



FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE 15TH BRICS ACADEMIC FORUM 2023
TO THE LEADERS OF BRICS COUNTRIES
14-17 MAY 2023

Under the theme, *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for mutually accelerated growth, sustainable development, and inclusive multilateralism*, the 15th BRICS Academic Forum took place on 14 –17 May 2023 at the Century City Convention Centre in Cape Town. The Academic Forum included academics, researchers, diplomats, and government officials from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. South Africa’s 2023 BRICS Presidency presents an opportunity for the BRICS members to further coalesce around common areas of understanding and dig deeper where divergences are identified and seek areas where complementarity within BRICS may be enhanced and consolidated, thus ensuring strong cohesion and development partnership among the five members. In this current South African Chairship, the Academic Forum also included an invitation to the participation of members of the diplomatic corps from select countries across the African continent.

In the 15 years of the BRICS Academic Forum, the BRICS group has evolved from an informal club of interests to an innovative and multifaceted partnership growing in its institutionalisation. For instance, recent years have witnessed the institutionalisation of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB), the increase in projects across the Global South, and a growing number of countries seeking to be part of the bank. This year, the Academic Forum, brought an opportunity for deeper engagement, given the past three years of online convening due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns.

The BRICS Think Tank Council (BTTC) agreed to take the BRICS research forward to deepen



discussions between academics and promote research initiatives, academic exchange programmes, and other forms of cooperation.

BRICS countries, through the BTTC, shall consider establishing the *BRICS Virtual Academy*, led by the South Africa BRICS Think Tank, and supported by the other BRICS Think Tanks. The BRICS Virtual Academy will foster new joint projects and serve as an archive of BRICS publications, research, and past content in all forms. The Academy will promote the design and implementation of, collaborative research projects as well as coordinate policy dialogues on social, political, and economic development challenges. The Academy should also foster cooperation between BRICS Think Tanks and the NDB research department, particularly on innovative instruments for development financing. In this context, the following urgent policy research initiatives are encouraged and will be supported by the BRICS Think Tank Council:

1. **BRICS Currencies:** Over the years, trade globally has relied heavily on Swap mechanisms and currency exchanges that do not benefit the members of the BRICS and the Global South. Considering that the BRICS has 41,5% of the global population and 32,5% of the global GDP, BRICS scholars and researchers should undertake research (collect evidence, study trends, and do a cost-benefit analysis) on the use of national currencies in trade and investment among BRICS as well as with their regional partners. Further research is needed on trade swap mechanisms and the development of alternative currencies.
2. **Expansion of BRICS:** We note that numerous countries from various continents have expressed interest in BRICS membership. We encourage the BRICS scholars and researchers to study the modalities, guiding principles, and implications of expansion and explore potential frameworks for partnering and working with others under a potentially expanded BRICS even as we serve the BRICS' original goals and intentions.



3. **New Technologies:** The BRICS scholars and researchers should explore critical and emerging technologies including Artificial Intelligence, and language processing advancements. These technologies, impact all walks of human life, including the digital economy, and digital security, and research on these issues would strengthen their understanding of digital infrastructure development. These studies should also analyse the dynamics of technology transfer and knowledge sharing, elevate the capacity for digital governance, and close digital and technological gaps. Research on this should also consider the contours of a BRICS Platform on Digital Public Goods, acknowledged in the Delhi Declaration of 2021. A repository for all Open-Source Technology applications created under the BRICS umbrella could provide important learnings for the achievement of the SDGs
4. **BRICS declarations:** Since its establishment, the BRICS has made numerous declarations. Some are currently being implemented, and others still need to be implemented. BRICS Think Tanks should establish a database of archival documents that would allow the production of monitoring reports on implementation timelines, progress, achievements, and challenges with every declaration undertaken since the establishment of the BRICS.
5. **Sustainable Development Goals:** BRICS scholars and researchers should conduct a comprehensive review of the performance of BRICS with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030.) with a view to informing innovative and cooperative measures to expedite the attainment of the SDGs.

BTCC members agreed to coordinate research efforts and strive to prepare joint reports for each of the above projects. Each research effort shall be facilitated by a designated BTCC member organisation with representatives from each of the other members. These reports



could be first presented to the BTTC and BRICS academic community as part of the review and deliberations process and thereafter presented to the national governments.

