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*BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth,
Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*

South Africa's Public Diplomacy in action 

BRICS SPECIAL



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a Nguni word meaning humanity

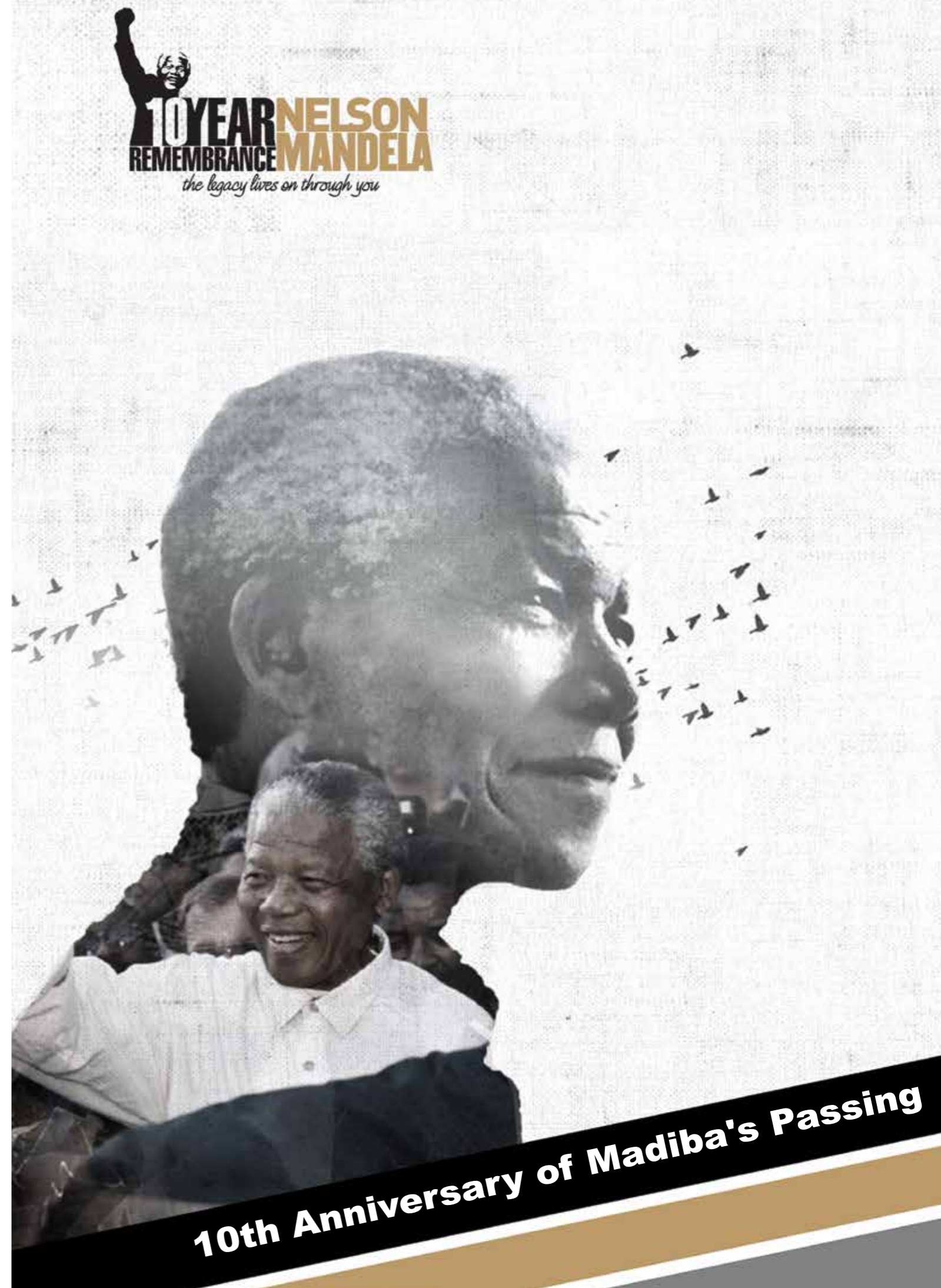
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ON THE COVER

South Africa became Chair of BRICS on 1 January 2023 under the theme: *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*. The country is hosting the XV BRICS Summit from 22 to 24 August 2023 in Johannesburg.

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**10 YEAR
REMEMBRANCE
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MANDELA**
the legacy lives on through you

10th Anniversary of Madiba's Passing

contents



34

What has BRICS done thus far to serve the agribusiness and agriculture communities?



42

South Africa to host BRICS Future Skills Challenge

- 6 Welcome message by HE President Cyril Ramaphosa
- 10 BRICS partnership has great value for South Africa
- 12 BRICS collaboration helps find solutions for challenges facing the global South
- 16 The 2023 BRICS Summit: A return to dialogue and cooperation
- 18 Towards a Just World Order
- 20 Outcomes of the 2023 BRICS Academic Forum: Fostering cooperation and advancing research
- 24 Outcomes of the 2023 BRICS Academic Forum: Fostering cooperation and advancing research
- 28 The New Development Bank: Built by and for developing countries
- 32 BRICS at 15: Youth as drivers of the BRICS Agenda
- 34 What has BRICS done thus far to serve the agribusiness and agriculture communities?
- 38 BRICS Women's Business Alliance: Unlocking the Gender Dividend
- 42 South Africa to host BRICS Future Skills Challenge
- 44 Partnership between BRICS and Africa will unlock mutually beneficial opportunities
- 45 Creating resilient South African cities
- 47 BRICS: Equipping learners with skills fit for the future
- 49 BRICS Partnership: Forging strong-people-to-people ties
- 52 BRICS advances African Tourism Agenda



98

Esther Mahlangu: South Africa's global ambassador



102

The empire sings back: The deep history behind SA's soprano Pretty Yende's triumph



88

Five things you didn't know about Africa's most loved destinations

- 54 Reimagining the BRICS Business Council to institutionalise a legacy of delivery
- 56 Call to action: South Africa's second Voluntary National Review for sustainable development 2024
- 60 Fostering partnerships with BRICS energy investors
- 66 BRICS benefits Eastern Cape economy
- 68 BRICS Cooperation: Science diplomacy best practice in action
- 72 What is a Sherpa?
- 78 "We must dare to invent the future"
- 82 Promoting investment to power Africa's single market
- 84 Africa's tourism sector is open en thriving
- 88 Five things you didn't know about Africa's most loved destinations
- 94 South Africa: Cradle of Humankind
- 100 Esther Mahlangu: South Africa's global cultural ambassador
- 104 The empire sings back: The deep history behind South African soprano Pretty Yende's triumph
- 108 South Africa's hidden jazz history is being restored album by album
- 112 Celebrating 333 years of South Africa's oldest wine-producing farm
- 114 FYN Restaurant named best sustainable restaurant in the world
- 116 South African fashion travels out of this world at this year's Durban July



XV BRICS SUMMIT

**JOHANNESBURG
SOUTH AFRICA
22 – 24 AUGUST 2023**

*BRICS and Africa:
Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth,
Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*

Fellow South Africans, BRICS friends and global citizens,

It is an honour for South Africa to chair BRICS in 2023. We find ourselves in difficult times. The world is fractured and uncertain.

Yet, the story of BRICS speaks to the potential and hope of change. Through BRICS, the countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa join together four continents, 42% of the world's population, almost 30% of the world's territory, around 27% of global gross domestic product and around 20% of global trade.

Our story is of people working together to build a better future for all in a spirit of solidarity, mutual respect and shared benefit.

Ours is a story of jobs and prosperity with a third of the world's economic activity taking place in our five countries.

Our story is of hundreds of millions of people emerging out of generations of poverty.

BRICS is a partnership for accelerated global growth, sustainable development and inclusive, representative and fair multilateralism.

We are hosting the XV BRICS Summit in Johannesburg. This is the third time we host BRICS on African soil.

As Chair, we align our actions with our values and our vision.

I have invited leaders from Africa and the global South to the BRICS Summit. Together, we will forge a new path of global prosperity and progress in the spirit of solidarity, equality, justice, mutual respect and collective benefit.

I welcome you all to our beautiful country, South Africa. I invite you to join us in shaping

a truly inclusive world of hope, shared prosperity and well-being. I invite you to join us as we work to expand horizons, advance the empowerment of women, realise the full potential of young people and build a world free from fear, disease and want.

I welcome you all to our beautiful country, South Africa. I invite you to join us in shaping a truly inclusive world of hope, shared prosperity and well-being.



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BRICS partnership has great value for South Africa

At the outset, BRICS countries identified the strengthening of economic and financial ties as one of the key pillars of its cooperation.

By HE Cyril Ramaphosa
President of the Republic of South Africa

The value of South Africa's membership of BRICS has grown substantially since we joined this group of emerging economies 13 years ago. There is much to be gained from our participation in BRICS and the relationships we have established with other member countries.

From the outset, BRICS countries identified the strengthening of economic and

financial ties as one of the key pillars of its cooperation. The countries have adopted the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership to increase access to each other's markets, promote mutual trade and investment and create a business-friendly environment for investors in all BRICS countries.

An important part of this strategy, particularly for South Africa, is to diversify trade so that more manufactured goods, rather than raw commodities, are traded.

South African exports to other BRICS countries have recorded strong growth since 2016 (7.1% per annum on average) reaching US\$17.6 billion in 2022. The principal contributor to such growth was exports to China over this period.

In 2022, about 21.2% of South Africa's total trade (exports and imports) with the world at large took place with other BRICS countries; 67.4% of which with China; 26.8% with India; 4.1% with Brazil; and 1.6% with

Russia. South African imports from other BRICS member states expanded by 7.2% per annum on average, over the period 2010 to 2022, to reach US\$32.4 billion by 2022.

These countries are therefore significant trading partners, and the value of this trade is continuing to grow.

At a time when we are focussed on improving the capacity and competitiveness of our economy, these trade linkages will prove vital to the growth of local industry.

There is therefore a direct relationship between, on the one hand, our reforms in energy, telecommunications and transport, our investment in infrastructure and our efforts to reduce red tape, and on the other hand, the work underway to increase exports to our BRICS partners.

These reforms are also important for encouraging greater investment from BRICS countries into our economy.

One area with great potential is tourism, which has been badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2021 and 2022, tourist arrivals from the BRICS countries showed a marked increase: Brazil, 174.5%; Russia, 52.8%; India, 214.3%; and

BRICS leaders' summits are valuable platforms for South Africa to strengthen ties with its partner countries in support of our own growth and employment creation. The summit is our opportunity to contribute to a better world, in which all countries have a better chance to flourish.

China, 85.3%. These markets are expected to make an important contribution to the recovery of this sector.

It is significant that visitors from India and China can now make use of our new eVisa programme to make it easier and less costly to visit our country.

As we mobilise financing from different sources to fund our ambitious infrastructure build programme, we expect the New Development Bank (NDB) – also known as the BRICS Bank – to play an important role in providing financial and project preparation support for infrastructure and sustainable development projects.

The NDB was established in 2015 with a AAA and AA+ credit rating to play a catalytic role in providing financial support to emerging markets and developing countries for infrastructure and sustainable development.

South Africa is the beneficiary of 12 projects financed by the bank to the value of US\$5.4 billion. Five of these projects support the energy sector, with three of those funding renewable energy projects to the value of R13 billion.

Alongside the engagements between governments, the BRICS Business Council and the BRICS Women's Business Alliance are building ties between our respective business communities. They have been looking at the development of sectors such as agribusiness, aviation, financial services, energy, manufacturing and infrastructure, while also improving regulatory environments and developing skills.


The collaboration among BRICS members in the area of health and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in particular has placed South Africa in a better position to respond effectively to the current and future health emergencies.

After several years of planning, the virtual BRICS Vaccine Research and Development

Centre was launched in March last year. This centre will enable BRICS countries to engage in joint vaccine research, development and co-production. It will contribute to the equitable distribution of vaccines, strengthen health systems and help our countries to respond to future pandemics. We see the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre as a valuable development in our efforts to strengthen vaccine manufacturing capacity in South Africa and on the African continent more broadly. We will be calling on our BRICS partners to support the principle that vaccines destined for Africa should be produced on the continent.

Last year, the BRICS ministers of agriculture adopted the BRICS Strategy on Food Security Cooperation. This is especially important as concerns grow around food security in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the wake of the conflict in Ukraine and the increasing effects of climate change.

The strategy aims to maintain sustainable agriculture production, unhindered supply of seeds, fertilisers and other agricultural inputs, access to markets and stable functioning of food value chains.

BRICS has ushered in a new era for global development that is more inclusive, sustainable and fair. Through the reform of the multilateral system, including the United Nations, and by refocussing the attention and resources of the global community on the sustainable development agenda, the BRICS group can support a sustained and equitable global recovery. BRICS leaders' summits are valuable platforms for South Africa to strengthen ties with its partner countries in support of our own growth and employment creation. The summit is our opportunity to contribute to a better world, in which all countries have a better chance to flourish. 

An important part of this strategy, particularly for South Africa, is to diversify trade so that more manufactured goods, rather than raw commodities, are traded.





BRICS collaboration helps find solutions for challenges facing the global South

South Africa is committed to building a partnership between BRICS and Africa to unlock mutually beneficial opportunities for increased trade, investment and infrastructure development.

By Dr GNM Pandor

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation

South Africa has taken up the Chair of the BRICS grouping at a time of momentous shifts in global geopolitics. BRICS – the group of leading emerging markets and developing countries, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – is eager to find solutions to the myriad of challenges that face the developing world.

Together, we have forged a comprehensive strategic partnership that seeks to unlock funding to address immediate imperatives such as building infrastructure, growing regional value chains and localising production.

The grouping has already made great strides in opening doors to significantly higher levels of trade and investment within the global South.

For South Africa, the benefits of BRICS membership are undeniable. Total South African trade with BRICS increased from R487 billion in 2017 to R702 billion in 2021.

The New Development Bank (NDB) has to date approved 12 projects in South Africa valued at around US\$5.4 billion to improve service delivery in critical areas.

Such access to finance is in keeping with our National Interest of urgently addressing the triple challenges of poverty, underdevelopment and unemployment in our country.

While the economic agenda is at the heart of the BRICS partnership, the core members are also committed to a transformative agenda that seeks to realise a more equitable, balanced and representative global governance system. There is an urgent need to strengthen multilateralism, including working towards real reform of the United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organisation. While multilateral cooperation in the post-World War II era has been imperfect, it has averted direct military conflict between major powers and spurred nations to recognise and take joint action to address international sustainable development and human rights challenges.

Unfortunately, a steady erosion of trust and competition between states has weakened the ability of the international community to work together to address shared challenges.

