

An ambitious G20 agenda

By H.E. MARK KENT

AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC



MARK KENT

is a graduate in Law from the University of Oxford. He gained a Master's degree in European Law and Economics from the Université Libre de Bruxelles in Belgium, and has a postgraduate qualification in Business Administration from the Open University. He has language qualifications in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, Vietnamese and Thai. He previously served as Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand (2012-2016) and Ambassador to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (2007-2010). He has been British Ambassador to the Argentine Republic since July 2016.

Argentina is the first South American country to host the G20 and has led an excellent presidency this year. From the outset, Argentina enthusiastically embraced the opportunities and challenges that come with the G20 Presidency. President Macri established clear objectives to run a successful Presidency by building “consensus for fair and sustainable development.” We welcome Argentina's return to the forefront of the international stage and see the Presidency as a tangible demonstration of Argentina's “intelligent insertion into the world.”

Argentina's overarching vision for G20 cooperation is to generate inclusive growth, through “building consensus for fair and sustainable development”. Their three priorities have been the *Future of Work*, *Infrastructure for Development* and a *Sustainable Food Future*.

The *Future of Work* has focused on how technology is changing traditional employment structures and how countries can best prepare for the future. G20 countries share an interest in ensuring that technological change is inclusive and that we harness its benefits.

For Argentina, *Infrastructure for Development*, a key global priority, was chosen to help catalyse private sector investment and close the global “infrastructure gap.” More efficient transportation services, better sanitation and access to energy flows and digital connectivity is important in creating a more equitable world.

The G20 collectively account for 60 per cent of all agricultural land and almost 80 per cent of world trade in food and agricultural commodities. The focus on a *Sustainable Food Future* and soil productivity was chosen because of the concern that this limited resource needs protection in order to secure sustainable development.

Argentina's priorities worked in alignment with the key themes of Canada's G7 Presidency, with both fora making the issue of empowering women a lynchpin of their work. The W20 engagement group also played a vital role in bringing together civil society, think tanks, businesses, NGOs and entrepreneurs to influence policies at the very heart of the G20.

Argentina has not shied away from an ambitious agenda, including bringing together trade ministers to discuss keeping markets open, addressing economic development and reinvigorating the international trading system. Throughout the year, Argentina built consensus through the various statements and communiqués that G20 Ministers have agreed to over the course of 2018.

The UK has supported Argentina's ambitions throughout, with frequent Ministerial contact. We co-hosted the exercise at the Health Ministerial to test G20 leaders on how we would tackle the spread of an infection that is resistant to antibiotics. The crisis simulation placed ministers in a fictional scenario where an outbreak spread across borders, putting public health, livestock, trade and travel at risk.

Bilaterally, the G20 has helped us deepen engagement with Argentina on a range of global issues. We have supported numerous visits by British experts and institutes to share their knowledge with both Argentina and the G20 on a wider scale.

The G20 has showcased the best of Argentina to the world. Throughout 2018, Argentina has hosted over 50 official-level meetings covering themes such as climate sustainability to digital economy. These have prepared the ground for the nine Ministerial meetings (Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors held further meetings outside Argentina) and the Leaders' Summit.

The seven official G20 Engagement Groups have hosted their own Summits and there have been many side events linked to G20 themes. The B20 hosted over 1800 participants from the private sector, governments and international organisations to discuss the need to create jobs, provide quality education, develop infrastructure and generate equal opportunities for all. The T20 brought together a similarly diverse crowd including some of the most important think tanks in the world – 54 sessions with over 170 high level international speakers, including from the UK. Argentina has also broadened outreach further. For the first time ever, the J(ustice)20 invited Supreme Court representatives of G20 countries to discuss the role played by the judiciary in solving today's global challenges.

As 2018 draws to a close, minds will turn towards Argentina's G20 Presidency legacy. Argentina will remain a member of the G20 Troika next year, alongside Japan and Saudi Arabia as G20 Presidency hosts in 2019, and 2020 respectively.

The Presidency comes at a time of considerable global, political and economic challenges, but Argentina has succeeded in establishing itself as a constructive and reliable international partner. President Macri set out to ensure that Argentina was able “to join a global conversation” and in this, Argentina has been supremely successful. **F**