The 15th BRICS Academic Forum Recommendations

As the BRICS Think Tank Council, we recommend the following actions for the consideration of the BRICS Leaders as they convene in 2023 under the South African Chairship. The 2023 BRICS Think Tank Council Recommendations are guided by the goal and vision of forging partnerships for mutually accelerated growth, sustainable development, and inclusive multilateralism that benefit all citizens, especially women, and the youth, to achieve a safe and equal world free from poverty, inequalities, and disease.

The BRICS Think Tank Council Recommendations, based on nine (9) policy imperatives for BRICS:

- *Strengthening Multilateralism and Reforming Global Governance Institutions*
- *Strengthening Peace and Security Processes*
- *Strengthening Post-Pandemic Socio-Economic Recovery, the Attainment of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development*
- *Climate challenges for BRICS countries*
- *Developing a partnership towards an Equitable, Just Transition and African Agenda on Science, Technology, and Innovation*
- *Transforming Education and Skills Development for the Future*
- *Unlocking Opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)*
- *New Development Bank and the BRICS financing*
- *People-to-People Exchanges*

Strengthening Multilateralism and Reform of Global Governance Institutions



6. Reform of the Global Governance Institutions requires a systemic transformation of the international order based on international law, including the purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter as its cornerstone.
7. The future of multilateralism must rely on respect for the sovereignty of independent countries, cultural diversity, and the right of every state to choose its developmental path.
8. The BRICS should support the multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core. It should be committed to promoting the development of economic globalisation and creating a free, inclusive, non-discriminatory, transparent, and predictable, trade and investment environment through stable policies for safeguarding and practicing multilateralism.
9. The BRICS should strengthen intergovernmental cooperation: Strengthening cooperation in economic governance is crucial for promoting sustainable economic growth and ensuring financial stability. Sustainable economic governance is one of the cornerstones in attaining peace and security. One key way to achieve this is through the development of common standards and regulations. BRICS should study the merits and concerns related to common standards and regulations necessary to ensure that economic activities are conducted fairly and transparently.
10. BRICS should identify areas of cooperation with other countries on pertinent issues such as climate change, gender equality, food security and sustainability agenda.

Strengthening Peace and Security Processes

As a grouping of emerging economies, the BRICS can address various security challenges today. Joint efforts by BRICS members should be encouraged and supported to respond to



traditional and non-traditional threats and risks. The multiple domains that security straddles acts as a catalyst for a hybrid response to security. Similarly, the BRICS nations should prioritise counterterrorism, maritime security, and development.

11. The BRICS should promote comprehensive security to address global challenges: BRICS members should promote dialogue among themselves to resolve regional and global security challenges.
12. The BRICS should strengthen intergovernmental cooperation: BRICS countries should strengthen their cooperation by promoting dialogue and trust-building measures between themselves. They should address security challenges such as international terrorism, extremism, cybercrime, and transnational organised crime.
13. The BRICS should build on regular BRICS Declarations emphasising the importance of addressing the issue of maritime security and terrorism. With respect to maritime security, following the success of multilateral cooperation in countering the scourge of piracy in the Horn of Africa, and issuing of the first-ever presidential statement by the UN Security Council on maritime security in August 2021, the BRICS should promote similar multilateral initiatives to promote maritime security, including combating piracy issue in the Gulf of Guinea. They should actively contribute to global efforts to counter terrorism by adopting a zero-tolerance approach and supporting the implementation of relevant UNSC resolutions. In this regard, the Moscow, Beijing and Delhi Declaration on countering the use of new technologies for terrorist purposes adopted by the UN Security Council in October 2022 is relevant.
14. In line with previous commitments to cooperation and collaboration in advancing the Ocean Economy and recognising that maintaining security is crucial to economic and



societal development, the BRICS should expand this commitment to promoting non-traditional security to include oceanic concerns.

15. The BRICS should commit to actively supporting initiatives of the ocean states or small island developing states of the Indian and Pacific Oceans to combat climate change.