The obstacles we are facing include growing unilateralism, geopolitical rivalries, violations of international law and the application of double standards. There has also been a proliferation of alternate fora outside of established multilateral processes where decisions are taken by the few, thereby disenfranchising the many.

Multilateralism – the notion of collective solutions – must be at the heart of the engagement between member states. The UN must remain the centrepiece of multilateralism and be modernised to make it fit-for-purpose and more effective, forward-

looking, inclusive and representative of current geopolitical relations.

The rising importance of BRICS, a collective of the global South, is increasingly evident. According to *Megh Updates*, one of the world's largest international online platforms, BRICS has officially overtaken the G7 in global gross domestic product (GDP) and the trend is set to continue. The five core members of BRICS contribute 31.5% of global GDP, while the G7 contributes 30%. BRICS is expected to contribute over 50% of global GDP by 2030, and this may happen even sooner with enlargement of the grouping.

There has been growing interest by members of the international community to join BRICS, moving us closer to a multipolar world order. In a vote of confidence that BRICS has stayed true to its core values of taking care of the interests of the global South, at least 12 countries have written to South Africa expressing an interest in joining BRICS, and this year's discussions will hopefully take this matter forward.

The BRICS NDB has welcomed Bangladesh, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates as members, and Uruguay is expected to deposit its instruments of accession. The NDB is positioned as a preferred global financing mechanism for emerging markets and developing countries. The NDB supports the development of



financial markets in member states and aims to provide financing in both local and hard currencies.

The NDB has an AA+ credit rating and plays a role in providing financial support to build infrastructure, ensure sustainable development and enhance equity in power-sharing.

The NDB has to date approved 80 investment projects in all member countries for a total amount exceeding US\$30 billion.

In South Africa, the NDB approved the financing of a US\$180-million project that will add 1 000 MVA transmission transformer capacity and 352.5 km of transmission lines. In India, construction works financed by the NDB have rebuilt or upgraded about 1,215 km of road length, benefitting 917 villages. In Brazil, NDB loans have financed double-tracking and the remodelling of the Carajas Railway and the expansion of the Ponta da Madeira Port Terminal.

BRICS members are keen to see the restructuring of the global financial architecture and will further explore the option of trading in our local currencies and developing an alternative to the Swift banking system.

South Africa consistently uses its membership of key global multilateral bodies to advance the African Union's (AU) African Agenda and key interests of the continent. Thus, the theme we chose for chairing BRICS this year is: *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth*,

Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism.

It is our firm belief that there are immense opportunities for BRICS to participate in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by locating production and service activities on the continent and partnering with local companies and entrepreneurs. The AfCFTA is an ambitious economic initiative of the AU that seeks to address the challenge of Africa's low level of participation in the global economy and world trade (which stands at 3%) relative to its population (around 17% of the world population).

It is the flagship project of the AU's Agenda 2063, which aims to build an integrated African market of over one billion people with a combined GDP of approximately US\$3.3 trillion. The AfCFTA is anchored on the development integration approach using market integration, infrastructure development and industrial development to boost intra-Africa trade and sustainable economic growth. The AfCFTA is expected to stimulate Africa's industrial development and

employment. The successful implementation of the AfCFTA is expected to lead to the diversification of exports, increased productive capacity, entrepreneurial opportunities, technology transfer, employment opportunities, broadening economic inclusion and acceleration of growth.

South Africa is committed to building a partnership between BRICS and Africa to unlock mutually beneficial opportunities for increased trade, investment and infrastructure development. It is for this reason that we have invited the chairs of the African regional economic communities as well as the Chair of the AU to attend the BRICS Summit.

There is a great deal that we can accomplish as BRICS to the benefit of the African continent and the global South. It is time to capitalise on the immense trade and investment opportunities that exist in emerging markets and work towards making our economies more self-reliant and prosperous for the good of our people. 

For South Africa, the benefits of BRICS membership are undeniable. Total South African trade with BRICS increased from R487 billion in 2017 to R702 billion in 2021. The New Development Bank has to date approved 12 projects in South Africa valued at around US\$5.4 billion to improve service delivery in critical areas.



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The 2023 BRICS Summit: A return to dialogue and cooperation

As President Lula stated recently, a false dichotomy between growth and environmental protection should be overcome. It is the fight against hunger, poverty and inequality that must return to the centre of the international agenda, ensuring adequate financing and technology transfer.

By **Mauro Vieira**
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil

Since the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as President in October 2022, and especially since his inauguration in January this year, Brazil has been focussing all efforts on rebuilding our foreign policy, by restoring values and principles essential to our people and enshrined in our Constitution. Multilateralism, respect for international law, the promotion of sustainable development and social justice are once again guiding our diplomatic action.

The world has been experiencing an unprecedented series of overlapping crises: from traditional threats to peace and security to pandemics, climate emergencies, social exclusion, food and energy shortages, terrorism, cybersecurity, disinformation and anti-democratic extremism.

As President Lula stated recently, a false dichotomy between growth and environmental protection should be overcome. It is the fight against hunger, poverty and inequality that must return to the centre of the international agenda, ensuring adequate financing and technology transfer.

The much-needed progress on these areas must be achieved with renewed and closely concerted commitment among partners.

It is unusual to reinforce the obvious, but our current situation requires it to be done: dialogue is essential. There is no solution

isolated from politics and coordination. With this in mind, we are strengthening our engagement with friends from the global South, with our neighbours in South America, with the Southern Common Market, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and Union of South American Nations, as well as beyond, towards meaningful connections with Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Indispensable for the building of a truly multipolar world order – one that should consider the voices and needs of developing countries and emerging markets – the BRICS mechanism is a forum where Brazil will be substantively engaged on every discussion.

The belief in the power of collective action that is inclusive and equitable, one that can shape a fairer and more balanced international order, continues to be one of our main purposes today. An enlarged United Nations Security Council, one that could overcome the restraints arising from its representation deficit, will not only better reflect the realities of a multipolar world, but also enhance the council's legitimacy in dealing with modern conflicts and contemporary challenges.

As part of BRICS, it is essential that we discuss the current challenges, particularly considering their more pronounced impact on developing countries and emerging markets, which are the hardest hit by crises like the ones we face now. We cannot accept that our collective lack of concerted action may block pathways to development

and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Our BRICS partners – together and individually – have both the will and the capacity to bridge differences and foster a more collaborative environment.

BRICS countries have been playing an indisputably important role on the global stage.

Our cooperation has advanced in many fields. This is most notably evidenced by the numbers from the New Development Bank (NDB). The bank has already approved 96 projects, totalling US\$ 32.8 billion, which will lead to the building or upgrading of 17 000 km of roads, construction or upgrading of 820 bridges, building of 35 000 housing units and generation of 2 800 MW of renewable and clean energy, to name but a few achievements in this short period.

The belief in the power of collective action that is inclusive and equitable, one that can shape a fairer and more balanced international order, continues to be one of our main purposes today.



Brazil is fully committed to the success of the next BRICS Summit. President Lula is looking forward to the first standalone meeting of leaders since the outbreak of the pandemic.

The interest expressed by many countries in joining the NDB is testament to its success. But let us not rest upon the achievements we have reached; instead, we must focus on forward-looking initiatives that bring about benefits to our countries and to the world.


Under the current leadership of President Dilma Rousseff, the first woman to head the institution, I am certain that the bank will evolve even further as an extraordinary tool for international development.

I congratulate the South African Presidency for choosing the theme, *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Accelerated Mutual Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*. It brings us to discussing important topics, such as developing a partnership towards an equitable just transition and strengthening

post-pandemic socio-economic recovery and the attainment of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Among other topics we would like to explore further with our partners, I would mention the use of local currencies in international trade and financial transactions between BRICS countries and our trading partners, which will unlock opportunities by diversifying international means of payment and reducing the dependency on a single currency. We are also engaged in the discussion of principles, standards, criteria and procedures for a possible BRICS expansion, as other countries continue to present their interest in becoming an integral part of this mechanism. Brazil is fully committed to the success of the next BRICS Summit. President Lula is looking forward to the

first standalone meeting of leaders since the outbreak of the pandemic. I wish to stress that this meeting will be relevant not only for our countries but also globally. The world will be watching with interest the debates and decisions, but most of all, the actions taken.

As Nelson Mandela once stated, *"Ndiwelimlambo enamagama – I have crossed famous rivers"*. By that, he meant that one has travelled and, in the process, gained much experience. The world has collectively crossed a turbulent river since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and only now we begin to rebuild. President Lula will come to the summit after crossing many such rivers in his life and hopes to share his experiences and expectations with BRICS leaders during our work in Johannesburg. 



TOWARDS A JUST WORLD ORDER

I am convinced that the XV Summit will be another milestone of BRICS strategic partnership and will determine the key priorities for the coming years. We highly appreciate the efforts of the South African Chairship, including the intensified work to improve the entire constellation of BRICS mechanisms to deepen BRICS dialogue with other countries.

By **Sergey Lavrov**
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

On the eve of the BRICS Summit, I would like to share with our dear readers my thoughts on the prospects for cooperation among the group of five countries in the current geopolitical context.

Tectonic shifts are taking place in the world today. The possibility of dominance by one country or even a small group of states is disappearing. The model of international development built on the exploitation of the resources of the world majority to maintain the well-being of the "golden billion" is hopelessly out of date. It does not reflect the aspirations of all humankind.

We are witnessing the emergence of a more just multipolar world order. New centres of economic growth and global decision-making on important political issues in Eurasia, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America are guided primarily by their own interests and assign paramount importance to national sovereignty. And against this background, they achieve impressive success in various areas.

Attempts of the collective West to reverse this trend with a view to preserving its own hegemony have an exactly opposite effect. The international community is tired of the blackmail and pressure from the Western elites and their colonial and racist manners. That is why, for example, not only Russia, but also a number of other countries are consistently reducing their dependence on the US dollar, switching to alternative payment systems and national currency

settlements. I recall the wise words of Nelson Mandela: "When the water starts boiling it is foolish to turn off the heat." And it truly is.

Russia – a civilisation state, the largest Eurasian and Euro-Pacific power – continues to work towards further democratisation of international life, building an architecture of inter-state relations that will be based on the values of equal and indivisible security and cultural and civilisational diversity, and will provide equal opportunities for development for all members of the international community with no one left behind. As President Vladimir Putin noted in his Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on 21 February 2023: "In today's world there should be no division into so-called civilised countries and all the rest ... There is a need for an honest partnership that rejects any exclusivity, especially an aggressive one." In our opinion, all this is in line with the Ubuntu philosophy, which advocates interconnectivity between nations and people.

In this context, Russia has consistently stood for strengthening the position of the African continent in a multipolar world order. We will further support our African friends in their aspirations to play an increasingly significant role in resolving the key problems of our time.

This also applies in full to the process of reforming the United Nations Security Council, in which framework, in our deep conviction, first and foremost, the legitimate interests of developing countries, including in Africa, must be protected.

Multilateral diplomacy does not stand aside from the global trends. Such a grouping as BRICS is a symbol of true multipolarity and an example of honest inter-state communication. Within its framework, states with different political systems, distinctive value platforms and independent foreign policies effectively cooperate in various spheres. I think it is no exaggeration to say that the five BRICS countries are a kind of cooperation "network" over the traditional North-South and West-East lines.

Indeed, we have something to present to our public. Through joint efforts, BRICS has managed to create a culture of dialogue based on the principles of equality, respect for the choice of one's own developmental path and consideration of each other's interests. This helps us find common ground on and solutions even to the most complex issues.

The place and significance of BRICS today and its ability to influence the global agenda are determined by objective factors. The figures speak for themselves. The population of the BRICS countries is over 40% and the area of their territories almost 30% of the world's land. According to experts' forecasts, in 2023, the five countries will account for about 31.5% of global gross domestic product (at purchasing power parity), while the share of the G7 has fallen to 30% in this indicator.

Today, the BRICS strategic partnership is gaining momentum.

The "Big Five" offers the world creative, forward-looking initiatives aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development



Goals, ensuring food and energy security, healthy growth of the global economy, conflict resolution and combatting climate change, including by means of a just energy transition.

An extensive network of mechanisms has been established to address these challenges. The Strategy for Economic Partnership 2025, which defines the benchmarks of cooperation in the mid-term, is being implemented. The BRICS Energy Research Cooperation Platform, launched at Russia's initiative, is operating successfully. The BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre, designed to help develop effective responses to challenges to the epidemic well-being of our countries, has started its work. Initiatives on Denial of Safe Haven to Corruption, on Trade and Investment for Sustainable Development, and on Enhancing Cooperation on Supply Chains have been approved. The BRICS Strategy on Food Security Cooperation has been adopted.

The unconditional priorities include strengthening the potential of the New Development Bank and the BRICS

Contingent Reserve Arrangement, improving payment mechanisms and increasing the role of national currencies in mutual settlements. It is planned to focus on these issues at the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg.

We do not aim to replace existing multilateral mechanisms, much less to become a new "collective hegemon". On the contrary, the BRICS countries have consistently advocated the creation of conditions for the development of all states, which excludes the bloc logic of the Cold War and zero-sum geopolitical games. BRICS seeks to offer inclusive solutions based on a participatory approach.

Building on that, we are consistently working to develop BRICS interaction with the countries representing the world majority. In particular, one of the priorities of the South African Chairship is strengthening cooperation with African countries. We fully share this approach. We are ready to contribute to economic growth on the continent and strengthen security there, including its food and energy components. A striking example is

the outcome of the Second Russia-Africa Summit, held in St Petersburg from 27 to 28 July 2023.

In this context, it is natural that our grouping has many like-minded countries around the world. BRICS is seen as a positive force that can strengthen the solidarity of the global South and global East and become one of the pillars of a new, more just polycentric world order.

The five countries stand ready to respond to this request. That is why we launched the expansion process. It is symbolic that it has gained such momentum in the year of South Africa's Chairship, a country that has joined BRICS as a result of a consensus-based political decision.

I am convinced that the XV Summit will be another milestone of BRICS strategic partnership and will determine the key priorities for the coming years. We highly appreciate the efforts of the South African Chairship, including the intensified work to improve the entire constellation of BRICS mechanisms to deepen BRICS dialogue with other countries.☺

BRICS HAS A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS AFRICA AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

We are also confident that the forthcoming summit will provide us with a valuable opportunity to deliberate upon many other critical issues confronting the global South in the spirit of equality, mutual respect and complete consensus, that is the hallmark of BRICS.

By Subrahmanyam Jaishankar
Minister of External Affairs of India

In many ways, the spirit of Ubuntu shapes the activities and evolution of the BRICS grouping. The message of *I am because of you* expresses the interdependence of our globalised existence, which has brought the BRICS nations together. It also expresses the mutual respect and sovereign equality that are the basis of the grouping. And, in its own way, BRICS is an assertion of democratisation by emphasising that global decisions should not be the prerogative of a few. This has been the philosophy of the last two decades and must continue to guide the way forward.

