

**MEDIA BRIEFING BY THE MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND  
COOPERATION, DR NALEDI PANDOR, ON SOUTH AFRICA'S STATE OF READINESS  
TO HOST THE XV BRICS SUMMIT**

**Monday 7 August 2023**

Ladies and gentlemen,

This briefing provides an update on preparations for our hosting of the 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit in Sandton, Gauteng, from 22 to 24 August 2023.

BRICS is an informal grouping of leading emerging markets and developing countries, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Together BRICS has around 42% of the world's population, almost 30% of the world's territory, around 27% of global GDP and around 20% of international trade.

South Africa is privileged to be chair of BRICS this year, for the third time since we were invited to join in 2010, our theme is ***"BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Multilateralism."***

The theme reflects our vision of BRICS providing global leadership in addressing the needs and concerns of the majority of the world, namely beneficial economic growth, sustainable development and inclusion of the global South in multilateral systems. Furthermore, our theme reflects our belief in the benefits a partnership with Africa can bring to BRICS, with our partners eager to explore opportunities to support, and benefit from, operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

**REFLECTION ON KEY BRICS MEETINGS HELD:**

Since January 2023, we have held a large number of meetings across all three pillars of cooperation, namely 1. political and security, 2. economic and financial; and 3. social and people-to-people cooperation.

Deputy Minister Mashego-Dlamini chaired the 9th meeting of BRICS Deputy Foreign Ministers and Special Envoys on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in hybrid format on 26 April 2023. The meeting reflected on the ongoing complex geo-political challenges faced by the region. The whole world has noted the positive developments in the region since China brooked a rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This historic agreement demonstrates the power of dialogue and mediation in a region where military options are often the norm.

I hosted my fellow BRICS Foreign Ministers in Cape Town on 1 June 2023 where we had frank and constructive discussions on global political and economic developments, the New Development Bank, preparations for the XV BRICS Summit and BRICS Institutional Development.

We were later joined by thirteen Foreign Ministers from African and developing countries for a Friends of BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting on 2 June 2023. It was an opportunity to strengthen our global partnership and highlight our shared concerns about the impact of global power contestation on the global economy as well as on development. Our friends value BRICS as a champion of South-South cooperation in a multi-polar world and called on BRICS to continue to advance reform of the global multilateral architecture and to reinforce the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

Last week, the BRICS Civil Forum, BRICS Ministers of Communication, BRICS Ministers of Health, and BRICS Ministers of Science and Innovation concluded their meetings. The meetings were held in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Gqeberha respectively. As Cabinet, we have encouraged BRICS meetings to be held in different our towns and cities so that our guests have a wide range of experience of our beautiful country. It is also important that the tangible economic benefits of hosting our BRICS partners are experienced in a variety of communities.

The impact of the end of the pandemic has further diversified our options for arranging meetings in-person, virtually or in a hybrid format. These options provide greater flexibility to the relationship and limit some of the expenses occasioned by the number of BRICS cooperation mechanisms. Today, we look forward to the outcomes of the virtual BRICS Ministers of Trade and BRICS Ministers of Industry meetings and the start of the BRICS Ministers of Agriculture meetings in Limpopo.

We welcome the mainstreaming of Youth across our sectoral meetings with the Youth Summit held recently and reporting the BRICS Ministers responsible for the Youth, the Young Scientists competition being held alongside the BRICS Ministers of Science and Innovation and the Fifth BRICS Youth Energy Summit held last week. Their report will be conveyed to the BRICS Ministers of Energy meeting to be held in Johannesburg next week. We are pleased at the first meeting of BRICS Women Ministers, as well as the first meeting of disability experts in Gauteng next week. Later, post-Summit, meetings at the ministerial level, such as the Tourism Ministers' meeting will continue.

## **XV BRICS SUMMIT:**

Ladies and gentlemen,

All these activities build up to the XV BRICS Summit which will provide an opportunity for BRICS Leaders to reflect on all the elements of BRICS cooperation, including the practical mutually beneficial areas of BRICS cooperation, regional and global economic and political developments as well as the global governance reform agenda. The XV BRICS Summit will also provide an opportunity to amplify the voices of our friends in Africa and the global South with the BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogues.