Strengthening Post-Pandemic Socio-Economic Recovery, the Attainment of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development

16. Coming out of COVID-19, all BRICS economies have been affected differently in terms of economic growth, employment, and other vital indicators. We recognise entrepreneurship as an essential catalyst for business development, industrialisation, and economic development. We therefore encourage the BRICS to strengthen its scientific, technical, innovation, and entrepreneurship cooperation for sustainable, and inclusive development and growth.
17. In strengthening the post-pandemic paradigm, we call on our BRICS countries to enhance cooperation in the health sector by expanding and collaborating on capacities for the manufacture of medical countermeasures and investing in physical and virtual platforms for knowledge exchange, contributing to a collective recovery plan for the post-COVID-19 era. We also call on BRICS countries to coordinate a unified voice for changes being proposed to the governance of global health systems, including the reform of the WHO and its associated forums, at various platforms including at G20.
18. As part of deepening cooperation between the BRICS and African countries, we call on BRICS governments to coordinate multilateral approaches to making international governance, more representative, inclusive, and credibly address socio-economic challenges and facilitate a collective recovery plan in the aftermath of COVID-19, including countries across the African continent.



Climate Challenges for BRICS Countries

19. In line with the 2018 Johannesburg Declarations on climate change and the 2019 BRICS Summit in Brazil, we welcome the progress since the 1992 Rio Summit on Climate Change. We look forward to the Global Stocktake of the implementation of the Paris Agreement at the upcoming 28th Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COP28). These should recognise each country's economic challenges in reducing reliance on fossil fuels so that social and economic justice can be guaranteed expressly for the BRICS and developing nations.

20. We once again reaffirm and support the establishment BRICS Agricultural Information Exchange System initiated by China in 2012, and the BRICS Agricultural Research Platform (ARP) initiated by India in 2016. We encourage BRICS countries to adopt agriculture-climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, including energy transition in agriculture as one of the priorities. The BRICS should therefore march towards amplifying work started in China and India.

21. BRICS countries are water scarce and suffer years of drought. We, therefore, welcome the commitment articulated through the Johannesburg BRICS declarations in 2018 to enhance cooperation in the field of water access, flood protection, drought management, water supply and sanitation, water, and climate, systematically facilitating water pollution prevention and control, river and lake ecosystem restoration and preservation, ecosystem conservation, and water resources management. We also recall the New Delhi Statement on Water adopted during the first meeting of BRICS Water Ministers held in November 2021.



Developing a partnership towards an Equitable Just Transition and African Agenda on Science, Technology, and Innovation

22. Addressing climate challenges will require substantial production of renewable energy technologies. Technology and critical minerals, such as lithium, zinc, chromium, manganese, silicon, etc., will be necessary for clean energy projects. BRICS countries have both. We call on BRICS leaders to support technological and policy collaboration in this area, including efforts to ensure that BRICS countries develop mutually supportive and beneficial critical minerals and green technology industrial policies. In addition, BRICS should cooperate to the benefits of transitioning to low-carbon, climate-resilient economies, which are widely shared, that the costs of the transition are minimised, and that the interests of vulnerable groups of society, especially women and young people, are adequately addressed.
23. The imperative for solid multilateral responses to global environmental challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and disaster risk, is increasingly urgent. We call on BRICS leaders to deepen collaboration on environmental protection and climate change and maintain their commitment to multilateral responses to these challenges through designated global institutions. The BRICS should use their collective influence to support the climate change priorities of least-developed countries, especially in Africa. This is related to adaptation financing and loss and damage. Furthermore, the BRICS should continue to promote the national-level implementation of climate goals through robust, ambitious, and fair Nationally Determined Contributions (to 2030) and Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategies.
24. In the context of global imperatives to strengthen climate adaptation, biodiversity protection and disaster risk reduction, BRICS countries should advocate for



ecosystem-based approaches and nature-based solutions that are scaled and adequately financed. Meaningful participation of communities and vulnerable people in restoration and adaptation efforts should be encouraged. The BRICS collaboration and knowledge exchange should also be strengthened to support long-term, enabling policies for the sustainable management of land and forests, as well as for agricultural production and to promote resilient, low-carbon, agroecological, regenerative, and climate-smart practices, as appropriate.

25. The BRICS should strengthen collaboration in response to global challenges related to the management of the world's oceans and freshwater resources. This includes efforts to support discussion on the United Nations Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty, actions to support the climate-oceans nexus agenda, ensure sustainable and well-governed fisheries, and ensure the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. BRICS countries should also fully implement their respective voluntary commitments compiled in the Water Action Agenda emerging from the March 2023 United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028.