Precisely because it is a vehicle of change, BRICS has a special responsibility towards Africa and the global South. And this has only grown further as developing nations have been economically and socially ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are also witnessing deep concerns about energy, food and fertiliser security in view of the repercussions of an ongoing conflict. All of this is coming on top of unsustainable debt, trade disruptions and high interest rates. Much of this is further complicated by opaque connectivity, unviable projects and unfair transactions. As a result, a large part of the global South is under significant stress. The consequences of their travails could be far-reaching if not addressed effectively. In many societies, endeavours towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals have slowed down discernibly. Domains like health and education are facing challenges of funding and execution. Another facet of concern is the prospect

of widening gender gaps, since women and girls usually bear the brunt of limited resources. Our collective effort at promoting women-led development is seriously impacted in the circumstances. The world is also seeking to grow in a greener and more sustainable manner. This is particularly crucial for developing societies who have so much growth still ahead of them. The resource crunch that they face today jeopardises ambitions in this regard, already created by the developed nations not living up to past commitments on climate action. As a grouping that has nurtured such strong ties with the developing world, the BRICS bloc cannot be impervious to these worrisome trends.

What we can do in these circumstances is to make both national and collective efforts. Indeed, there are experiences and achievements that are worth sharing even among ourselves in that process. Those that are transparent, consultative, viable and capable of emulation are particularly relevant. As India contemplates this challenge, we believe that many achievements of the last decade deserve the focussed attention of BRICS members as well as our international partners. Some of them relate to long-standing global challenges like climate action, disaster resilience and counter-terrorism. Others reflect an organic evolution, which served us particularly well as we combatted the COVID-19 pandemic and ensured a robust economic recovery thereafter. There are still others, which have gained a particular salience in the context of the economic implications of ongoing conflicts. Together, these

constitute an interconnected template, which is a powerful contribution to ongoing development and growth debates.

When it comes to climate action, India has not only sought to chart a more sustainable path for itself but has done so in a manner in which it has wider global resonance. Our commitment to the growth of renewable energy, the promotion of energy efficiency and the deployment of environment-friendly technologies is evident on the ground. In many ways, we have emerged as a climate action-leader that has kept its commitments made under the Paris Agreement. India was also the initiator of collaborative endeavours like the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. More recently, we proposed the "One Sun One World One Grid" as well as Infrastructure for Resilient Island States. At the same time, it is our deep belief that sustainable growth requires a transformation in our lifestyle. For that reason, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has put forward the LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) initiative that promotes practices, which are more in harmony with nature. This draws upon an Indian tradition and culture of reverence for Mother Earth and for nature. We are confident that other societies, drawing on their own heritage, will find similar motivation to join us in this effort. Another significant development is the declaration by the United Nations of 2023 as the International Year of Millets. By promoting the production and consumption of ancient grains that are ingrained in the habits of so many societies, we seek to address both challenges of food security and of

more climate-friendly food production. It is heartening to see both initiatives make rapid progress.

In many ways, the progress in India during the last few years itself serves as a body of knowledge that can drive greater international partnerships. Despite being a low-income society, we have taken major steps to ensure social welfare of large segments of our population. The key to this achievement is the emergence of a digital public infrastructure that ensures delivery of services in a credible and effective manner. This is visible in the food support extended to more than 800 million Indians, direct financial payments made to more than 400 million and ambitious schemes of providing electricity, drinking water and housing. It was expressed as well in the digital platform, which underpinned a massive vaccination effort. As indeed, in the provision of benefits to farmers or in the promotion of digital financial transactions. The cumulative impact of these endeavours has been dramatic on the quality of governance. The scale of services that is ensured on a daily basis has increased by multiples. If there are digital lessons from India's experience, a similar example is also now being offered in the health domain. During COVID, Indian-manufactured vaccines were supplied to almost a 100 nations and medicines to a 150. It witnessed India establishing a reputation as a "pharmacy of the world". It was not just the scale of the effort but also its competitive costs and equally, the effectiveness of the products. In parallel, there has been a massive expansion in the availability of generics and low-cost medicines to ensure universal accessibility and affordability. The concept of a "People's Pharmacy" that has gained traction can offer insights to others with similar needs.

These are but some examples of ideas and initiatives that India is seeking to bring to BRICS and beyond. We believe deeply in the inter-dependence of our globalised economy. But, we are equally convinced that this should serve for mutual benefit, not for leveraging or unilateral gains. The challenges of the world are today too complicated to be addressed effectively by national solutions alone. A larger collective effort will be credible only if groupings like BRICS sets an example. In the past, India took the lead in areas like strengthening and reforming the multilateral system; counter-terrorism;



digital public goods; digital health; startups; micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises; agriculture, water and green tourism. We have seen through actual practice that the ambit of activities of BRICS has grown through successive chairships. Because the developing world is characterised by young demographics, we believe that their interests should be a special focus for BRICS activities. On its part, India is certainly prepared to contribute its experiences in areas like startups, innovation and digitisation.

As the South African Presidency takes on the responsibility of further developing the BRICS grouping, India extends fullest support for its success. We believe that the question of comprehensive institutional development of BRICS should be deliberated upon with an open mind and a positive outlook. The decisions we could take in this regard would have far-reaching consequences. We are also confident that the forthcoming summit will provide us with a valuable opportunity to

deliberate upon many other critical issues confronting the global South in the spirit of equality, mutual respect and complete consensus, that is the hallmark of BRICS.

Despite being a low-income society, we have taken major steps to ensure social welfare of large segments of our population. The key to this achievement is the emergence of a digital public infrastructure that ensures delivery of services in a credible and effective manner.



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Outcomes of the 2023 BRICS Academic Forum: Fostering cooperation and advancing research

The 2023 BRICS Academic Forum's outcomes underscore the necessity for collaborative efforts to address pressing global challenges and capitalise on emerging opportunities.

Prof. Sarah Mosoetsa
Interim Chairperson of the BRICS Think Tank Council

The 2023 BRICS Academic Forum brought together leading scholars, researchers and policymakers from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa to discuss pressing global challenges and opportunities for collaboration.

In his opening address, South Africa's Minister of Higher Education, Science and

Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, highlighted, "The 15th BRICS Academic Forum provides us with another opportunity to strengthen our relations and reaffirm our values in an ever unfortunately polarised global order."

In line with South Africa's 2023 theme, *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*, the Consul General of India in Cape Town,

Mr PK Ashok Babu, noted that, "Today, the BRICS Academic Forum has become an important part of dialogue diplomacy wherein experts have the freedom to interact frankly and recommend pragmatic solutions to our concerns." Indeed, successful partnership necessitates dialogue and consensus to respond to these needs and demands of the larger international community, particularly regarding growth, sustainable development

and inclusion of the global South in the world system.

Delegates engaged with five priorities under South Africa's 2023 BRICS theme during the forum.

In resonance with the priorities, *Developing a Partnership towards an Equitable Just Energy Transition, and Transforming Education and Skills Development for the Future*, Mr Aleksei Malenko, Consul General of Russia in Cape Town, highlighted that "strengthening the capacity of the academic society is one of the most important aspects of the BRICS activities."

Touching on the priority of *Unlocking Opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement*, Minister Nzimande emphasised that BRICS needed to pay "particular attention to developing countries and their needs" if they were to meet their "commitment to developing a more inclusive, equitable and just global system." He urged BRICS researchers to scrutinise "the illicit flow of finances and funds from the African continent to developed countries."

Concerning the fourth priority, *Strengthening Post-Pandemic Socio-Economic Recovery and the Attainment of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development*, the progress that BRICS had already made in this regard was emphasised by Consul General Malenko: "Recently, the combined GDP of the BRICS countries, for the first time, exceeded that of the G7."

Alluding to the fifth priority, *Strengthening Multilateralism, including Working Towards Real Reform of Global Governance Institutions and Strengthening the Meaningful Participation of Women in Peace Processes*, Dr Nzimande emphasised "the necessity to bring about peace in the world as a precondition for equitable economic development." He noted that as the African Union had resolved to "silence the guns" on the African continent, there should also be a similar global commitment to focus "on the achievement of human goals, of egalitarianism and mutually beneficial development."

Policy proposals for sustainable development

Education and skills development emerged as critical areas of focus during the forum. BRICS countries recognise that investing in human capital is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By collaborating on educational initiatives and sharing knowledge, these nations can bridge the gap between educational systems and promote cross-cultural learning. This

cooperation will result in a more skilled and adaptable workforce capable of meeting the challenges of the ever-evolving global job market.

Cross-cultural understanding and soft diplomacy were highlighted as essential ingredients for successful academic cooperation. By promoting mutual understanding, BRICS nations can foster an environment of trust and respect, reducing the likelihood of misunderstanding and conflict. The intellectual exchange of ideas, cultures and traditions creates a strong foundation for productive international relations, encouraging peaceful coexistence and diplomatic partnerships.

Some of the key focal points of the forum were sustainable development and climate change. As the world faces environmental crises, BRICS nations recognise the urgency of adopting eco-friendly practices and policies. These nations can develop innovative solutions to combat climate change and its associated impacts by pooling their resources, expertise and research findings. Moreover, continued academic cooperation allows for the exchange of best practices in sustainable development, enabling each member country to learn from the successes and challenges their counterparts face. Continued research cooperation among BRICS nations is paramount in driving sustainable development and global progress in the 21st century.

The 2023 BRICS Academic Forum's outcomes underscore the necessity for collaborative efforts to address pressing global challenges and capitalise on emerging opportunities.

The 15th BRICS Academic Forum's recommendations, formulated by the BRICS Think Tank Council, offer guidance for the BRICS leaders under the South African Chairship in 2023. The recommendations aim to promote partnerships for mutual growth, sustainable development and inclusive multilateralism, focussing on benefitting all citizens, especially women and youth, to create a world free from poverty, inequalities and disease. Specifically, the nine policy imperatives were proposed as follows:

1. Strengthening Multilateralism and Reforming Global Governance Institutions: BRICS should work towards transforming the international order based on international law, respecting the sovereignty of independent countries and promoting the multilateral trading system.
2. Strengthening Peace and Security Processes: BRICS should address

Cross-cultural understanding and soft diplomacy were highlighted as essential ingredients for successful academic cooperation.

security challenges through joint efforts to respond to traditional and non-traditional threats, focussing on counterterrorism, maritime security and development.

3. Strengthening Post-Pandemic Socio-Economic Recovery and the 2030 Agenda: BRICS economies have been affected differently by COVID-19, therefore, cooperation in health, entrepreneurship and scientific and technical innovation is crucial for sustainable and inclusive development.
4. Climate Challenges for BRICS Countries: BRICS should support the implementation of the Paris Agreement, promote agriculture-climate adaptation and mitigation strategies and collaborate on water resource management to combat climate change.
5. Developing a Partnership towards an Equitable Just Transition and the African Agenda on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI): BRICS countries must support technological and policy collaboration in clean energy projects, critical minerals and green technology, ensuring the interests of vulnerable groups are addressed.
6. Transforming Education, Innovation and Skills Development for the Future: Knowledge exchanges, monitoring and evaluation should be improved, and STI cooperation should be strengthened, primarily through the BRICS Partnership for New Industrial Revolution.
7. Unlocking Opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement: BRICS should prioritise infrastructure investment and development, promote technology transfer and knowledge exchange and facilitate engagement with regional trade groupings.
8. New Development Bank (NDB) and BRICS Financing: The NDB's

The establishment of the BRICS Virtual Academy marks a significant milestone in strengthening academic cooperation among BRICS nations.

role in global development finance should be expanded, with a focus on renewable energy projects and infrastructure development. BRICS must also advocate for climate finance architecture reassessment and support trade for mutual benefit.

- 9. People-to-People Exchanges: BRICS should strengthen people-to-people ties through cultural exchanges, tourism, sports and other programmes to promote mutual understanding and trust.

These policy recommendations aim to enhance cooperation, sustainable development and inclusiveness among the BRICS nations and contribute to a safe and equal world free from poverty, inequalities and disease.

Strengthening research cooperation

During the 2023 BRICS Academic Forum, the BRICS countries took a significant step towards fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. As part of the proposal to establish a BRICS Virtual Academy, the BRICS Think Tank Council identified urgent policy research areas that will drive sustainable development and further cooperation among the BRICS nations:

- BRICS Currencies: Trade among BRICS nations and the global South has historically relied on currency exchanges and swap mechanisms that may not always be mutually beneficial. Given BRICS' significant share of the global population and gross domestic product, exploring the potential use of national currencies in trade and investment within the bloc and with regional partners is vital. Comprehensive research, including evidence-gathering and cost-benefit analyses, will be undertaken by scholars and researchers from BRICS nations to develop alternative currencies and enhance economic stability and cooperation.
- Expansion of BRICS: The growing interest from countries across continents to join BRICS calls for careful research and examination of the implications of expansion. Scholars and researchers will study the guiding

principles and modalities for expanding BRICS while preserving its original goals and intentions. Additionally, exploring collaboration frameworks with potential partner countries will strengthen BRICS' global position and foster collective progress.

- New Technologies: Critical and emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence and language-processing advancements, require in-depth research by BRICS scholars. Understanding the impact of these technologies on various aspects of human life, including the digital economy and security, will foster better digital infrastructure development. Analysis of knowledge-sharing and technology transfer dynamics will help bridge the digital divide and elevate digital governance. The establishment of a BRICS Platform on Digital Public Goods, as per the Delhi Declaration of 2021, will drive digital innovation, and a repository for Open-Source Technology Applications under the BRICS umbrella will support the achievement of the SDGs.
- BRICS Declarations: Effective implementation of BRICS declarations necessitates the establishment of a comprehensive database of archival documents. BRICS think tanks will compile relevant data to produce monitoring reports on progress, achievements and challenges since the bloc's inception. This systematic approach will promote transparency and accountability, reinforcing BRICS' commitment to its objectives.
- SDGs: Assessing BRICS' progress in achieving the SDGs (Agenda 2030) is crucial to expedite their attainment. Through comprehensive reviews, BRICS scholars and researchers can identify areas that require innovative and cooperative measures to drive sustainable development and improve

the well-being of their nations and the global community.

The establishment of the BRICS Virtual Academy marks a significant milestone in strengthening academic cooperation among BRICS nations.

The prioritisation of urgent policy research initiatives by the BRICS Think Tank Council demonstrates its commitment to promoting sustainable development and finding innovative solutions to global challenges.

As researchers and scholars collaborate and share knowledge and expertise, the BRICS bloc can harness its collective potential to drive positive change and shape a more prosperous and interconnected future for all.

