

**US foreign policy**

## Marco Rubio shuns G20 meeting in South Africa over 'equality' drive

Top US diplomat echoes Donald Trump and Elon Musk in condemning promotion of 'solidarity' and 'sustainability'



US secretary of state Marco Rubio: 'South Africa is doing very bad things . . . My job is to advance America's national interests, not waste taxpayer money or coddle anti-Americanism' © Mark Schiefelbein/Reuters

**Monica Mark** in Johannesburg 12 HOURS AGO

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US secretary of state Marco Rubio has said he will snub the meeting of G20 foreign ministers from the world's biggest economies in Johannesburg this month over South Africa's attempts to promote "equality, solidarity and sustainability".

[Rubio](#), the US's highest-ranking diplomat, echoed the anger of US President Donald Trump and his South African-born adviser Elon Musk over land ownership laws that replace those dating from the apartheid era.

"I will NOT attend the G20 summit in Johannesburg," Rubio [said on X](#): "South Africa is doing very bad things. Expropriating private property. Using G20 to promote 'solidarity, equality, & sustainability.' In other words: DEI and climate change.

"My job is to advance America's national interests, not waste taxpayer money or coddle anti-Americanism."

[South Africa](#) is the first country from the continent to hold the G20's rotating leadership, and has made climate justice for countries of the global south one of its priorities. The US will take over the leadership next year — a handover that is now likely to be strained.

It is unusual for a country to miss attending G20 meetings, and the US's absence

comes at a time when China is seeking to further strengthen its ties to Africa. Rubio, a hawk on China, has also criticised South Africa for its recent pressure on Taiwan in accordance with Beijing's wishes.

South African officials appeared to be baffled by Rubio's boycott of the meeting. "This is not a South African event. It's a global event," said Songezo Zibi, an opposition MP. "The Trump administration is fundamentally hell-bent on isolating the United States, weakening its role in international institutions and destroying its soft power."

Foreign minister Ronald Lamola said South Africa's G20 presidency was "not confined to just climate change but also equitable treatment for nations of the global south, ensuring an equal global system for all".

Wu Peng, China's ambassador to South Africa, met Lamola on Thursday and [said pointedly on X](#) that he had "expressed China's readiness to support South Africa's G20 Presidency".

Ziyanda Stuurman, an independent Cape Town-based analyst, said that the troika of previous, present and future hosts often had to work through their different priorities but Rubio's withdrawal was "a pretty intense escalation even with there being a general understanding that the US-South Africa relationship is tense".

She added that it seemed the US was "retreating from the world stage. And nature abhors a vacuum — there will be either a country or a group of countries that step forward, whether it's on the trade front or the diplomacy front."

On Monday, Trump accused South African authorities of treating "certain classes of people VERY BADLY" after President Cyril Ramaphosa signed an expropriation bill that allows land to be seized without compensation in circumstances where the government believes it is "just and equitable and in the public interest".

The legislation replaces laws dating from the apartheid era, during which thousands of non-white families were forcibly removed from their land for the benefit of a white minority. About a quarter of farmland today is owned by black South Africans, who represent 80 per cent of the population.

"I will be cutting off all future funding to South Africa until a full investigation of this situation has been completed!" Trump said on X.

Musk, a close Trump ally and head of the "Department of Government Efficiency" responded to Ramaphosa's statement by alleging that the country had "openly racist

ownership laws”.

It is not clear whether the US will now pull out of the G20, whose meetings over the year culminate in a summit in November.

A South African official said no US officials had been in contact regarding the US’s attendance.

“The US secretary of state has not yet spoken either to the South African president or the minister of foreign affairs,” the official said. “He possibly does not have any meaningful level of understanding of what he is talking about . . . [if] he is pulling away from a major international event without consulting other members of the G20.”

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