President Ramaphosa has confirmed South Africa's readiness to host the XV BRICS Summit, in person, in Sandton, Johannesburg. It is the first BRICS Summit to be hosted in person since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent global travel restrictions.

We chair BRICS in a dynamic global environment where the eyes of the world are on us. Developments in the ICC were the sole topic of discussion around the Summit for most of the year. We have consistently stated that we are aware of our domestic and international legal obligations. We have also been very conscious of the diplomatic implications of the narratives created around these developments.

Our President therefore engaged in wide-ranging consultations with BRICS Leaders and by mutual agreement, President Putin will not attend the Summit in person. The Summit will be attended by the leaders of Brazil, India, China and South Africa and President Putin will actively participate in the Leaders' discussion virtually.

## **XV BRICS SUMMIT: BRICS BUSINESS FORUM**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Leading up to the Summit, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the BRICS Business Council will be hosting a content-rich BRICS Business Programme from 19 to 23 August which seeks to foster economic growth, promote collaboration, attract investment, and showcase opportunities within South Africa, Africa and BRICS countries. All the BRICS Business Councils are bringing large business delegations to South Africa.

Delegations are invited to sector-focused visits to the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and special economic zones in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal. An exhibition at Gallagher Estate includes a Product Wing showcasing proudly South African products and services from over 200 South African companies, and more from the rest of Africa. These business-to-business interactions are aimed at increasing Intra-Africa as well as intra-BRICS trade and investment.

South African industry leaders, BRICS experts and invited African businesses will engage in a range of dialogues to foster an environment of collaboration, driving strategic economic partnerships to expand trade and investment opportunities, knowledge exchange and capacity building. The programme includes the following dialogues:

- Energy Cooperation Forum
- Accelerating Infrastructure Development through Government Business/Private Partnerships
- Embracing the Digital Economy for Transformation and Advancement
- BRICS Dialogue on Airlift Strategy
- Importance of Skills for Emerging and Future Jobs
- Development Finance Institutions Funding Instruments
- The BRICS Manufacturing Forum, and
- Oceans Economy High-Level Dialogue.

As an outcome of South Africa's Chairing of BRICS in 2013, the BRICS Business Council celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2023 and we look forward to the celebrations as well as the outcomes of the review of the work of the Council in its first ten years. Minister Patel will provide more details on the business programme in due course.

The first event on the BRICS Leaders' programme is the BRICS Business Forum Leaders Dialogue on the afternoon of Tuesday 22 August. The Leaders will get a report on the outcomes of the deliberations during the BRICS Business Forum and will deliver statements reflecting on BRICS economic relations.

### **BRICS LEADERS RETREAT:**

Following the Business Forum, the Leaders move to a quieter venue for the BRICS Leaders Retreat. This is a signature event of South Africa as BRICS Chair. Leaders meet in a comfortable setting in a private venue for an unscripted discussion of contemporary issues of importance. There is no set agenda and Leaders can initiate a discussion on issues of choice such as BRICS membership expansion, reform of global governance, or use of local currencies.

### **XV BRICS SUMMIT PLENARY:**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Wednesday 23 August, the XV BRICS Summit continues with a closed plenary followed by an open plenary session. The Summit is held under the theme of South Africa as Chair, namely: *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Multilateralism*.

BRICS Leaders are expected to discuss opportunities for realising the full potential of BRICS for inclusive global economic recovery and sustainable development, strengthening mutually beneficial partnerships with Africa and the global South in a multi-polar world, deepening and strengthening progressive multilateralism and delivering meaningful global governance reform as well as addressing the marginalisation of women in peace processes and fostering an environment of peace and development.

The Leaders' national statements are followed by reports by the President of the New Development Bank, the South African Chair of the BRICS Business Council and the South African Chair of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance.