In conclusion, the outcomes of the 2023 BRICS Academic Forum reinforce the critical role of continued academic cooperation among BRICS nations in advancing sustainable development and global progress.

By addressing key themes such as sustainable development, technology, education, cross-cultural understanding and research collaboration, these countries can collectively create positive impacts on a global scale. It is imperative that they sustain and strengthen their collaborative efforts to leverage their collective potential and overcome the complexities of the modern world.

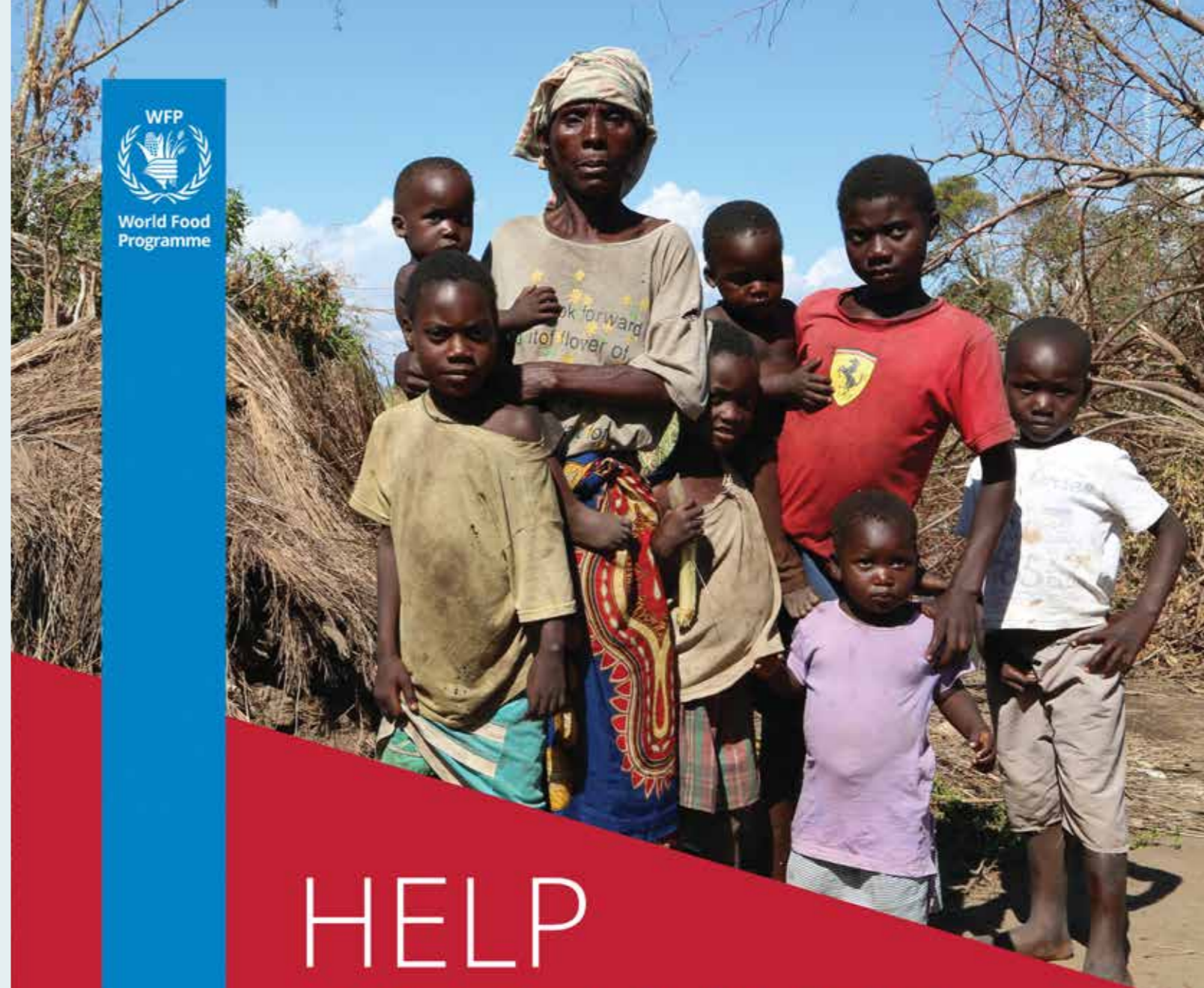
BRICS countries have demonstrated remarkable progress in various technological domains, from space exploration to Artificial Intelligence.

By collaborating on research and development projects, these nations can accelerate technological advancements, benefitting not only their own economies but also contributing to global technological progress.

Jointly addressing the ethical and regulatory implications of emerging technologies will also foster a shared sense of responsibility and cooperation in shaping the digital future.

As the global landscape continues to evolve, nurturing academic ties among BRICS nations will remain essential for building a more sustainable, prosperous and interconnected future for all. ▬

The prioritisation of urgent policy research initiatives by the BRICS Think Tank Council demonstrates its commitment to promoting sustainable development and finding innovative solutions to global challenges.



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SAVING LIVES CHANGING LIVES

THE NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK

Built by and for developing countries

The NDB is a bank built by and for developing countries, where the voices of all member countries are equally heard.

By Dilma Rousseff
President of the New Development Bank

The New Development Bank (NDB) was created in 2014, during the BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, when I was the President of Brazil. Seeing that its birth resulted from the collective will of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the NDB is often referred to as the “BRICS Bank”.

With the important entry of other countries, this acronym has now become a name and it no longer stands for the five founders only, but for all the countries of the global South that belong now, and that will in the future belong to the bank.

However, besides its name, the bank is also new for its characteristics; possessing a profile that makes it stand out among multilateral development banks. The NDB focusses primarily on developing countries and emerging economies. Its mission is to mobilise resources for investments in logistical, social, environmental and digital infrastructure, with a view to the sustainable development of its member countries.

In short, the NDB is a bank built by and for developing countries, where the voices of all member countries are equally heard.

Today, the bank faces the new challenges that come from a changing world. The drive towards globalisation that has prevailed since

World War II, with the internationalisation of trade and financial and information flows, has been changing since the 2008/09 crisis. With the multiplication of sanctions, geopolitical conflicts have introduced uncertainty and instability by leaving financial assets unprotected. They also led to the fragmentation of global supply chains, already weakened by COVID-19.

The world's economy has been facing the effects of high inflation and monetary policies that lead to rising interest rates, thus giving rise to bank failures, excessive leverage and increasing the risk of recession in both developed and developing countries. The end of quantitative easing and the adoption of quantitative tightening are generating shock waves of instability that hit the entire world economy.

As a former president of a developing country, I know how important multilateral banks are, and above all, I know the immense challenge of obtaining financing on the scale required to meet the economic, social, logistical and environmental challenges of these countries.

Becoming president of the NDB is, without a doubt, an excellent opportunity to do more for developing countries, for emerging economies, and, therefore, for Brazil. We support the national strategies of the bank's

member countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by financing renewable energy, green and resilient infrastructure, aiming at low-carbon growth. The bank is committed to helping member countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – foremost among which are the eradication of poverty and of hunger – as well as the nationally determined contributions made under the Paris Agreement by each signatory country.

The efforts of the NDB in this area are extremely relevant in view of the shortfall of over US\$4 trillion that exists today to achieve the SDGs globally, creating what the United Nations Secretary-General has called “a funding black hole”.

Moreover, because of its origin and characteristics, the NDB is in a unique position to support the infrastructure investments needed to fight poverty and promote job creation.

Looking to the immediate future, the priorities for the bank are clear.

First, the NDB needs to expand its outreach, strengthening its role as a platform for cooperation. We will do this by expanding our network of partnerships, always placing great emphasis on the relevance of the development projects we finance. To this end, we are seeking to work ever more closely and

The countries that will be joining us will bring resources to the bank, supporting the diversification of its portfolio and increasing its ability to mobilise funds. The expansion of the bank's membership will serve to strengthen our capital base, enhancing support for new investments.

directly with our members to better identify their most significant needs and focus our support on their most critical and strategic projects.

In this same sense, the NDB intends to increase its participation in co-financing operations with other multilateral financial institutions, national development banks and the private sector. By strengthening these partnerships, we will be able to multiply the impact of our bank's resources, amplifying the reach of our actions in favour of our member countries.

In 2021, the NDB began its membership expansion, in line with the guidance of the bank's governors and Board of Directors, and welcomed three new members: Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates and Egypt. These countries, with their geographic, economic and developmental differences, represent the diversity of the bank's membership.

Our approach to expanding the number of countries will be to seek greater diversity, both in terms of geography and stage of development. The countries that will be joining us will bring resources to the bank, supporting the diversification of its portfolio and increasing its ability to mobilise funds. The expansion of the bank's membership will serve to strengthen our capital base, enhancing support for new investments. Furthermore, they will enrich the NDB's collection of social and economic development experiences and enhance the bank's role as a platform for amplifying collaboration between developing countries and emerging economies.

A second priority for the NDB will be to raise funds in diverse world markets, and in

different currencies – such as the renminbi, dollar and euro – bringing in resources from wherever they are available. At the same time, we will seek to fund a greater share of our projects in local currencies, with the dual objective of strengthening the member countries' domestic markets and protecting our borrowers from the risks of currency fluctuations.

Because their currencies are not fully convertible within the current financial architecture, the economies of the global South often suffer from the negative impacts of sudden fluctuations in their exchange rates.

In addition, many infrastructure projects crucial for sustainable development generate their revenues in local currency, and we intend to offer more compatible alternatives for their financing.

It is worth noting that the private sector will be the main beneficiary of the lower costs generated by the ability to offer project-finance loans in local currencies.

Currently, local-currency financing represents approximately 22% of the bank's portfolio, largely driven by renminbi-denominated loans. For the 2022 – 2026 strategic cycle, our goal is that 30% of the bank's project financing volume will be denominated in the national currencies of our members.

A third priority for the bank will be to promote social inclusion. The NDB needs to support projects that help reduce inequalities and that contribute to improving the living standards of the large communities of poor and excluded people that still exist in the countries of the global South.

The impacts of projects in terms of promoting economic growth, generating employment and increasing household income are necessarily part of the criteria that the bank has been adopting in offering financial support that is truly relevant for member countries.

When considering the social impact of the financing it provides, however, the NDB must aim beyond income growth to productive inclusion and access to public services.

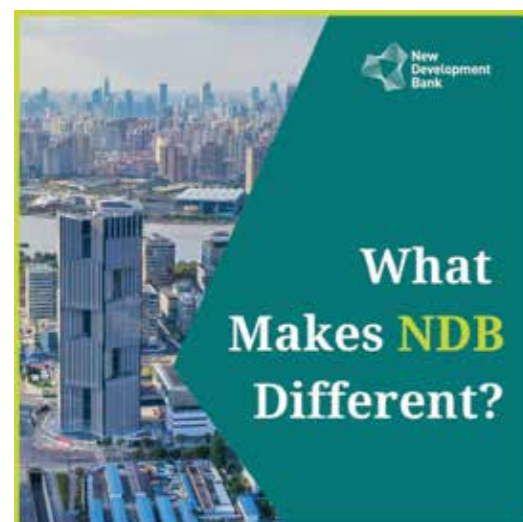
The experience of many member countries shows that social inclusion also depends on the population's access to health, education, sanitation, mobility and housing.

All these public goods and the services associated with them depend on investments in specific infrastructures geared towards their availability for the general population, and the bank intends to play an increasing role in supporting such investments.

The strategic objective of the NDB is to become the leading development bank for emerging markets and developing countries.

The NDB is, in essence, a cooperative of countries that share an inarguable commitment to the climate and environmental agenda, the social-inclusion and inequality-reduction agendas and the economic modernisation agenda of the countries of the global South.

By diversifying its sources of funding, broadening its partnership network and expanding its membership base, the NDB aims to extend its global reach as a platform that practises true multilateralism, promoting broader cooperation among developing countries. ☰





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Established in South Africa at the dawn of democracy in 1994, MTN has grown by investing in sophisticated communication infrastructure, developing new technologies, and by harnessing the talent of our diverse people to offer services to communities across Africa and in the Middle East.

We aim to be the trusted partner for progress with our nation state hosts in the socioeconomic development of their countries as well as to contribute to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. We continue to expand our network coverage; lower the cost to communicate; reduce our GHG emissions; and advance the representation of women across our business.

In 2022, we contributed approximately R149 billion to society, as measured by economic value added. Of this, our total tax contribution was R51.5 billion. As a company rooted in Africa, we are connected with all things that give Africans dignity, hope

and opportunity. Expanding digital and financial inclusion are a particular focus. In 2022, of our 289 million subscribers, 137 million were active data users and 69 million were active users of MTN Mobile Money. Some 88% of the population

in our markets fell within our broadband coverage and we are targeting 95% by 2025. In 2022, we contributed approximately R149 billion to society, as measured by economic value added. Of this, our total tax contribution was R51.5 billion. As a company rooted in Africa, we are connected with all things that give Africans dignity, hope and opportunity.

Expanding digital and financial inclusion are a particular focus. In 2022, of our 289 million subscribers, 137 million were active data users and 69 million were active users of MTN Mobile Money. Some 88% of the population in our markets fell within our broadband coverage and we are targeting 95% by 2025.

Women make up 40% of our workforce, and we aim for 50% by 2030. To contribute to the fight against climate change, we are committed to a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030 and Net Zero by 2040.

MTN's journey is rooted in the soul of Africa. It is a journey of tenacity, resilience, dedication, and the pursuit of excellence. We are committed to contributing to the 'Africa We Want' and are inspired by the transformative power of connections and the potential they hold for mutual and sustainable growth, development, and understanding. We actively seek

opportunities to leverage our connections to address the challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. Through increased collaborations in trade, investment, tourism, skills for the future, and technology transfers, we envision a future of sustainable growth and development for Africa and beyond.

We are excited about the opportunities of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the African Digital Transformation Strategy and remain committed to strengthening the post-pandemic recovery. We are at the forefront of sustainable solutions, investing in renewable energy and innovative technologies that reduce our environmental footprint

Since over 60% of Africa's population is under 35 years of age, we are determined to empower young people by equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in the digital age, and beyond. MTN is a partner in progress, a catalyst for change, and a believer in the power of connection. We are excited about the opportunities ahead. Together, we can create a better Africa and world, with a more connected future for all.

Doing for tomorrow, today.



BRICS at 15: Youth as drivers of the BRICS Agenda

The uniqueness of BRICS is precisely the diversity and richness, which weld us together as a powerful global force. It brings us together to work together in cooperation not only for our own benefit but for the global community.