26. The next three years present a unique opportunity with consecutive BRICS member presidencies of G20 (India in 2023, Brazil in 2024, and South Africa in 2025). It is a chance to highlight the developing countries' agenda. It should be utilised strategically to build continuous and sustained interest in issues critical to the global south, especially, green financing. We call on the BRICS to advocate in international fora the reassessment of the multilateral climate finance architecture to make it easier for developing economies to access significantly higher levels of financing. Given the volume of funding required to meet the climate challenge and the Sustainable



Development Goals, the lending capacity of the New Development Bank and other financial institutions should be expanded. The large financing requirements make it imperative that the BRICS should also push for the delivery of concessional IDA financing. We also reiterate the call to donor countries to honour their Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments and to facilitate capacity building and technology transfer along with additional development resources to developing countries, in line with the national policy objectives of recipients.

27. Considering the economic weight of the BRICS collectively, the BRICS should strive for a consolidated response to mounting protectionism in international trade using climate-related measures. Trade is crucial for Global South countries if they are to meet their developmental objectives and therefore need to be given the policy space to expand their trade exchanges. A fragmented global trade regime is not in any country's interest.

28. Building on the African continent's goals and agenda for science, technology, and innovation (STI), as expressed in the African Union's Agenda 2063 and STI Strategy for Africa (STISA2024), which outlines priorities to ensure innovation-led growth and to create decent quality and well-paying jobs for the large youth population, we call upon BRICS countries to support African governments in their creation and fostering of enabling environments for STI in their respective countries, through support for a systematic approach to knowledge-sharing and technology transfer, and support for the establishment of centres of innovation at higher education institutes across the continent. We recommend that the BRICS Network University be the coordinating mechanism to ensure this support for African countries.



29. Knowledge generation and scientific innovation, produced within countries of the Global South, and intended for the enrichment and development of nations and peoples of the Global South, continue to be essential. We call upon BRICS countries to support STI research and the publication thereof by researchers within African countries, to be published in and across academic platforms within the BRICS, Africa and the Global South.

30. While innovation is a significant catalyst for further development that can improve quality of life, nurture new sectors and industries, and enhance decision-making for our governments, we must also recognise that innovation sources are broader than research and development. Therefore, we call upon BRICS countries to adopt a whole-of-society approach to innovation to ensure this approach is embedded in a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation and ensure that innovation is inclusive within each country. We also call upon BRICS countries, in their support for the African Agenda for STI, to integrate a whole-of-society approach to innovation in the support they provide to African countries.

Transforming Education, Innovation, and Skills Development for the Future

31. The BRICS should improve Knowledge Exchanges, Monitoring, and Evaluation: We recommend expanding mechanisms and interventions that enable collaboration and in-person knowledge exchanges, such as organising conferences and workshops. Once the necessary structures are in place, building and training models with local content is essential, involving both the business and education sectors. Collecting data, monitoring, evaluating, and revising the model iteratively is imperative to achieve the desired outcomes.

32. We reaffirm our commitment that the BRICS should strengthen Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) Cooperation. Implementing the BRICS Action Plan on Innovation



Cooperation for 2021-2024 should be prioritised, monitored, and reported upon at each BRICS Summit.

33. The BRICS should leverage the BRICS Partnership for New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR) as a platform for knowledge-sharing to promote inclusive and innovation-driven growth in BRICS countries and other EMDCs, including in Africa.

Unlocking Opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)

In support of the African Union Agenda 2063 and to advance BRICS trade and investment with the AfCFTA members, we recommend that the BRICS countries prioritise infrastructure investment and development.

34. BRICS countries should promote technology transfer and knowledge exchange on trade and investment with African countries through capacity-building programs and joint research and development initiatives. The AfCFTA partnership should encourage the participation of the private sector in infrastructure. This is to unlock private investment and expertise and promote innovation.
35. The BRICS countries are part of a vast network of regional and bilateral trade groupings with diverse memberships. We encourage member countries to help facilitate the engagement of such groups with AfCFTA. This would result in more effective ideation on better value chain integration, improving industrial and productive capacity, and sustainable industrialisation and modernisation.
36. The AfCFTA partnership should develop risk management strategies to address geopolitical risks and the impact of external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic.



This could involve more regular consultations and dialogue between the BRICS and African countries.