### **NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK:**

The New Development Bank was established by BRICS members in 2015 to play a catalytic role in providing financial support to emerging markets and developing countries for infrastructure and sustainable development. The Bank has to date approved twelve projects in South Africa, valued at around \$5.4 billion, to improve service delivery in critical areas. In late 2021, the Bank welcomed Bangladesh, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay as new members firmly positioning the Bank as a preferred global financing mechanism for emerging markets and developing countries.

In March this year, Ms Dilma Rousseff, former President of Brazil, was elected as President of the New Development Bank. Ms Rousseff has a unique perspective as she was Chair of BRICS in 2014 when Leaders signed the agreement to establish the Bank in Fortaleza, Brazil. This

will be her first engagement with BRICS Leaders on the management of the Bank. This is an opportunity to share her vision for the Bank in the current economic climate.

This is a very topical discussion as countries of the global South are reflecting on the need to bring fairness to global financial systems and de-risk our economies and institutions from over-dependence on a single currency.

### **BRICS ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP:**

BRICS economies are at the centre of the recovery of global economic growth and there is a need to ensure that this brings benefits to other economies of the global South, particularly on the African continent. The developing world is faced not only with food and energy insecurity, the impact of unilateral sanctions on Russia but also the sustained impact of America's trade war with China. The combined economic strength of BRICS should be a catalyst for sustainable global economic recovery and respond to the needs of our businesses and communities.

One of South Africa's key stated objectives of BRICS membership is to leverage its political and economic relations with BRICS members to address the triple challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment through increased intra-BRICS trade, investment, tourism, capacity building, skills, and technology transfers.

South Africa's overall trade with its BRICS partners has increased by an average growth of 10% over the period 2017-2021. Total South African trade with BRICS reached R830 billion in 2022 from R487 billion in 2017. Last year, BRICS accounted for 21% of South Africa's global trade. Trade with China remains the dominant force but the share of other BRICS partners also increased by 10% from 2021 to 2022.

South Africa continues to have a trade deficit in its overall trade with BRICS countries. The urgent need for trade diversification as primary products continue to be the largest share of exports, therefore remains.

The Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership is the guiding document that aims to develop opportunities for market access and facilitate market inter-linkages, promote mutual trade and investment, and create a business-friendly environment, and diversify trade and investment cooperation that supports value addition.

### **BRICS BUSINESS COUNCIL:**

The BRICS Business Council and the BRICS Women's Business Alliance are important Track II bodies bringing together big business and women entrepreneurs respectively from all BRICS members. These important commercial networks established on both ends of the business spectrum are vital to strengthening the economic partnership in BRICS.

The engagement between Leaders and the BRICS Business Council and the BRICS Women's Business Alliance at the Summit gives business the opportunity to make recommendations to Leaders on issues of trade and investment based on their concrete experience of the business environment.

As mentioned previously, the BRICS Business Council was established when South Africa chaired BRICS 2013 and the Council is expected to share with Leaders the outcomes of its review of the work of the Council over the last decade and opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness of the Council.

#### **BRICS JOINT STATISTICAL PUBLICATION:**

An overlooked 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is that of the BRICS Joint Statistical Publication. In 2013, the National Statistical Offices of BRICS countries agreed to develop a common publication of statistics and statistical indicators of BRICS countries. The publication is a comprehensive self-reflection of the economic and social development of BRICS countries that provides the data needed by BRICS countries for policy development. Statistics South Africa, together with their BRICS counterparts, is finalising the 2023 Joint Statistical Publication Snapshot to be distributed to Leaders during the Summit.

#### **BRICS WOMEN'S BUSINESS ALLIANCE:**

For the BRICS Women's Business Alliance, this will be the first in-person engagement with BRICS Leaders as it was established in 2020 under the Chairship of Russia during the height of the pandemic. This Alliance aims to empower and advance women entrepreneurs in BRICS to create a vibrant network in partnership with others that facilitates knowledge-sharing, skill development, and business opportunities for women across diverse sectors and industries.