By Prof. Anil Sooklal

Ambassador-at-Large: Asia and BRICS and South Africa's BRICS Sherpa
Department of International Relations and Cooperation

Our unique identity and strength as BRICS are anchored in our solidarity as people of the South. BRICS brings people together across four continents and diverse histories, cultures, religions and identities to forge new friendships and deepen relations and mutual understanding between BRICS peoples in the spirit of openness, inclusiveness, diversity, solidarity and mutual respect.

Some of the global narratives about BRICS constantly aim to highlight our differences as something negative. The uniqueness of BRICS is precisely the diversity and richness, which weld us together as a powerful global force. It brings us together to work together in cooperation not only for our own benefit but for the global community.

Our BRICS partnership has deep roots in the formal government cooperation tracks across the three pillars of cooperation: political and security; financial and economic; as well as social/people-to-people cooperation.

The partnership is more than government-to-government relations. It is inclusive of women, youth, civil societies, media, ruling parties, parliaments, law societies, cultural organisations, sports federations, arts, theatre and film, to name but a few.

We live in a very fractured world and therefore new solutions are desperately needed for the challenges confronting humanity today.

The global pandemic has erased almost all the gains we have made towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The world is increasingly divided and the return to Cold War mentalities and the contestation of so-called great powers have worsened the situation for the global South.

The key developmental challenges of poverty, underdevelopment and inequality are increasing, but are being relegated to

the margins by those who have the means to make a difference.

BRICS as a powerful voice of the global South must leverage its combined resources, influence and leadership, in partnership with other like-minded emerging market and developing countries, to provide the global leadership that is lacking in the world today. This is what is expected of BRICS.

This is the motivation for South Africa's theme as Chair of BRICS in 2023: *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*.

Our theme emphasises the value of BRICS as a partnership of leading emerging markets and developing countries generating momentum towards global growth, sustainable development and inclusion of the global South in the world system.

Governments cannot deliver on this alone. It requires a whole-of-community and whole-of-society approach. The future of our BRICS partnership depends on cooperation between our countries being driven at a people-to-people level.

The BRICS partnership depends on the support and leadership of our youth, our future. As a country, South Africa is acutely aware of how youth activism has shaped, and continues to shape, international relations.

It was the youth of South Africa who exposed the brutality of the apartheid regime and who was a catalyst for the international revulsion against the South African Government, mobilising support for the liberation struggle against apartheid.

International solidarity with the struggle of South African youth elevated the consciousness of young South Africans to global challenges and the power of youth engagement in finding solutions.

In 2011, we witnessed young people demanding more accountability from governments on matters affecting them, in

what later became known as the Arab Spring. With the rise of social media, young people have proven their ability to amplify their activism on issues such as peace and security, climate change, sustainable development and human rights beyond their borders.

Youth are now critical players in international fora and global affairs in general. One of the foundational values of BRICS is the need to restructure the global political, economic and financial architecture to be more equitable, balanced, inclusive and representative.

Our vision of BRICS is of a partnership of emerging markets and developing countries providing global leadership and serving as the catalyst for sustained and mutually beneficial global growth and sustainable development.

Our vision is for BRICS cooperation to respond to the needs and demands of the larger international community, particularly growth, sustainable development and inclusion of the global South in the world system.

Our vision of BRICS is also inclusive and representative. Our vision cannot be achieved

The partnership is more than government-to-government relations. It is inclusive of women, youth, civil societies, media, ruling parties, parliaments, law societies, cultural organisations, sports federations, arts, theatre and film, to name but a few.



The BRICS partnership depends on the support and leadership of our youth, our future. As a country, South Africa is acutely aware of how youth activism has shaped, and continues to shape, international relations.

by governments alone and demands the meaningful participation of women and youth.

Our BRICS partnership recognises that full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making is fundamental for inclusive and sustainable development.

It is one thing to talk about inclusion of the youth to ensure representation of their interest and to show solidarity with young people across the world. Young people also need resources, networks and platforms to play a meaningful and lasting role in the foreign policy space.

BRICS has therefore created a number of platforms to enhance meaningful youth participation and leadership, including the BRICS Youth Summit, but also the BRICS Young Scientists Forum; BRICS Civil Forum; BRICS Youth Parliamentarians Forum; BRICS Youth Energy Forum; and the BRICS

Games. These platforms have created a cohort of young BRICS policymakers and influencers who are key players in the new era of development.

Young people also need to be present in decision-making platforms and I commend the leadership role played by South Africa's National Youth Development Agency in this area with their proposal for the establishment of a BRICS Youth Council.

A youth council will be a formalised structure for BRICS youth engagement to coordinate BRICS youth participation and representation across all three pillars of our cooperation. It will create a platform for dialogue and capacity-building for youth empowerment and an entry point for engagement with other BRICS structures, including the Sherpas, governments, the New Development Bank, BRICS Civil Society, BRICS Think Tank Council, BRICS Women Business Alliance,

BRICS Business Council and other working groups to mainstream youth interests and perspectives across all BRICS activities and cooperation.

It will also provide a feedback loop to government with the youth council making recommendations to governments on the impact and direction of BRICS priorities and programmes and how they affect our youth. This is important to ensure that BRICS membership delivers benefits across the board, including to the youth of BRICS countries and the global South.

As a collective, we look forward to working with the youth of BRICS towards addressing our national and global challenges and exploring opportunities for mutual benefit for all. We look forward to working together with you to place BRICS at the forefront of shaping a new people-centred global society in a multipolar world. U

What has BRICS done thus far to serve the agribusiness and agriculture communities?

Overall, there is progress within BRICS regarding identifying critical areas of focus, which the five BBC chapters have now adopted. The next step will be to drill down on the delivery methods in these focal areas and ensuring that each partner country benefits.

By Wandile Sihlobo
 Chair of the BRICS Agribusiness Working Group
 BRICS Business Council

In May 2023, the business councils of the BRICS grouping gathered virtually to discuss a range of priorities for the year, in preparation for the XV BRICS Summit in August 2023.

The BRICS Business Council (BBC) works collaboratively with the political heads and primarily focusses on commercial opportunities within BRICS.

Having assumed the BRICS Chairship this year, South Africa led the meeting and proposed the areas of focus for the year ahead. Within the Agribusiness Working Group, there are five priority areas, namely:

- Best practices on agriculture sustainable development among BRICS countries: All the BRICS countries are major agricultural countries and agricultural production faces significant challenges in tackling climate change. This BBC workstream is crucial and will build on the work already started by the China chapter in 2022.
- Improve fertiliser availability to use among BRICS countries and the broader African continent: This theme will explore ways of boosting fertiliser production and trade among BRICS countries.
- Agricultural finance: The drive towards smart climate agriculture and the adoption of new farming methods, such as the European Union's Green Deal, requires new ways of production and investments in global agriculture. This requires innovative ways of financing. Given that some BRICS members are more advanced in their agricultural sectors than others, information-sharing about agricultural

finance and domestic experiences is critical. This could be achieved through virtual seminars and reports.

- Trade and investment: Although the BRICS countries are primarily agricultural powerhouses, there is still room to improve trade, with a specific focus on market-access issues.
- Academic interactions for private-sector benefit: The working group will explore the academic programmes to align research and collaboration between academic and private sector role-players.

These focal points were adopted by the global BBC chapters and will inform the main programme of work of the agriculture and agribusiness sectors.

The expected outcome or model of delivery in each of the said priorities will include business facilitation, seminars and research papers.

Importantly, BRICS is a political grouping and a free trade agreement; therefore, there will remain some limitations in facilitating trade, although the group offers the opportunity to highlight the barriers that each country experiences regarding trade. The South African agricultural role-players will be represented in these discussions.

Of all these priority areas, the most urgent for South Africa are trade and investment, as well as the improvement of fertiliser availability.

On trade, the main interest for South Africa is advancing agricultural exports, specifically to China and India. These countries have relatively solid economic growth prospects and large populations (and therefore markets). Brazil tends to be a competitor with South

Africa in major agricultural commodities, while Russia is an important market for South African fruit and in turn, a major supplier of wheat. Still, since the Russia-Ukraine conflict, advancing commerce with the country is generally risky.

As things stand, BRICS countries account for a relatively small share of South Africa's agricultural exports – an average of 8% over the past 10 years in total agricultural exports of US\$9,9 billion.

These calculations are based on data from *Trade Map*. China is the leading market, accounting for an average of 5% of South Africa's agricultural exports worldwide. The top products were wool, citrus, beef, nuts and grapes.

The second-largest market within BRICS was Russia, accounting for an average of 2%, with citrus, apples, pears, grapes and wine as some of the top products while India and Brazil were negligible importers of South African agricultural products.

While the BRIC (with South Africa excluded in this calculation) countries imported an average of US\$764 million of agricultural products from South Africa, a small share in the nearly US\$10 billion South Africa exported over the past decade annually, the grouping imported an average of US\$196 billion worth of agricultural products from the world market.

This data excludes South Africa to provide a view of the size of the agricultural market that South Africa is part of within BRIC(S).

The US\$764 million imported by BRIC from South Africa over the past 10 years makes South Africa a small player in the agricultural trade of this grouping. China is the largest importer, accounting for 67% of the total BRIC agriculture import of US\$196 billion, followed by Russia (16%), India (12%) and Brazil (5%).

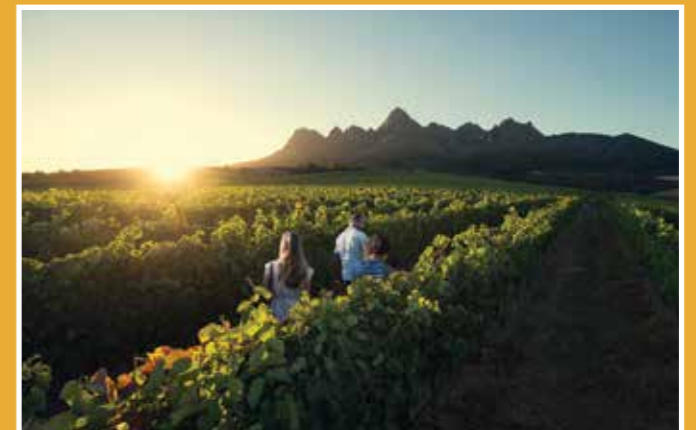
These realities imply that within the agribusiness stream of the BBC and the broader political grouping, the South African representatives should continue to advocate for lowering import tariffs for agricultural products, specifically within India and China. At the same time, the business community will have to actively promote the "proudly South African" agriculture (and broadly food, fibre and beverages) products within the bloc.

Overall, there is progress within BRICS regarding identifying critical areas of focus,

which the five BBC chapters have now adopted. The next step will be to drill down on the delivery methods in these focal areas and ensuring that each partner country benefits.

The coming months will be seized with work on these issues, ahead of the BRICS annual meetings in August, which will see the BBC handing over recommendations to the BRICS heads of state at the BRICS Business Forum ahead of the flagship meeting of the heads of state. ☺

Of all these priority areas, the most urgent for South Africa are trade and investment, as well as the improvement of fertiliser availability.





BRICS Women's Business Alliance: Unlocking the Gender Dividend

The alliance is now an official structure within the BRICS cooperative framework. Its primary objective is twofold: to amplify women's participation in the economic processes of BRICS nations and promote the inclusion of women-led businesses in global value chains.

By the BRICS Women's Business Alliance

The ascension of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) nations as emerging economies on the global stage over the past few decades is a well-known tale. However, the narrative that truly stands out is the commendable role of women spearheading this growth story through the BRICS Women's Business Alliance (BRICS WBA).

At the heart of this initiative was the 10th BRICS Summit, where the Johannesburg Declaration came into existence. This landmark declaration recognised the invaluable contributions of women to inclusive development. It catalysed the creation of the BRICS Women's

Forum and the BRICS WBA – initiatives designed to amplify the voices of women parliamentarians from BRICS countries and promote increased interactions moving forward.

The Russia BRICS Chairship, imbued with a shared vision and a spirit of collaboration, inaugurated the BRICS WBA in July 2020. The alliance is now an official structure within the BRICS cooperative framework. Its primary objective is twofold: to amplify women's participation in the economic processes of BRICS nations and promote the inclusion of women-led businesses in global value chains.

South Africa's Presidency of the XV BRICS Summit, themed *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated*

Economic Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism, introduced several impactful economic activities:

- BRICS WBA South Africa executed, in partnership with Jozini Local Municipality, the Jozini Farmers Imbizo on 10 March 2023, a landmark gathering which concluded with several significant outcomes that promise to transform the agricultural landscape in the country, including the formation of a cooperative among the local farmers. This initiative will allow for pooling resources, sharing knowledge and creating a unified voice to address common issues, such as domestic and international market access as well as fair pricing.

- South Africa has been at the forefront, conducting strategic scoping missions with fellow BRICS nations: Brazil, Russia, India and China. These missions have been pivotal in intensifying collaborative relationships within this international bloc, focussing on promoting balanced and inclusive economic growth. Central to their pursuit is the advancement of women in trade, the attraction of investments, capacity-building and technology transfer. Unique focus is placed on boosting women's economic participation, acknowledging their role as vital contributors to the economy.

These collaborative efforts have borne fruit in several key areas:

- **Business Intelligence Portal:** A successful joint endeavour was the creation of a Business Intelligence Portal. This cooperative development aims to provide critical market insights, trend analysis and information on potential business opportunities, aiding companies in making informed decisions.
- **Agriculture E-Commerce and Fintech Solutions:** Partnerships have been formed to broaden the reach of the agriculture e-commerce platform. Coupled with the integration of fintech solutions, this expansion aims to amplify the presence of women agripreneurs in the BRICS markets, opening up new avenues for their products and services.
- **Fuel Storage Facility:** The establishment of a fuel storage facility represents a key achievement in the energy sector, ensuring fuel storage capacity and contributing to energy infrastructure development in the country.
- **Solar Farm Cooperation:** Further in the energy sector, there has been significant cooperation in developing solar farms. This reflects the commitment of the BRICS countries to sustainable energy and combatting climate change.
- **Innovative Building Centre of Excellence:** The creation of the Innovative Building Centre of Excellence underpins the importance of construction and infrastructural development. This institution will serve as a hub for innovation, research and skills development in the innovative and building technologies industry.
- **Banking Cooperation and Smart Solutions:** In the financial sector,

notable progress has been made in the realm of banking cooperation and smart solutions. This includes the sharing of best practices and deployment of smart banking solutions to bank the unbankable and rural communities across the country, technological advancements and regulatory policies and commercial licensing to enhance the efficiency, security and accessibility of financial services across BRICS countries.

These achievements not only highlight the progress made in strengthening economic cooperation among the BRICS members but also underscore the ongoing commitment to fostering inclusive, balanced and sustainable growth. Through these initiatives, the BRICS WBA and its partners continue to champion the cause of socio-economic development, women's leadership and economic advancement within the BRICS bloc.