New Development Bank and the BRICS financing

37. We applaud the BRICS for the work done and the progress accomplished by the New Development Bank to date. In line with the 2019 BRICS Summit in Brazil and the 2020 Summit in Russia, we encourage amplifying the NDB's role in global development finance. As such, further mobilisation of its resources is essential. Therefore, we encourage the NDB to expand its membership. Through its NDB Board of Governors, the NDB should support expanding membership, to benefit associated financial contributions and broader partnership.
38. The NDB must focus its funding on renewable energy projects, bridging the digital divide, and prioritising sustainable development to address infrastructure shortages and foster long-term and sustainable growth. We encourage the BRICS efforts to increase trade for mutual benefit.
39. We reaffirm our commitment to support international cooperation in the Common Reporting Standard for Automatic Exchange of Tax Information (AEOI) as outlined in the Goa Declaration of 2016.
40. We recognise that trade between the BRICS nations has increased over the past few years despite the pandemic, among other challenges. We are cognisant that the BRICS now constitute 41,5% of the world population and 32,5% of global GDP, with an anticipated contribution of BRICS in global GDP growth of around 50% by 2030. Considering this outlook, we encourage the BRICS to optimise instruments for trade



and business investments between member countries and specifically to optimise the central role of the BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism.

41. There may be substantial benefits from greater cooperation between the BRICS New Development Bank and the regional development banks and funds in which BRICS countries are members. In particular, there may be important synergies to be gained from closer cooperation between the NDB and such regional banks and funds as the Eurasian Development Bank, FOCEM, CAF, and others.

42. There may be scope to expand the mandate of the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) to evaluate avenues for greater economic policy coordination and the ex-ante evaluation of macroeconomic vulnerabilities across BRICS economies. There may also be important benefits from closer coordination between the BRICS CRA and relevant regional financing arrangements.

People-to-People Exchanges

43. The BRICS should strengthen people-to-people ties: BRICS countries should encourage people-to-people ties, including cultural exchanges, education, and tourism. Such exchanges promote mutual understanding and help to build trust and respect among people from different cultures and backgrounds.

44. The 2018 Johannesburg Summit welcomed the establishment of a BRICS Working Group on Tourism that would foster greater cooperation between the BRICS countries. Tourism is central to the exchange of knowledge, best practices, culture, and trade, among others, and the barriers to tourism among BRICS nations should therefore receive special attention. We implore the Working Group to table successes and areas of improvement for all the BRICS countries to strengthen tourism among members continuously. We strongly recommend that BRICS member states commit



to actively and progressively removing restrictions on the movement of people between their countries to encourage people-to-people contact, engagement, and interaction.

45. As reflected in the 2018 Johannesburg Declarations, tourism is central to BRICS economies, along with their sports, youth, films, culture, and education programmes. We note that since COVID-19, numerous airlines have gone bankrupt, so better connectivity between the BRICS nations has been disrupted. We urge the BRICS Tourism Working Group to prioritise BRICS air travel connectivity to facilitate and smoothen people-to-people cooperation and exchanges.
46. The Beijing BRICS Summit (2022) acknowledged the urgent need for the tourism industry to recover from the impact of COVID-19. We recall the 2021 BRICS Summit in India and support the strengthening of tourism among BRICS nations to shape the resilience and sustenance of this sector. While tourism has historically been leisure-focused in most countries, BRICS Tourism Ministers and the Working Group should work towards unlocking and smoothening tourism mechanisms for the promotion of alternative tourist activities in the form of, among others, academic, medical, and business / industrial tourism.
47. Sports have the potential to deepen and enrich exchanges between the peoples of our BRICS countries. As such, we call on our governments to encourage youth annual sports game exchanges across football, netball, volleyball, indigenous and traditional sports, and athletics because these are a vital part of the cooperation between our countries. These games will leverage more on BRICS' diverse strengths and further cement the ties that bind the grouping. It is crucial to make every effort to exchange national experiences on implementing efficient measures to promote the sports industry.



48. Through our interdependent world, overlapping experiences and shared histories, we note that the BRICS countries are culturally interconnected and proud of their diverse cultures; they should continue to enhance cultural exchanges among the grouping through exhibitions, performances, and cultural exchanges across all expressions of the arts. Through this, we highlight and promote our diverse and rich heritage, creativity, art, and cultural treasures across the vast populations within the BRICS. The BRICS must respect the diversity of cultures and civilisations in this world and pursue joint efforts to promote equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness.

Delegates of the 15th BRICS Academic Forum thank the organisers for all the arrangements and hospitality. Academics and scholars from the BRICS countries look forward to the 16th Academic Forum in 2024.

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