



Family photo: BRICS Member Heads

South Africa joins BRICS partners for Employment and Labour Meetings in India



**Deputy Minister:
Jomo Sibiya**

The Department of Employment and Labour joined fellow BRICS member states in Hyderabad, India, for four days of engagements focused on strengthening cooperation on social protection, employment creation, skills development, gender equality and the changing world of work.

Convened under India's BRICS Chairship theme, "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," the meetings brought together representatives from Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

The programme began with the 3rd BRICS Employment Working Group Meeting from 13-14 July 2026, followed by the 12th BRITS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting from 15-16 July 2026.



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Employment Working Group concludes technical engagements

South Africa's technical delegation was led by Mr Sipho Ndebele, Acting Deputy Director-General for Labour Policy and Industrial Relations, and Mr Siyabonga Hadebe, Acting Chief Director: Labour Relations in the Department of Employment and Labour.

Member states exchanged national experiences and good practices across the four priorities of India's BRICS Chairship:

- advancing social security and labour-market formalisation; enhancing women's participation and inclusion in the workforce;
- strengthening cooperation on employability, skills mapping and skills development;
- and leveraging digital technologies for the benefit of all workers, including gig and platform workers.

The discussions were supported by technical presentations from the International Labour Organization, the International Social Security Association and the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in India.

South Africa contributed by sharing its experience in expanding social protection, strengthening employment equity, advancing women's economic participation, developing relevant skills and extending labour and social protections to workers in the platform economy.

A significant part of the Working Group's programme focused on finalising the outstanding provisions of the draft Twelfth BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Declaration, ahead of consideration by Ministers and Heads of Delegation at the Ministerial Meeting.

The Working Group concluded after two days of deliberations and technical exchanges, having made progress towards finalising the Declaration.



Sipho Ndebele, Acting Deputy Director-General for Labour Policy and Industrial Relations, and Mr Siyabonga Hadebe, Acting Chief Director: Labour Relations

Deputy Minister Sibiya leads South Africa at Ministerial Meeting

The technical engagements were followed by the 12th BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting, the highest political platform for labour and employment cooperation within BRICS.

South Africa's delegation was led by the Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour, Honourable Jomo Sibiya.

The meeting opened with welcoming remarks and a keynote address by India's Minister of Labour and Employment, Honourable Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, before Ministers and Heads of Delegation presented their national statements on the priorities under India's BRICS Chairship.

In his intervention, Deputy Minister Sibiya congratulated India on its stewardship of the BRICS Presidency and welcomed the practical, people-centred approach underpinning the four priorities, noting their alignment with South Africa's national development agenda and its commitment to decent work, reduced inequality and inclusive economic transformation.

He also reaffirmed South Africa's commitment to BRICS solidarity and South-South cooperation, and stressed the importance of implementing the meeting's commitments for the benefit of workers, economies and communities.

South Africa presents labour-market reforms as a national good practice

During the showcasing of best practices by BRICS member countries, Deputy Minister Sibiya presented South Africa's labour-market reforms as an example of how legislative modernisation can support economic growth while strengthening decent work and workers' rights.

The reform proposes amendments to the Labour Relations Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Employment Equity Act and National Minimum Wage Act. Developed through social dialogue at the National Economic Development and Labour Council, it seeks to strengthen worker protection, improve regulatory certainty, enhance labour-market institutions and support sustainable enterprise development.

A key focus is extending protection to workers in emerging and non-standard forms of employment. Proposed measures include safeguards for on-call and zero-hour workers, action against the misclassification of platform workers, broader protection against workplace harassment, modernised parental-leave provisions and stronger enforcement of minimum labour standards.

“Protecting workers’ rights and promoting economic competitiveness are complementary rather than competing objectives,” said Deputy Minister Sibiya.

He said effective social dialogue and balanced labour regulation could promote labour-market stability, investor confidence, enterprise development and decent work, and called for stronger cooperation among BRICS countries in exchanging policy solutions and building labour markets that are inclusive, resilient and responsive to the changing world of work.



Ministers adopt BRICS Labour and Employment Declaration

A central outcome of the Ministerial Meeting was the adoption of the Twelfth BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers’ Declaration by Ministers and Heads of Delegation.

The Declaration reflects the consensus reached by member states through the Employment Working Group's technical negotiations, and sets the collective policy direction for continued BRICS cooperation on decent work, inclusive labour markets, social justice and sustainable development.

It recognises the diverse national circumstances, legal frameworks and development priorities of participating member states, while affirming cooperation across the four priorities considered during the Employment Working Group.

It also strengthens member states' commitment to South-South cooperation, policy exchange and practical collaboration on shared labour and employment challenges.

Site visits connect policy discussions with workplace practice

The four-day programme concluded with visits to Bosch Global Software Technologies and the Confederation of Indian Industry's Green Business Centre in Hyderabad.

At Bosch, Deputy Minister Sibiya joined BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers, Heads of Delegation and member-state representatives for a tour of the facility and a showcase of its work in software engineering, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, connected mobility and other digital technologies. The Deputy Minister also spoke with employees about their workplace experiences and the skills required in a rapidly evolving digital economy.

The delegation then visited the CII Green Business Centre, where dignitaries took part in a sapling-planting activity, toured the facility and engaged with Global Capability Centre leaders.

Deputy Minister Sibiya raised the importance of women's empowerment and employment equity, seeking insight into how women are being supported to participate, progress and assume leadership roles within the sector.

Strengthening cooperation for a people-centred future of work

South Africa's participation in the Employment Working Group and Ministerial Meeting gave the country an opportunity to share its national policy experience while learning from the approaches taken by other BRICS member states, reinforcing its commitment to multilateral cooperation, decent work and inclusive, resilient labour markets. The adoption of the Ministerial Declaration, together with the launch of BRICS CONNECT, marks a concrete step towards turning this week's policy discussions into ongoing cooperation and action.



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