Africa's evolution: *"Our ecosystem has matured from limited early-stage funding to a thriving network of VCs and incubators."* However, he identified a key constraint: *"A major challenge is scaling beyond our borders, as many startups initially focus on solving hyper-local problems."* He emphasised the strategic imperative of "expanding support to townships and rural areas to ensure inclusive innovation."

Tom Mkhwanazi of W&RSETA addressed the human capital foundation, detailing his agency's role in *"providing grants to upskill employees and foster youth entrepreneurship."* He stressed the importance of "fit-for-purpose training that considers regional needs and education levels," and championed the value of *"international collaboration for learning, as seen in exchanges with ecosystems in Kenya and Egypt."*

Navigating the Universal Realities of Finance and Failure

The panel concluded by synthesising a universal truth about scaling: the non-negotiable requirement of financial viability and the instructive role of failure. This final analysis provided grounded, practical wisdom for founders and policymakers alike.

- **The Pathway to Traditional Finance:** Christopher Rachal, the SU20 USA Delegate, provided a starkly pragmatic perspective on finance. “Robust banking regulations exist to protect public savings, which is why traditional banks cannot be the first port of call for unproven startups,” he explained. He outlined the proven pathway: “The most effective way to secure traditional financing is to first have a proven product and existing contracts to package the business in a way that is viable for lenders.”
- **The Visibility and Value of Failure:** Rachal also offered a crucial reframe on entrepreneurial failure, contrasting its high visibility in structured economies like the U.S. with its invisibility in informal settings. He presented failure not as an end, but as a visible, and therefore learnable, milestone on the path to scale a necessary piece of market feedback that is often missing in less documented economies.

This incisive final discussion provided a masterclass in comparative ecosystem analysis, grounding the summit’s ambitious visions in the practical realities of global startup scaling. By juxtaposing the lessons from developed and developing economies, the panel crystallised the essential, collaborative work ahead: to leverage each region’s strengths be it capital, culture, or nascent dynamism while systematically dismantling the barriers, both hard and soft, that prevent founders from achieving global reach. It was a powerful capstone that directly informed the strategic outcomes and legacy initiatives to follow.

5. Summit Outcomes and The Path Forward

This final section of the summit transitioned from discussion to action, outlining the concrete legacy projects and closing commitments that will carry the event's momentum forward. It crystallised the summit's purpose by defining a clear path for continued impact and collaboration.

5.1 SU20 South Africa Legacy Project

Vuyani Jarana, SU20 South Africa Chairperson

A key outcome of the summit was the announcement of the SU20 South Africa Legacy Project. Presented jointly by SU20 Chair Vuyani Jarana and the SU20 USA delegation, this initiative represents a tangible commitment to implementing the summit's goals. Critically, the legacy project moves beyond the abstract nature of a communiqué to create a direct mechanism for accountability and sustained impact. It is designed to ensure that the summit's influence endures, providing a lasting

framework for supporting South Africa's startup ecosystem and strengthening international partnerships on the ground.

Mr. Vuyani Jarana, Chairperson of SU20, announced two primary legacy initiatives. These were created to address critical challenges identified during the presidency, including limited administrative capacity, the need to bring all G20 countries into the fold, and the imperative for meaningful advocacy on the global stage.

- **Startup20 International:** This entity is being established as a formal, global non-profit organisation. Its mandate is to provide the administrative capacity to support the programs of the SU20 Engagement Group, drive meaningful advocacy, and fulfill the crucial mission of engaging all G20 countries to ensure inclusive participation.

- **Startup South Africa:** To address internal coordination challenges and prevent the loss of momentum at the national level, this organisation has been established. Its purpose is to coordinate the local ecosystem, create opportunities, and sustain the work of the SU20 by working “hand in glove with Startup20 International.”

Mr. Jahana concluded his address with a powerful declaration, marking the culmination of the presidency’s efforts: *“We have fought a good fight, we have finished the race, we have kept the faith.”*

This announcement of a durable legacy paved the way for the final reflections on the summit’s overall message and achievements.

5.2 Closing Reflections: The Final Word Inspiring Change Together

Thulisile Manzini, Director-General of the Department of Small Business Development.

The summit’s concluding address, “The Final Word: Inspiring Change Together,” was delivered by Thulisile Manzini, Director-General of the Department of Small Business Development. Her reflections served as the summit’s definitive call to action, urging delegates to translate the insights and connections gained into meaningful change within their respective ecosystems.

The summit’s closing remarks served as a final, powerful synthesis of the key policy commitments and the collective vision for the future of global entrepreneurship. The address consolidated two days of intensive deliberation into a clear and forward-looking agenda, anchored by a monumental strategic shift articulated by the Director-General, Ms. Thulisile Manzini: “the importance of moving away from aid to investment, driving prosperity in all countries.”

The DG highlighted the groundbreaking and futuristic nature of the policy recommendations advanced by the task forces. These centered on four transformative pillars designed to achieve this shift from aid-based support to investment-driven growth:

- Global Ecosystem Integration: Combating the isolation of startups by linking them to global networks of learning, trade, and investment through initiatives like the Global Ecosystem Exchange (GEX).
- Access to Finance: Developing innovative platforms to unlock new capital flows, with a specific focus on tokenised community finance.
- Harmonisation: Creating unified frameworks for tax incentives and establishing a seamless digital trade environment through centralised platforms and a startup passport.
- Credit Innovation: Moving beyond traditional credit models by utilising alternative and inclusive data to expand financial access.

The DG issued a critical call to action for all G20 governments: legislative and policy frameworks must evolve at the same rapid pace as entrepreneurial innovation. Outdated regulations stifle economic growth, create uncertainty, and hinder a nation's ability to adapt to modern challenges. She noted that, inspired by the SU20 deliberations, South Africa has already initiated the development of its own startup policy for high-growth, scalable businesses.

This final address encapsulated the summit's spirit of bold, actionable change and set a clear, ambitious tone for the work that lies ahead.

6. Conclusion

The Startup20 Summit 2025 in Johannesburg successfully unified a global cohort of leaders around a clear and urgent mission: empowering startups and MSMEs to be resilient, innovative, and sustainable drivers of economic growth. Over two intensive days, the discussions moved analytically from foundational needs like finance and policy to the critical imperatives of inclusion, sustainability, and cross-border collaboration. The adoption of the SU20 Communiqué, coupled with the launch of the tangible SU20 South Africa Legacy Project, transformed dialogue into concrete commitments, solidifying the summit's role as a vital platform for influencing global policy.

The ultimate message of the summit was one of profound transformation. As the closing remarks powerfully stated, the delegates have not just gathered but have aligned; they have not just spoken but have committed; and they are not just imagining a better future but have already begun building it together. This ethos was reinforced by a final call to action for delegates to continue to network, build, and grow, recognising that the summit's true work continues through personal connection. With the launch of Startup20 International and Startup South Africa, a durable legacy has been established to carry this vital work forward. The responsibility now transitions to the next G20 presidency, which will inherit a more structured, more unified, and more ambitious global startup ecosystem.

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