



Ensuring decent work, dignity, and respect for all

Declaration of the Ninth BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting held on 29 September 2023, Republic of South Africa

1. We, the Ministers of Labour and Employment from the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People's Republic of China, and the Republic of South Africa, met in Durban on 29 September 2023 for the Ninth BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting. Our purpose was to share our respective policy development and discuss and agree on how to address the common labour and employment challenges commonly faced by BRICS countries, all while recognising the importance of flexibility and adaptability in our strategies, considering the unique circumstances of each member state.
2. Against the backdrop of geopolitical changes, we commit to working together in the BRICS spirit featuring mutual respect and understanding, equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness and consensus. We will intensify efforts within various international bodies to shape global labour market policies and agendas.
3. The theme of the Ninth BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting is "Ensuring decent work, dignity, and respect for all". We will focus on the following four priorities to support this goal, namely: [1] Promoting labour rights at work and reducing decent work deficits; [2] Universal access to social protection and ensuring a minimum basic income; [3] Promoting decent work and closing the skills gap in the informal economy; and [4] Building sustainable enterprises, innovation, and enhancing productivity.

Promoting labour rights for all and reducing decent work deficits

4. The labour markets of BRICS members are impacted by future of work mega drivers, including technological advancements, climate change, demographic shifts and changes in investment and trade patterns as well as mutually reinforcing crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic. As we design our response to these challenges, we reaffirm our commitment to respect, promote, and realise fundamental principles and rights at work to provide decent work for all and achieve social justice.

5. In light of the unique labour market conditions and challenges in each BRICS Member Country, we commit to reducing informal work through the promotion of the transition from informal to formal economy, expanding social protection coverage, eliminating discrimination in employment and occupation, ensuring adequate and fair wages and enhancing job security. Respecting, promoting and realising the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRWs) is an ongoing process that necessitates sustained attention and efforts. Therefore, the promotion and realisation of labour rights is a high priority on the agenda of the BRICS countries.
6. Promoting an enabling environment for freedom of association and collective bargaining requires a combination of legal and institutional frameworks, strong employers' and workers' organisations and an efficient labour administration that promotes labour rights, facilitates labour inspection and professional dispute settlement services. Tripartism and regular consultations with the social actors must be enhanced. The effective abolition of child labour remains our priority, and we will step up our efforts to eradicate child labour based on the Durban Call to Action.
7. We acknowledge the significance of labour rights and international labour standards and also acknowledge the necessity to exchange best practices and respect and advocate for labour rights to fortify the resilience of our labour markets. We also commit to using public procurement as a means of promoting decent work and preventing precarisation.

Universal access to social protection and ensuring a minimum basic income

8. Acknowledging that access to social protection is a human right, we commit to prioritising the integration of universal access to social protection within our national frameworks, informed by the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) social security standards, including Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) and the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102).
9. We comprehend the significance of comprehensive social security for poverty eradication and shared prosperity. We advocate for prioritising universal coverage and availability of social security, informed by international labour standards. As BRICS nations, we have made strides in expanding the scope of social security through cooperative frameworks and collaborative studies. However, we acknowledge the necessity to bridge coverage gaps and ensure all-encompassing benefits.
10. We commit to closing coverage and adequacy gaps, ensuring sustainability and equity, extending comprehensive benefits and undertaking efforts to ensure sustainable and equitable resourcing. We also emphasise the importance of both contributory and non-

contributory schemes, with the aim of providing at least a basic level of income security for all through nationally defined social protection floors.

11. We also urge ILO and other international organisations to take into account different measures for social security adopted by BRICS member countries which are currently not included in global reports and databases.
12. Universal social protection plays a pivotal role in eradicating poverty and promoting shared prosperity. Reaffirming the BRICS Social Security Cooperation Framework, endorsed during the 2017 Labour and Employment Ministers Meeting in China, and the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Social and Labour Sphere signed in South Africa in 2018, we are determined to enhance our progress towards universal social protection for all by 2030. This commitment reflects our shared vision of ensuring that every individual, irrespective of their social or economic status, has access to adequate and comprehensive social security systems. We commend the progress made by the BRICS Countries in extending social protection coverage to previously under-served populations and welcome the continued efforts of knowledge sharing and joint programmes among BRICS member countries.