Their flagship meeting is the BRICS-Africa WBA Trade Conference to be held in Durban from 20 to 21 August which brings together over 500 women-owned businesses, including micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, from BRICS and Africa. The conference will include the first in-person joint meeting of BRICS WBA national chapters and develop recommendations to be presented to BRICS Leaders at the Summit.

Following the reports from the New Development Bank, BRICS Business Council and the BRICS Women's Business Alliance, the Summit is expected to adopt **the eGoli Declaration as the main outcome document of the 2023 BRICS Leaders Summit.**

#### **DELIVERABLES:**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The eGoli Declaration will express BRICS views on contemporary regional and global political, financial and economic issues, reflect on the outcomes of mutually beneficial areas of cooperation during the year and the key outcomes of South Africa's Chairship.

South Africa is pleased to welcome the first meeting of Ministers responsible for Women Affairs as an important step in mainstreaming women's issues across all areas of BRICS cooperation. We have also welcomed the recommendations by the Youth Summit for the establishment of a BRICS Youth Council that will add to the voices being heard by BRICS Leaders at future

Summits. We also welcome the first meeting of BRICS disability experts as a concrete step forward in addressing the needs of vulnerable groups. A first seminar on Public Sector Reform was held and the outcomes of the exchange of best practice are supporting the National School of Government in its policy recommendations to government.

The Working Group on Security in the Use of ICTs exchanges best practice in cybersecurity and South Africa will in September host the first workshop on incident management which brings together the actual Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) from BRICS countries to workshop case studies and exchange practical experiences and knowledge.

The BRICS Business Council in collaboration with the BRICS University network is working to identify, connect and establish a network of BRICS research Centres of Excellence in the Just Energy Transition that would provide the analysis, data and statistics and policy recommendations to support governments in a Just Transition.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Energy and Water SETA and the National Research Foundation to establish a Community of Practice to fund a platform for Centres of Excellence (COE) in Africa and BRICS to collaborate.

South Africa has launched an Energy Skills Roadmap identifying the jobs impacted by the Just Transition and the skills that will be required by the new economy. A survey of BRICS countries on current energy skills has been concluded and the aim is to utilise the strengths and opportunities of the BRICS economies to address identified skills gaps with training courses and other opportunities for skills development.

One of the expected outcomes of the BRICS-Africa WBA Trade Conference is the launch of an e-commerce platform connecting agricultural entrepreneurs in BRICS and African countries to better integrate the continent into the agricultural value chain.

Work is also underway to finalise the launch of the BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies in collaboration with UNIDO and we hope to have some progress by the time of the Summit.

## **BRICS MEMBERSHIP EXPANSION:**

Ladies and gentlemen,

BRICS Leaders are also expected to discuss the issue of membership expansion of BRICS. The issue of membership expansion has been discussed at different levels since the first BRIC Summit in 2009. South Africa was welcomed to BRICS as the first beneficiary of expansion in 2010 and invited to its first BRICS Summit in 2011.

The current geopolitical context has driven renewed interest in BRICS membership as countries of the global South look for alternatives in a multi-polar world.

We have had formal expressions of interest from the Leaders of 23 countries in joining BRICS, and many more informal approaches about the possibilities of BRICS membership.

Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Morocco, Nigeria, State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela and Viet Nam.

We see this interest as recognition of the voice of BRICS as a champion of the interests of the global South, particularly our agenda of reform and inclusion of the global South – true to our founding values. As a partnership, BRICS also operates on the principles of openness, solidarity, mutual respect and understanding as well as mutually beneficial cooperation that is seen to deliver tangible benefits.

In the 73<sup>rd</sup> paragraph of the Beijing Declaration of the 14th BRICS Summit, BRICS Leaders mandated Sherpas to hold internal discussions to clarify the guiding principles, standards, criteria and procedures for a BRICS membership expansion process on the basis of full consultation and consensus.

As Chair, South Africa has continued to hold discussions on membership that has built significant convergence on possible models for the expansion process as well as the guiding principles, standards, criteria, and procedures. We continue to meet towards building consensus and hope to have some concrete progress at the Summit.

