

Saudi Arabia Highlights Global Innovation Leadership at G20 Startup20 Summit in Johannesburg

Saudi Arabia concluded a high-impact participation at the G20 Startup20 Summit held under the presidency of the Republic of South Africa, presenting a forward-looking vision for global innovation and entrepreneurship.

Led by Prince Fahd bin Mansour bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz, Head of Saudi G20 Startup20, the Saudi delegation showcased the Kingdom's growing role in shaping the international startup landscape — aligned with global priorities and South Africa's G20 agenda.

A Strong Saudi Delegation with a Future-Driven Outlook

The Saudi delegation included experts in investment, technology, entrepreneurship, sustainability, and ecosystem development. The team engaged in technical discussions, policy sessions, and bilateral meetings focused on:

- Advancing cross-border startup growth;
- Enhancing talent mobility;
- Strengthening innovation diplomacy;
- Developing investment frameworks for global capital flows.

Prince Fahd affirmed:

“Saudi Arabia continues to support a globally connected innovation ecosystem. Our work with South Africa and our G20 partners is laying the foundation for a more dynamic, more inclusive, and more competitive future for entrepreneurs worldwide.”

Key Deliverables Toward the 2026 US Summit

Saudi Arabia played an instrumental role in shaping the next phase of the Startup20 agenda, including:

- The Joint G20 Innovation Roadmap;
- Cross-border funding and investment mechanisms;
- Youth entrepreneurship and skills development programmes;
- A comprehensive progress report to be presented at the 2026 G20 Startup20 Summit in the United States.

Prince Fahd added:

“Johannesburg marks an important milestone. The United States in 2026 will be the moment where the world sees the long-term vision of this group come to life.”

A Transformational Moment for Africa

Saudi Arabia’s participation delivered tangible value to South Africa and African markets, reinforcing a shared commitment to inclusive development and innovation-led growth. Key areas of collaboration included:

- Opening new routes for investment between Africa and the Gulf;
- Technology cooperation and ecosystem building;
- Talent mobility for African innovators;
- Alignment on digital transformation, energy transition, and SME development;
- Mandela × NEOM: A Vision for Africa’s Future.

The Summit also featured a notable address inspired by the legacy of Nelson Mandela, delivered as part of an African initiative in collaboration with NEOM.

The address highlighted the future of development across the continent and emphasised the role of innovation in empowering youth, strengthening sustainability, and expanding economic opportunity.

Speakers stressed the importance of long-term cooperation between Africa and transformational projects such as NEOM, noting that investment in technology, clean energy, and education represents a path toward realising Mandela’s vision of a connected, resilient, and prosperous Africa.

The address further emphasised that strategic partnerships between African institutions and pioneering initiatives like NEOM open new pathways for entrepreneurship, talent development, and global integration — offering African innovators unprecedented opportunities to shape the future of innovation.

A Major Win for Sustainability: Net Zero Recognised in Johannesburg

A highlight of the Summit was the recognition of the Saudi startup Net Zero, which received top honours for its innovations in environmental sustainability.

To support African communities, Net Zero announced a dedicated tree-planting initiative across South Africa — reinforcing the Kingdom’s commitment to climate resilience and green development across the continent.

Looking Ahead to the United States 2026

With Johannesburg successfully concluded, Saudi Arabia now turns its focus to the upcoming 2026 G20 Startup20 Summit in the United States.

The Kingdom will advance:

- A unified global innovation roadmap;
- A multi-country investment and funding architecture;
- Youth and talent mobility frameworks;
- A first-ever global progress report initiated in South Africa;
- Saudi Arabia's Message to the World.

Prince Fahd concluded:

“Our role in the Startup20 platform reflects Saudi Arabia's belief in a connected, collaborative global innovation economy. We look forward to continuing this work alongside all our partners — and to presenting a stronger, more unified agenda as we head toward the 2026 Summit in the United States.”