Throughout 2023, the BRICS WBA curated a plethora of events and initiatives, demonstrating its commitment to fostering women's economic participation across BRICS countries:

- At the forefront of notable gatherings, was the BRICS Women Leadership Forum, hosted in Beijing. This esteemed occasion served as a powerful platform for women in leadership positions to convene and deliberate on the opportunities and obstacles they encountered in their respective journeys. During this significant event, participants engaged in fruitful discussions, shared innovative ideas and collaborated to formulate effective strategies aimed at bolstering the representation and influence of women within the BRICS bloc.
- Equally noteworthy, were the Business-to-Business meetings that brought together all the winners of the BRICS Women Innovation contest. Hosted by the Chinese Chapter of the WBA, these meetings provided a platform for these innovative women entrepreneurs to network, explore potential collaborations and share their unique business ideas and models.
- The St Petersburg International Economic Forum, a renowned business event, has been a leading platform for global economic discussions and sustainable development practices for 26 years. On 17 June 2023, the Russia Chapter of the BRICS WBA held a captivating panel session, titled *BRICS: on the Verge of Change* at the XXVI

forum. Dedicated to the prospects of BRICS expansion and strengthening international cooperation, the session highlighted the pivotal role of BRICS women leaders in shaping and implementing the development agenda. Attended by representatives from BRICS WBA national chapters, business and government as moderated by Lebogang Zulu, the BRICS WBA Rotating Chairperson, and Anna Nesterova, the BRICS WBA Russia Chapter Chairperson.

- Another highlight was the Women Business Indaba in KwaZulu-Natal, spearheaded by Premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube and the Moses Kotane Institute. The indaba represented a critical opportunity for women entrepreneurs to engage with key stakeholders, access valuable resources and gain insight into business growth strategies.
- The Eastern Cape province, in partnership with the Women Chamber of the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and with sponsorship from the Eastern Cape Development Corporation and ABSA bank, also contributed significantly to the cause. Their collaboration resulted in successful engagements that furthered the economic empowerment of women within the BRICS framework of cooperation.

These multifaceted engagements, events and initiatives have laid a robust foundation for the continued advancement of women's economic participation within the BRICS countries.

They not only empower women to contribute meaningfully to the economies of their respective countries but also pave the way for further collaborative initiatives to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

A crucial result of these initiatives has been the creation of an extensive pipeline comprising more than 60 projects.

From their inception and feasibility assessment to a state of execution-readiness, these projects embody a spectrum of opportunities.

They offer prospects for trade and investment, strengthening capacities and fostering technology partnerships. This outcome is testament to the tangible impact of these cooperative efforts, acting as a driving force for continued growth and collaboration among the BRICS women. ►►



We are inspired by the remarkable strides made by the BRICS WBA in empowering women entrepreneurs across the world's largest emerging economies. By providing training, networking and access to funding, the alliance is unlocking the tremendous economic potential of women, proving that the Gender Dividend is real and promising.

Unleashing the Gender Dividend: BRICS Women Development eGoli Declaration

In July 2023, a momentous occasion took place in the dynamic city of Durban, as the South African Chapter of BRICS WBA, in collaboration with Premier Dube-Ncube, hosted a compelling Gender Dividend Debate. The event served as a crucial precursor to the upcoming XV BRICS Summit in August.

Titled, *Tomorrow's Multipolar World, Through a Gender Lens*, the debate brought together eminent female leaders, visionaries and experts from various fields to address the pressing issue of gender parity and the realisation of gender dividends.

Distinguished participants included renowned figures such as the Minister in The Presidency responsible for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma; the Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Cooperation, Nomalungelo Gina; Dr Arikana Chihombori; Ambassador Erieka Bennett; and Madam Sharmila Govind from the New Development Bank. These influential women represented diverse spheres, including politics, government, entrepreneurship and advocacy groups.

The primary objective of the session was to foster a robust dialogue centred around the invaluable contributions of women to politics, government and business.

At the heart of the discussion was the significance of gender diversity within organisations and the urgent need to address the challenges that persist despite progress in promoting inclusive economies within the global power architecture.

Lebogang Zulu, Chairperson of BRICS WBA South Africa, stressed the critical importance of incorporating women's voices into the decision-making structures of BRICS countries. Such inclusion is essential for advancing gender equality and equity by 2030, in alignment with the Johannesburg XV BRICS Summit Declaration.

Ms Zulu highlighted the realistic challenges faced by women in political, social and economic arenas, emphasising the necessity of innovative approaches to elevate women's voices and support female leaders in

influential positions within BRICS. She also proposed key elements to be included in the BRICS Women Development eGoli Declaration, including the establishment of female-led advisory committees to serve at the BRICS Presidential, Ministerial and Sherpa levels, ensuring an inclusive agenda is a top priority for BRICS.

During the debate, participants explored essential themes, including the correlation between economic growth and gender equality.

The panellists provided robust evidence in support of the Gender Dividend concept, underscoring the positive impact of gender diversity on financial performance.

The event also shed light on the vital role of leadership in cultivating an inclusive environment that supports professional growth and diversity of thought.

Furthermore, the significance of mentorship and sponsorship programmes in accelerating women's career progression was emphasised, along with the importance of prioritising diversity and inclusion efforts to combat gender bias in the workplace.

Attendees of the Gender Dividend Debate praised the event for its empowerment and insightfulness, as it provided a meaningful platform for profound discussions on gender diversity.

The transformative power of embracing gender multiplicity was highlighted, and the invaluable contributions of women were celebrated, acknowledging the Gender Dividend as a strategic advantage for organisations. The discourse during the debate is expected to leave a lasting impact on all participants, charting a course towards a more equitable and prosperous future within the BRICS countries.

We are inspired by the remarkable strides made by the BRICS WBA in empowering women entrepreneurs across the world's largest emerging economies.

By providing training, networking and access to funding, the alliance is unlocking the tremendous economic potential of women, proving that the Gender Dividend is real and promising.

When we empower women with opportunities and support, communities

and countries thrive, and the future is undoubtedly female. #Womandla

The alliance's upcoming landmark event, the BRICS-Africa WBA Trade Conference, scheduled for 20 to 21 August 2023, is set to be a trailblazing occasion, bringing together 500 women-owned businesses from 18 diverse countries.

This conference promises first-time accomplishments and exciting unveilings, marking a significant step in the alliance's journey.

A standout feature will be the inaugural physical meeting of the BRICS WBA's national chapters, reaffirming the alliance's commitment to regional cooperation and shared growth. Additionally, the launch of the Agrowex e-commerce platform will revolutionise the agricultural industry, providing a dynamic online marketplace for agripreneurs, embracing technology for economic growth and inclusivity.

Moreover, the conference will witness the unveiling of the BRICS Centre for Labour Mobility and Education Services' "Work and Study", fostering labour mobility and diverse educational services within the BRICS countries and promoting cooperation and shared prosperity.

Lastly, the event will introduce the BRICS Global Television Network, with a special focus on the BRICS MPower, giving voice to the BRICS countries on a global scale, sharing their vibrant stories and enhancing understanding among nations.

In essence, the BRICS-Africa WBA Trade Conference is set to be a groundbreaking event, demonstrating the unwavering commitment of the BRICS WBA to promoting women's economic participation, regional cooperation and shared growth.

As we celebrate these achievements, we also recognise that there is still a long way to go to achieve true gender parity, but the alliance stands as a beacon of hope, proving that progress is attainable when visionary leaders come together to invest in women.

"BRICS women, let us unite and embrace our collective strength, charting a path towards an inclusive and prosperous future that empowers the girl child of tomorrow." – Lebogang Zulu. 🇿🇦

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Universally known as the king of the jungle, the Lion is both graceful and majestic and is the second animal to be revealed in the South African Mint's second series of the award winning Big 5 coin collection, following the mighty Elephant.

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SOUTH AFRICA TO HOST BRICS FUTURE SKILLS CHALLENGE

The objective of the BRICS Future Skills Challenge is to understand how the partner member countries approach the development of critical digital skills challenges confronting businesses.

By Mapule Ncanywa, Chairperson: Skills Development Working Group, South Africa BRICS Business Council

Established in 2013, the South Africa BRICS Business Council's objective is to constitute a platform, which will promote and strengthen business, trade and investment ties among the business communities of the five BRICS countries i.e. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Additionally, the SA BRICS Business Council fosters regular dialogue between the business communities of the BRICS nations and the governments of the BRICS countries; and identify problems and bottlenecks to ensure greater economic, trade and investment ties among the BRICS members, recommend solutions accordingly and advance South Africa's brand intentionally.

To bring the various dialogue opportunities to life, the SA BRICS Council formed nine working groups to facilitate and spearhead dialogues and interactions among the BRICS member countries.

The working groups focus on specific areas key to trade and investment namely, Finance, Energy, Manufacturing, Agribusiness, Deregulation, Infrastructure, Aviation, Digital Economy, and Skills.

As Chairperson of the SA BRICS Skills Development Working Group (SDWG) under the priority area Transforming Education and Skills Development, I am leading a team

of experts to host the BRICS Future Skills Challenge in South Africa, Johannesburg, from 12 to 15 September 2023. The objective of the challenge is to understand how the partner member countries approach the development of critical digital skills challenges confronting businesses.

The SDWG has been working on assessing skills for developing BRICS skills standards, identifying gaps for curriculum development and putting it to test at the Future Skills Challenge.

The Future Skills Challenge has therefore become a flagship event for the SDWG for BRICS, where hundreds of brilliant minds (ages 16-35) from Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and Africa are invited to test their knowledge and creativity to help solve critical challenges against the standards.

There are 50 skills identified that the SDWG has been working on, but for the year 2023, only 12 critical skills areas have been identified and agreed upon for the Future Skills Challenge to be held in South Africa.

The SA BRICS SDWG has already completed standards for two skills areas, which are under assessment.

Additionally, the group has developed an atlas of skills that are emerging and required in future for the food and beverages sector.

The atlas was launched and handed over to the Food and Beverage Sector Education

All young tech gurus and interested parties out there are invited to this opportunity to network, learn and gain experience with industry leaders.

Training Authority to prepare the sector for changing jobs and socialising the requisite future skills.

The BRICS Future Skills Challenge serves as a platform to collate and provide insights into how we, as BRICS member countries, can partner to continuously support businesses by helping them respond to new and emerging skills.

Participants are expected to come up with solutions in the areas of energy, water and health as common areas of sustainable challenge among the BRICS partner countries. In front of a panel of judges, participants are to present their solutions hoping for the best technology-led solutions.

The BRICS Future Skills Challenge will have experts from across the BRICS member countries assigned to different skills areas to develop and mentor participants.

This is an opportunity for South African youth to benchmark their skills against their counterparts from the BRICS countries. It is also a great platform to present their solutions to potential investors and gain job experiences within the BRICS bloc.

All young tech gurus and interested parties out there are invited to this opportunity to network, learn and gain experience with industry leaders.

To find out more, visit the website www.bricsfutureskills.co.za.

The SA BRICS Business Council fosters regular dialogue between the business communities of the BRICS nations and the governments of the BRICS countries; and identify problems and bottlenecks to ensure greater economic, trade and investment ties among the BRICS countries, recommend solutions and advance South Africa's brand intentionally.

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

– Nelson Mandela –

Partnership between BRICS and Africa will unlock mutually beneficial opportunities

As a country, South Africa is committed to building a developmental state that efficiently guides national economic development by mobilising and directing resources in a manner that enhances the realisation of developmental goals.

By Dr Chana Pilane-Majake
Deputy Minister for the Public Service and Administration

As the Deputy Minister for the Public Service and Administration, I recently delivered a keynote address at the BRICS Conference on Governance and Public Administration Reform at the University of Pretoria.

The pre-summit conference was held as part of the build-up towards the XV BRICS Summit.

The theme of the summit, *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*, highlights the importance of building partnerships between BRICS countries and Africa to unlock mutually beneficial opportunities for increased trade, investment and infrastructure development.

South Africa's five priorities for 2023 are focussed on developing inclusive partnerships, upscaling education and skills development, unlocking opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Area, strengthening post-pandemic socio-economic recovery and strengthening multilateralism. As a country, South Africa is committed to

building a developmental state that efficiently guides national economic development by mobilising and directing resources in a manner that enhances the realisation of developmental goals.

A developmental state must be able to direct and promote economic development by establishing a strong public sector that promotes an investor-friendly climate, small business development, effective state-owned enterprises and drives strategic investment programmes.

Investing in building human capabilities is key to driving the developmental state agenda.

The National School of Government (NSG) in South Africa remains a key institution to drive the developmental state agenda of building state capacity.

The NSG programmes focus on on-the-job training and development in the Public Service for public servants, senior managers and executive leaders.

The reach of the NSG has also grown on the African continent, with bilateral agreements and the African Management Development Institutes' Network.

As we celebrate the life and times of Tata Nelson Mandela, we must remember his message of peace:

One of the mistakes which some political analysts make is to think their enemies should be our enemies. Our attitude towards any country is determined by the attitude of that country to our struggle.

This approach is what today guides South Africa's stance on international relations that encourages peaceful resolution of any form of conflict in line with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I believe that by working together, we can build a better BRICS, a better Africa and a better world.

Let us focus on building strong partnerships and investing in human capabilities to drive the developmental state agenda.

Let us work towards peace and inclusive multilateralism to achieve sustainable development for all. ♪

Creating resilient South African cities

The COVID-19 pandemic offers lessons for building financially resilient and sustainable municipalities, which can plan for changes over time, deal with the adverse external shocks and adjust revenues and expenditures in response.

By the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

The 2023 BRICS Urbanisation Forum took place from 26 to 27 July 2023 under the theme: *Advancing Urban Resilience for Sustainable Cities and Towns for Future Generations*.

Like many other countries, BRICS member states continue to grapple with issues of urbanisation, resilience and sustainability while endeavouring to meet their respective development goals.

Although shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic offer clues about how a continued state of flux can be navigated, they are remiss in articulating solutions for long-term resilience, sustainability and development.

The Resilient Cities Network describes resilience as the "capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems within a city to survive, adapt and grow, no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience".

South Africa's Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries describes resilience as "the ability of a social, economic or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, the capacity for self-organisation and the capacity to adapt to stress and change".

In contexts such as South Africa, the aim is to ensure that developmental issues such as

inequality, unemployment and poverty are not worsened due to chronic stresses and acute shocks.

Against the backdrop of chronic stresses such as high unemployment, inadequate public transport systems, endemic violence and food insecurity, South African cities are already in a precarious position when they are impacted by acute shocks. The pandemic has worsened a bad situation and highlighted the vulnerability of municipalities, particularly the state of their finances. It has revealed that over three-quarters (78%) of municipalities are unprepared to address periods of reduced revenue.