#### **BRICS-AFRICA OUTREACH AND BRICS PLUS DIALOGUE:**

Ladies and gentlemen,

South Africa's vision for BRICS is to constructively, and in partnership with others, provide global leadership in a world fractured by competition, geopolitical tension, inequality, and deteriorating global security. BRICS should be the catalyst for sustained and mutually beneficial global growth and sustainable development that responds to the needs and demands of the whole world and not just the privileged few. BRICS should lead the way towards the inclusion of Africa and the global South in a more fair, just and equitable world based on mutual respect and the equal sovereignty of nations.

In 2013, South Africa introduced the BRICS-Africa Outreach to draw African leaders into an inclusive association with BRICS Leaders during the BRICS Summit.

The BRICS partners are significant investors in Africa. This Summit will therefore give particular attention to infrastructure development, supported by the New Development Bank, and the African Continental Free Trade Area. The AfCFTA, once fully operational, will unlock the benefits of the continental market and generate mutually beneficial opportunities for both African and BRICS countries.

The BRICS model of cooperation is based on sovereign equality, mutual respect and understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation. This is particularly valued by African States who demand respect and reciprocal trade and investment, and for the goods, products and services from Africa to compete on an equal footing in the global economy.



In 2017, China introduced the BRICS Plus to create a platform for greater interaction and partnerships among countries of the Global South to shape a common agenda. Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated at the time 'We will widen the circle of friends of the BRICS and turn it into the most influential platform for South-South cooperation in the world.'

BRICS and the global South share a common desire for existing global institutional mechanisms to be both strengthened and reformed. Greater participation of countries of the Global South will promote inclusiveness and engender trust.

### **Ladies and gentlemen,**

The President has therefore invited (with consensus support from his fellow BRICS Leaders) sixty-seven (67) Leaders from Africa and the global South to attend the BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogues. The Leaders cover all the continents and regions of the global South.

The President has also invited twenty (20) dignitaries that include the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the President of the New Development Bank, the Chairs and Executive Heads of African Regional Economic Communities, African financial institutions, and the Secretary General of the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat and CEO of the African Union Development Agency.

The BRICS Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogues will reflect on the strengthening of the mutually beneficial BRICS-Africa partnership for growth, development, peace and inclusive multilateralism as well as building mutually beneficial partnerships between BRICS and the global South in a multi-polar world.

To date, confirmations have been received from no less than 34 countries.

### **CONCLUSION:**

According to the IMF, BRICS countries, in terms of purchasing power parity, have a larger share of global economic activity than the G7 countries. This is not a competition, but it is a clear demonstration of the need for the voices of BRICS countries, countries of the global South, countries of Africa to be heard, listened to and respected in global economic, financial and political governance.

The XV BRICS Summit is the venue and occasion for the voices of BRICS, Africa and the global South to converge and be heard. We meet to reflect on the status of cooperation, to consider regional and global developments and to assess the status of global governance reform. We plan to leave the Summit with concrete, practical and implementable plans to strengthen the BRICS-Africa partnership and a way forward towards greater inclusion of the global South in the benefits of global economic recovery and a transformed global order.

The Summit is not the final event of South Africa as Chair of BRICS. We continue our programme of mutually beneficial cooperation until the end of 2023.

We look forward to further meetings including the Ministers for Disaster Management, Ministers of Tourism, possible Ministers of Transport meeting, the BRICS Parliamentary Forum, the Foreign Policy Dialogue, Young Diplomats and the first workshop on incident management later in the year. We particularly look forward to the return of the BRICS Games in October.

We are confident that we will leave 2023 having strengthened the BRICS partnership and having delivered benefits to the people of South Africa, BRICS, Africa and the global South.

We call on South Africans to continue to extend the warmest of South African welcomes to the many official delegates, businesspeople, media and civil society who will arrive from various parts of the continent and the world shortly for the Summit.

**I thank you.**