Promoting decent work and closing the skills gap in the informal economy

13. Noting that a higher proportion of workers in the BRICS is in informal employment, we commit to closing the skills gap of the informally employed to reduce decent work deficits and enhance the ability of workers and enterprises to transition to the formal economy. We believe that this approach, with reference to the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), can be applied to addressing new forms of employment in BRICS member countries. Our deliberations showed the importance of enterprise formalisation, skills training and lifelong learning for workers engaged in emerging forms of work, including digital platforms for online deliveries.
14. To achieve this, we will prioritise and advocate for investments in skills development systems. We will develop basic skills programmes that are foundational for other learning, decent work, and civic participation. We will also work towards aligning training to labour market demand, and we will ensure that programme design is sensitive to the needs and constraints of informal economy workers and enterprises, including by improving access to relevant and quality skills training for workers in the informal economy and those engaged in new forms of employment, we aim to enhance their employability, income levels, and overall well-being.
15. Furthermore, we acknowledge that skills are crucial in enabling work mobility and reducing gender disparity. Technology is recognised as a potential tool for providing

skills training to workers both in the formal and informal economy, including distance learning options that cater to those unable to attend traditional in-person education.

16. We commit to creating an enabling environment that promotes the acquisition and development of skills, ensuring that workers in the informal economy have the same access to opportunities for growth and advancement as workers in the formal economy. To this end, we endeavour to promote the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and the establishment of sector-focused educational initiatives and upgrade informal apprenticeships. By recognising the transformative potential of skills training and lifelong learning, the BRICS Member Countries aim to foster inclusive and sustainable economic development, reduce inequalities, and promote decent work for all.

Promoting sustainable enterprises, innovation and enhancing productivity

17. Recognising the significance of sustainable enterprises and the crucial relationship between productivity and decent work, we commit to exploring avenues to optimise this relationship. Our objective is to promote decent work to gain better economic, environmental, and social outcomes, including faster economic growth, innovation, increasing enterprises sustainability, skills development, employment creation, and poverty reduction at macro-economic, sectorial, and enterprise levels.
18. We emphasise the importance of creating policy environments that promote productivity across different types of enterprises and economic sectors. Our long-term goal is to address low productivity levels and poor working conditions by providing a platform for technical support, especially directed to the micro, small low and medium enterprises and solidarity economic enterprises to enhance their productivity and improve the skills of their workforce.
19. We affirm our commitment to promoting sustainable enterprises and strengthening the link between productivity and decent work. By prioritising policies and initiatives that enhance productivity, improve working conditions and promote employment creation, we aim to achieve decent work, and inclusive economies and societies.

Establishment of a BRICS Productivity Ecosystem for Decent Work Platform

20. We welcome South Africa's proposal for the establishment of a BRICS Productivity Ecosystem for Decent Work Platform, aiming to improve collaboration within our BRICS grouping and promote economic growth, sustainable enterprises, productive employment creation and poverty reduction.

21. Through this collaborative initiative, we aim to design and implement coherent, inclusive, and sustainable policies that enhance productivity, improve working conditions, and create productive employment. We emphasise the importance of cross-collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and monitoring and evaluation in achieving our goals and will use the platform as a catalyst for implementing the Productivity Ecosystem for Decent Work approach in our respective countries, within the broader framework of the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025.

The Way Forward

22. We commit to acting in line with this Declaration, responding to the call of our BRICS leaders, and demonstrating our confidence and determination to achieve a human-centred recovery and the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. This Declaration will serve as a reference for our five countries to work together towards stronger, healthier and sustainable global development.
23. We extend our appreciation to our social partners for their valuable contributions to addressing the challenges facing the world of work. We will further strengthen social dialogue, incorporate the views of our social partners in our labour market policies, and promote the inclusive development of the labour market.
24. We express our gratitude to the ILO and the ISSA for their technical support during the 2023 BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting, and we will continue to work closely with them in our ongoing efforts. Their expertise and guidance have been invaluable in shaping our policies and initiatives for the betterment of labour and employment as well as social protection in BRICS member countries.
25. As decided by our Leaders, we welcome the invitation extended to Argentina, Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to join the BRICS family and look forward to working with them on a variety of issues of labour market and development, promotion of decent work, inclusiveness and human-centred growth.
26. Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the South African Presidency for organising the Ninth BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting, the meetings of the Employment Working Group and the Leaders' Summit. We look forward to our next meeting in 2024 under the Presidency of the Russian Federation.