However, a silver lining is that the COVID-19 pandemic offers lessons for building financially resilient and sustainable municipalities, which can plan for changes over time, deal with adverse external shocks and adjust revenues and expenditures in response.

Previous stresses and shocks have taught us that resilient urban municipalities are foundational to resilient urban communities. Building urban resilience requires effective governance, institutional capacity and coordination among various stakeholders.

Challenges in governance, including inadequate urban planning, weak enforcement of regulations and limited financial resources can hinder the implementation of resilient

strategies and initiatives. We've also learned that cities must look holistically at their capacities and risks, including through meaningful engagement with the most vulnerable members of their communities.

We've learned that resilience should be planned for and not only engaged with when a crisis occurs.

This will enable cities to tackle challenges and create solutions place-based, integrated, and proactively, allowing them to realise "resilience dividends".

Resilience dividends capture the idea that building resilience realises benefits both in times of crisis and calm. With this approach, we can frame resilience as a process focussing on improving capacity and systems to create a resilience dividend that will assist a city in surviving, adapting and growing after experiencing chronic stress or acute shocks to improve the status quo.

Lastly, we have learned that resilience cannot be built within a silo or one specific department, but should be taken as a cross-departmental initiative.

Moreover, government alone cannot solve these problems that are complex and entrenched; an all-of-society approach is needed to find long-term, sustainable and equitable solutions. ♪





BRICS: Equipping learners with skills fit for the future

The BRICS partnership has grown in scope and depth with BRICS members exploring practical cooperation in a spirit of openness and solidarity to find mutual interests and common values.

By Dr Nkosinathi Sishi

Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training

BRICS is a partnership of five leading emerging markets and developing countries, founded on historical bonds of friendship, solidarity and shared interests. The five leading emerging markets and developing countries are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

South Africa's participation in BRICS is premised on its National Interest in line with the National Development Plan and the Medium Term Strategic Framework 2019 – 2024.

The objectives of South Africa's engagement in BRICS are to enhance the future growth and development of South Africa through its BRICS membership, strengthen intra-BRICS relations and develop mutually beneficial collaboration across the three pillars of cooperation. It is common knowledge that one of the founding values of BRICS is the shared commitment to restructure the global political, economic and financial architecture to be fair, balanced and representative, resting on the important pillars of multilateralism and international law.

The BRICS partnership has grown in scope and depth with BRICS members exploring practical cooperation in a spirit of openness and solidarity to find mutual interests and common values.

Several meetings are held annually across the three pillars of BRICS cooperation: political and security cooperation; financial and economic cooperation; and cultural and people-to-people cooperation.

South Africa assumed the BRICS Chairship on 1 January 2023, following its first successful hosting of BRICS in 2018. It is for this reason that we have witnessed a number of activities across the country in preparation for the August Summit to be hosted by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The Department of Higher Education and Training, joined by the Department of Basic Education and the Mpumalanga Provincial Government, recently delivered a successful 10th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Education at Skukuza Safari Lodge in the Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga. The meeting took place at a time when new forms of education access and innovative approaches to teaching and learning are at centre stage with the aid of digital technologies.

Taking place under the theme, *Responsive and Relevant Education and Training in the Current Global Context*, the meeting provided an important platform for the five countries to share experiences, undertake joint initiatives and facilitate student and staff exchanges. It provided a stimulating platform to collaborate on education and training challenges and opportunities, against the backdrop of growing

levels of devastating weather patterns, unemployment, inequality and poverty, higher costs of living and lower levels of economic growth.

The previous BRICS ministers of education meetings focusses on a number of topics and saw a need for the formation of communities of practice to advance the BRICS Education and Training Agenda.

One such community of practice is the BRICS Network University, which seeks to enhance cooperation and exchanges among member universities. The BRICS Network University was established in November 2015 through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the BRICS ministers of education. It comprises six international thematic groups, namely: Energy; Computer Science and Information Security; Ecology and Climate Change; BRICS Studies; Economics; and Water Resources and Pollution Treatment.

Over 20 research projects have been supported and the partnership has contributed to several innovative development concepts for international cooperation.

The BRICS Think Tanks Council is another community of practice that serves as an advisory body to the BRICS leaders. The council is also responsible for coordinating and convening the annual Academic Forum and ensuring that the academic input and recommendations made at the forum are presented to BRICS. Over 20 research projects have been supported and the partnership has contributed to several innovative development concepts for international cooperation.

On the other hand, the BRICS Academic Forum provides a platform for scholars in BRICS to share ideas and reflect on a range of topics. The aim is to generate and promote an intra-BRICS knowledge base and exchange to reduce dependency on Western powers as sources of knowledge for individual BRICS members.

The BRICS Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Cooperation Alliance has 68 founding members, including vocational education associations, vocational education institutions, research organisations and businesses. The BRICS TVET Corporation Alliance was officially inaugurated in May 2022 and serves as a multilateral platform for exchanging information and practices to foster cooperation between BRICS TVET stakeholders. Its objective is to empower youth through productive employment and contribute to BRICS' socio-economic development.

These are all important initiatives of the BRICS ministers of education and resolutions that feed into their discussions and deliberations.

As the Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training, I had the pleasure of delivering a keynote address at the BRICS Network University at North West University in Potchefstroom early in July 2023 and also chaired the BRICS Education Senior Officials Meeting at Skukuza Safari Lodge, ahead of the 10th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Education. There has been tremendous improvement since our chairing of BRICS in

2018, particularly on the commitments and work done by all BRICS member countries in areas of mutual interest. There is also a huge improvement and evidence in the maturity of the system itself; the manner in which countries coordinate their work and continue to work together.

Important for higher education is the plurality and diversity of voices across all our institutions to ensure that new knowledge systems are shared among us. The sharing of research agendas and collaboration will make a bigger impact and help us, for example, to close the gap between universities that over the past years have benefitted from better financial support and those who have lagged behind for many years. What is therefore important for us should be the closing of the gap between universities of all types, wherever they are located in the spectrum and profile of our institutions.

The BRICS Network University also provides us with an opportunity to continue to improve our network, internally, but also with universities across all BRICS member countries. I appreciated as Chair, that there was consciousness that the work we were doing was a build-up towards the summit of leaders; that our work will feed into this summit and be received as inputs to the leaders later in the year on what new resolutions must be taken in the space in which we operate.

The 10th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Education discussed issues of mutual interest to BRICS members, deepened cooperation and identified priorities for continued partnerships. The meeting also reflected on the success and commitments made at previous meetings of the BRICS education ministers and strengthened BRICS exchanges and partnerships in areas where they have not moved forward.

In his closing remarks, Dr Blade Nzimande, the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, said, "BRICS must remain committed to its priorities, especially those that have been identified for this year. We must be reminded that our principle of cooperation is based on mutual respect while jointly pursuing developmental agenda.

"Our BRICS educational structures require a fresh approach and focus on supporting the overall objectives of BRICS. Let us all reflect on resolutions and declarations that have been adopted this year."

The declaration commits all BRICS member states to the following, among others:

- To strengthen entrepreneurship development at all levels of education and training among BRICS member states and impart the requisite skills-set to students to consider self-

The 10th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Education discussed issues of mutual interest to BRICS members, deepened cooperation and identified priorities for continued partnerships.

- employment as a valuable career path.
- To rethink and reimagine the global rankings of universities because it tends to be skewed towards valuing the priorities and context of universities of the global North, imposes indefensible costs on developing country universities and detracts from norms emphasising cooperation, collaboration, sharing and solidarity. This commitment to develop an alternative system includes exploring the development of an evaluation system that emphasises the quality (as opposed to quantity) of research outputs of universities and their diverse contributions to inclusive development of all humanity. Such system will also seek to integrate the cultural and indigenous knowledge of each country, respecting our member states' diverse cultures.
- To improve the quality and enhance international cooperation on higher education and training through mutual recognition qualifications in line with the Global Education 2030 Agenda.
- To facilitate exchanges of ideas and experiences within BRICS member states on interventions for equipping learners with skills fit for the future through multiple learning pathways education to prepare them for the changing world of work and equitable social justice.

We remain thankful to the South African Public Colleges Organisation for its leadership as the convener of the BRICS TVET Cooperation Alliance meeting, which took place at Ekurhuleni West TVET College in Germiston.

We are also thankful to Universities South Africa for its participation leadership in the BRICS Network University and its International Governing Board.

We appeal to universities that are active members of the BRICS Network University to work harder and recruit more universities within BRICS member states to join the network. ☺



Nelson Mandela Bridge, Johannesburg, South Africa

BRICS Partnership: Forging strong people-to-people ties

In the words of former President Nelson Mandela: Our differences make the people of BRICS a global rainbow community — a shining light in providing leadership and charting a new era of harmony, peace, cooperation and development for the benefit of all.

By Prof. Anil Sooklal

Ambassador-at-Large: Asia and BRICS and South Africa's BRICS Sherpa

Department of International Relations and Cooperation

One of the key focus areas of South Africa's Chairship in 2023 is to deepen and strengthen people-to-people ties among BRICS countries.

A people-centred BRICS community is one of the major strengths of our cooperative relations.

Our BRICS partnership has deep roots in the formal government cooperation tracks across all three pillars of cooperation: political and security; financial and economic; as well as social/people-to-people cooperation.

The partnership is more than government-to-government relations. It is inclusive of women, youth, civil societies, media, ruling parties, parliaments, law societies, cultural organisations, sports federations, arts, theatre and film, to name but a few.

Some of the global narratives about BRICS constantly aim to highlight our differences. It speaks of our different histories, cultures, religions, development paths and forms of governance as something negative. However,

the uniqueness of BRICS is precisely the diversity and richness, which weld us together as a powerful global force. It brings us together to work together in cooperation not only for our own benefit but for the global community.

In the words of former President Nelson Mandela: Our differences make the people of BRICS a global rainbow community — a shining light in providing leadership and charting a new era of harmony, peace, cooperation and development for the benefit of all.

We live in a very fractured world and therefore, new solutions are desperately needed for the challenges confronting humanity today.

We have seen the global pandemic erase almost all the gains we have made towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The world is increasingly divided and the return to Cold War mentalities and the preservation of hegemonic tendencies have further exacerbated the situation, especially for the global South.

The key developmental challenges of poverty, underdevelopment and inequality

are increasing, but are being relegated to the margins by those who have the means to make a difference. Attention and resources are being shifted away from the Sustainable Development Goals, including from the most needy and vulnerable.

We cannot count on those who profess to be the leaders of the global community.

BRICS as a powerful voice of the global South must leverage its combined resources, influence and leadership, in partnership with other like-minded emerging market and developing countries, to provide the global leadership that is lacking in the world today. This is what is expected of BRICS.

This is the motivation for South Africa's theme as Chair of BRICS in 2023: *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*.

Our theme emphasises the value of BRICS as a partnership of leading emerging markets and developing countries generating momentum towards global growth, sustainable development and inclusion of the global South



BRICS as a powerful voice of the global South must leverage its combined resources, influence and leadership, in partnership with other like-minded emerging market and developing countries, to provide the global leadership that is lacking in the world today. This is what is expected of BRICS.

in the world system. Governments cannot deliver on this alone. It requires a whole-of-community and whole-of-society approach. The importance of social and people-to-people cooperation was visible in the BRICS response to COVID-19. BRICS was at the forefront of a compassionate response to the global North and the South.

Our response to climate change and the restructuring of our economies must also be compassionate. Our solutions to one problem should not leave others behind.

As Chair, we will explore how BRICS can lead with solutions for an equitable just transition. We can manage the risks associated with climate change while still improving the lives and futures of those people employed under the umbrella of old industries.

An equitable just transition will require new ideas and initiatives. BRICS is a platform for sharing and learning. Our cooperation has led to the establishment of the BRICS Academic Forum, BRICS Think Tank Council, Network of BRICS Universities and the virtual BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre.

More than 100 multilateral BRICS research projects have been funded under the BRICS Framework Programme. Our research

partnership is based on joint ownership and shared responsibility; the real and open sharing of experience, expertise and resources; and a determination for BRICS research to advance the global good.

Our differences as well as our unique identity and strength become the anchor of our ever-expanding cooperation benefitting from our richness and diversity. BRICS brings people together to forge new friendships, deepen relations and mutual understanding between BRICS peoples in the spirit of openness, inclusiveness, diversity, solidarity and mutual respect.

Under our Chairship, we will continue the wide range of BRICS people-to-people platforms, including the Youth Summit, Young Diplomats Forum, Parliamentary Forum, Civil BRICS as well as the Media Forum.

We will focus on the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Culture Agreement, promoting the development of BRICS cultural digitisation and deepening cooperation in areas such as cultural arts, heritage and industry. We look forward to changing narratives in the BRICS Media Forum, empowering our media with the BRICS International Journalism Training Programme and the Joint Photography Exhibition.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has emphasised that BRICS is centred on people-to-people contact. The pandemic weakened these links when all travel was banned. A return to people-to-people contact will help our travel and tourism sectors recover.

This year, we will further strengthen the BRICS Alliance for Green Tourism to forge a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive tourism sector and promote the high-quality development of BRICS culture and tourism cooperation.

We encourage sports ministries and federations of BRICS to strengthen communication and maintain coordination in international sports affairs. We look forward to hosting the BRICS Games in Durban later this year.

Our Chairship is not isolated. It builds on the excellent work of the chairs before us. We are seized with the important discussions on the guiding principles, standards, criteria and procedures for BRICS membership expansion.

For South Africa, the immense interest in joining BRICS is recognition that we remain true to our foundational values of creating a more inclusive and equitable global community, strengthening multilateralism and being a catalyst for global economic recovery and growth and a stable and peaceful world.

As a collective, we will work together both to address challenges and explore opportunities for mutual benefit for all. We will work together to place BRICS at the forefront of shaping a new people-centred global society. 🌍

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BRICS advances African Tourism Agenda

The Tourism Dialogue focussed on South Africa's leveraging of its BRICS membership to address the triple challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment through increased intra-BRICS trade, investment, tourism, capacity-building, skills and technology transfers.

By **Natasha Rockman**
Department of Tourism

The rising giant that is Africa, stands tall and proud. It blows its own horn and sings its own song.

In celebration of Africa Month in May and to give expression to the ethos of the premier Pan-African tradeshow, Africa's Travel Indaba, the Department of Tourism hosted the African Dialogue with several African tourism ministers, led by the Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, under the theme: *Sustainable Tourism Development*.

The Tourism Dialogue focussed on South Africa's leveraging of its BRICS membership to address the triple challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment through increased intra-BRICS trade, investment, tourism, capacity-building, skills and technology transfers. As Chair of BRICS in 2023, South Africa will pursue the potential for growing trade and investment, as well as intra-African trade and investment, while advancing the benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The dialogue was held on the sidelines of Africa's Travel Indaba, one of the largest tourism marketing events on the African calendar, which showcases the widest variety of Africa's best tourism products and attracts more than 1 000 international buyers and media from across the world. It also provided an opportunity for face-to-face interactions, networking, sharing ideas and forging partnerships that will enhance the industry's recovery, particularly after the COVID-19 lockdowns and disruption to the greater global tourism industry.

With a sharp focus on Africa's excellence, this Tourism Dialogue created a high-level platform for thought leaders and representatives from various countries. Countries present included Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini,

Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Namibia and a representative from the African Union (AU).

The African Dialogue presented a valuable opportunity to learn from these countries so that there can be seamless synergy between ourselves and the markets that we are focussing on, especially in Africa, to help us fulfil our obligation from a supply point of view. This will give South Africa significant insight on how to reintegrate back into the tourism value chain, post COVID-19

Tourism has the potential to be a catalyst for change on the African continent. Africa's Travel Indaba 2023 and this Tourism Dialogue provided the space to deliberate on "how" to rethink our policies, recognise emerging trends, mitigate threats and identify opportunities.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) predicted the region's international tourist arrivals would reach 134 million by 2030, up from 70 million in 2019. The UNWTO's January 2023 report shows that Africa has recovered about 65% of its pre-pandemic visitors, and tourism in Africa contributed US\$ 1.6 trillion in 2022.

The AU's Agenda 2063 identifies tourism as a critical driver of inclusive growth, a job creator and a wealth generator. Not one African Minister or business leader has all the answers, but a collective dialogue can steer us on the right path.

Senior Tourism Policy Officer at the Department of Infrastructure and Energy at the AU Commission (AUC), Mustapha Ouabbas, emphasised the importance of tourism to the continent.

"Our largest trade resides in Africa and the tourism sector in Africa has always been a liberal sector. The major challenges are accessibility due to poor infrastructure and the high cost of travel. The AUC has launched

a flagship programme to accelerate progress in the tourism sector, whose agreement was signed in 2018. The Programme for Infrastructure in Africa is aimed at interconnection to host development of the tourism industry on the continent," said Mr Ouabbas.

Minister De Lille was adamant that African countries must work together to find solutions to current tourism challenges. "We need solutions. We must hear from countries in East Africa what they are doing differently to recover quicker from COVID-19 and increase tourism arrivals. We need to think of solutions to improve air access, how to market Brand Africa, how to facilitate public-private partnerships, cement country-to-country cooperation and promote innovation and use of technology. It is clear that key priorities are to move even faster to gradually liberalise air policies and create an intra-continental air transport architecture that facilitates intra-African travel and trade, and to remove travel barriers such as cumbersome paper visas by switching to e-visas as well as visa waiver and regional visa schemes, to name but a few," said Minister De Lille.

The AUC has prioritised tourism among the socio-economic sectors in defining the targets and strategies for the African Agenda 2063. We believe tourism has a huge potential and would go a long way in improving the

With a sharp focus on Africa's excellence, this Tourism Dialogue created a high-level platform for thought leaders and representatives from various countries.

economic and social status of Africans in the next few decades.

Agenda 2063 identifies key activities to be undertaken, which will ensure that Agenda 2063 delivers both quantitative and qualitative transformational outcomes for Africa's people.

South Africa is committed to building a partnership between BRICS and Africa to unlock mutually beneficial opportunities for increased trade, investment and infrastructure development.

The BRICS countries constitute the largest trading partners of Africa and the most significant new investors and has nourished Africa's economic emergence and elevated the continent's contemporary global positioning. This year, the BRICS countries overtook the G7 countries as the most significant combined economy.

The significance of South Africa's participation in BRICS is enormous for Africa and underpins our commitment to participate in the continent's development, "Building a Better Africa and a Better World." Growing tourism is one of the focus areas for BRICS.

"We cannot achieve successful results in the tourism industry, if we continue to work in isolation as individual countries. We have to start pursuing joint strategies in order to accelerate growth in this sector. Tourists are not interested in our administrative borders; they want to explore as many site attractions as possible given limited resources and time at their disposal. Therefore, we need to focus on joint marketing of our tourism attractions across African borders," continued Minister De Lille.

The dialogue saw different countries presenting their perspectives and sharing best practice. It is evident that Africa is indeed ready, safe and open for business. The collective call to action was: "Let us work together to visualise and realise the Africa we want. All indications are that Africa is ready, more than ever before, to become the world's

most telling story of the creation of hope and prosperity," said Minister De Lille.

The Tourism Minister of Zimbabwe, Nqobizitha Magaliso, said: "Intra-African travel is key to our success as a region. We need to make it easy for tourists to travel from one African country to the next. Therefore, we need to advance ease of travel by improving our connectivity and visa regime."

The Tourism Minister of Malawi, Vera Kamtukele, stated: "We have structured tourism at the centre of our strategy to build back better after the pandemic. As tourism is not a standalone portfolio, we need to leverage on other industries and draw on their resources. At the same time, we need to maintain our authenticity while still working in collaboration with each other."

Minister De Lille further urged countries present to rethink and sharpen their focus for a better Africa that attracts visitors to the continent and create sustainable industries,

infrastructure and employment for our citizens. The BRICS Sous-Sherpa, Ben Joubert, expressed shared commitment to improving the lives and livelihoods of our people, of advancing the interests and developmental goals of the global South as well as the contribution to the socio-economic development of South Africa and regeneration of Africa.

The aim of the Tourism Dialogue was therefore to bring together leaders within the region across the tourism sector, which can still reach or even exceed the 2030 predictions, considering the sustainability and resilience lessons learned out of COVID-19. South Africa aims for its BRICS membership to contribute to the sustainable growth and development of South Africa and Africa, to strengthen relations with BRICS partners and to increase mutually beneficial cooperation with BRICS partners across the three pillars of cooperation. ♪



Reimagining the BRICS BUSINESS COUNCIL to institutionalise a legacy of delivery

The 10th anniversary provides South Africa with an opportunity to reimagine the operating model of the BRICS Business Council and assess critical opportunities with a view to develop a meaningful trajectory.

By **Busi Mabuza**
Chairperson of the South African BRICS Business Council

The advent of the 10th anniversary of the BRICS Business Council (BBC) calls for a reflection on the work of the BBC, with a key focus on milestones achieved and identifying areas of improvement in line with its mandate. The anniversary provides South Africa with an opportunity to reimagine the operating model of the BBC and assess critical opportunities with a view to develop a meaningful trajectory.

The past decade largely focussed on knowledge-sharing and the development of processes, with some moderate level of success achieved. The next decade must inject a level of pragmatism into the work programme of the BBC, through:

- the delivery of tangible project(s) across BRICS countries by introducing legacy/flagship projects that may be implemented in partnership with government
- trade and investment promotion, with targeted trade missions building intra-BRICS sector networks as well as acting as a critical access point for business to government to unblock challenges
- ensuring learning, knowledge-sharing and advocacy through understanding how our partner BRIC countries approach common development challenges confronting business and develop recommendations.

South Africa assumed the Chairship of BRICS this year under the theme: *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*.

The South African BBC will ensure the two economic priorities of our Chairship are achieved. The first priority is developing

a partnership towards an equitable just transition. One of the key outcomes of this initiative will be the establishment of an African Centre of Excellence, which will network with centres of excellence across the African continent and the BRIC countries to share and collaborate on projects related to the Just Energy Transition (JET).

The second priority is around transforming education and skills development for the future. The expected outcome of this initiative will be the:

- development of BRICS energy skills benchmarking
- identification of current jobs data and statistics
- a BRICS cooperative skill planning approach for the JET
- identification of high-impact areas where we need to undertake skills ecosystem mapping within the BRICS nations.

The Chair will also work with other BRIC nations to diligently track trade statistics among the BRICS nations, identify areas where trade performance has not met expectations, seek to understand the cause of the underperformance and propose solutions to identified non-tariff barrier challenges.

The key practical outputs must lead the BRICS nations to improve the transparency of the trade and investment climate in the framework of agreed obligations, create favourable conditions for development of mutual trade and foreign direct investment in the BRICS-Africa nations, as well as advance the African continent's global economic participation with South Africa as catalyst, thus improving the diversification of production and exports.

Through South Africa's Chairship, BRICS must commit to work with Africa to drive industrialisation and infrastructure

development, which are critical in enabling trade and investment on the continent.

The South African BBC is planning a roadshow to meet with regional business bodies on the continent and work with the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement's Secretary-General's office to explore opportunities in the prioritised value chains for BRICS and Africa, and intra-Africa opportunities (agriculture and agro-processing, automotive and vehicle parts, pharmaceuticals, and services transportation, logistics and distribution) for the first set of interventions; to contribute to the acceleration of economic growth; and facilitate access to technology and diversification of the export market at a business-to-business level on the continent.

In reimagining the BBC to institutionalise a legacy of delivery, the BBC must work with the Think Tank Council to revisit the proposal around the development of an institutional research institute. The research institute could be modelled similarly to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, which can find solutions to common challenges, develop BRICS standards, share experiences and identify best practices to promote better policies for better lives, distinctly suited to BRICS and other developing countries. 🇷🇵

In reimagining the BBC to institutionalise a legacy of delivery, the BBC must work with the Think Tank Council to revisit the proposal around the development of an institutional research institute.

A B R I G H T E R T O M O R R O W

MAKING WINE BETTER

The indigenous /Xam San people of southern Africa were the world's first environmentalists. They regulated their behaviour in harmony with plant and animal cycles, the movements of the stars and climatic phenomena.

They saw land as a source of life – a gift to mankind that nourishes, supports and teaches. In this tradition, South African producers have recognised that they now also have a responsibility to farm sustainably and act as custodians of the land, in order to preserve it for the use of our future generations.

About 95% of our wine is produced in the area known as the Cape Floral Kingdom (CFK).

One of six such plant kingdoms in the world, it is the smallest, yet richest, home to over 9 600 plant species, more than in the entire northern hemisphere. The CFK is one of 36 recognised biodiversity hotspots, with 70% of the plants found here not found anywhere else on earth.

Sustainable Wine South Africa (SWSA) is the alliance between the Wine and Spirit Board (WSB), the Integrated Production of Wine (IPW) scheme and Wines of South Africa (WoSA). Together these organisations are driving the South African wine industry's commitment to sustainable, eco-friendly production.

LEADING THE WORLD IN PRODUCTION INTEGRITY

For over two decades there has been a strong focus on sustainability in the South African wine industry. The WSB, which administers the Wine of Origin (WO) scheme, also administers a scheme known as IPW, which was introduced in 1998.

Producers farm according to independently audited IPW guidelines to prevent further loss of habitat. These guidelines cover minimising the use of sprays, monitoring water usage and recycling the maximum water possible, as well as protecting the natural habitat. These guidelines are constantly improved and independent auditors audit the farms and cellars.



In 2010, South Africa launched the world's first industry-wide sustainability seal. Issued by the WSB, it guarantees a certified wine's environmental credentials

according to measurable, auditable criteria. It also makes it possible for consumers to verify information simply by entering each seal's unique number on the SWSA website. Today, some 94.3% of wines certified in accordance with the WO scheme are meeting the requirements to carry the sustainability seal.



South Africa adopts a comprehensive approach to SDG implementation. It sees the alignment between the SDGs, the AU's Agenda 2063 aspirations and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Programme of the Southern African Development Community as key to achieving a better life for all.

Call to action:

South Africa's second Voluntary National Review for sustainable development 2024

The implementation of the SDGs is a shared responsibility and hinges on international cooperation. It requires the mobilisation of all three spheres of government, civil society, businesses and academia, among various stakeholders. It is a whole-of-society undertaking.

By Prof. Siphamandla Zondi
National Planning Commission of South Africa

The year 2030 is rapidly approaching, and globally, it is clear that adequate progress is not being made on meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Historical and structural impediments are well known.

The global financial crisis limited many countries' ability to achieve these goals.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the setback and caused a regress to some of the progress that countries have made. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected low and medium human development countries with devastating impacts on the three dimensions of the Human Development Index – health, education and standard of living, including socio-economic effects.

The United Nations (UN) Development Programme has estimated that because of the pandemic, approximately 41 million to 169 million people could be in extreme poverty by 2030 in countries with low and medium levels of human development, including approximately 20 million and 83 million women and girls. Moreover, malnourished children could increase by approximately 1.6 million, totalling 57.5 million children by 2030. These figures depict a dire picture of development. Things cannot work as usual. Something

needs to change very soon. Therefore, there is a need to understand better how well countries are doing concerning reaching the goals, how the pandemic has hindered progress and how to accelerate progress through and even beyond 2030.

As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages member states to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven".

The national reviews are expected to serve as a basis for regular reviews by the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), meeting under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). As paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda stipulates, regular reviews by the HLPF are voluntary, state-led and undertaken by both developed and developing countries and involve multiple stakeholders.

The voluntary national reviews (VNRs) aim to facilitate sharing experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned; and to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and mobilise multistakeholder support and partnerships to implement the SDGs.

South Africa presented its first successful VNR report in 2019, entitled, *Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality*. The 2019 VNR successfully traced South Africa's progress in achieving Vision 2030.

The 25 years since the end of apartheid saw remarkable improvements in poverty, health, education and access to basic services. Nevertheless, daunting challenges remain in South Africa, which is among the most unequal countries in the world, with high levels of poverty and unemployment and the vulnerability of women to violence.

The National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030 – "Our future, make it work",

The emerging aspect and critical for VNRs is the integration of environmental sustainability, resilience and climate action in the analysis and implementation of the SDGs.

was adopted in 2012 as South Africa's development loadstar and roadmap. It predated the 2015 adoption of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 – "The Africa We Want". The NDP has a 74% convergence with the SDGs.

South Africa is undertaking the second VNR assessment in 2024 to understand how far we are in implementing the SDGs and how we accelerate progress towards 2030. This will invariably reveal what the impediments are and where the opportunities for the rejuvenation of SDG implementation lie.

Compiling the country's progress needs the inclusion of all stakeholders, such as academia, members of Parliament, civil society, governmental entities, the private sector, women's groups, youth, human rights institutions and the media to contribute to telling a whole-of-society story.

The implementation of the SDGs is a shared responsibility and hinges on international cooperation. It requires the mobilisation of all three spheres of government, civil society, businesses and academia, among various stakeholders. It is a whole-of-society undertaking.

The VNRs are at the core of the HLPF, which takes place every year at the UN's ECOSOC. The aim is to assess and reflect on progress towards the full implementation of SDGs in all continents.

The reviews help in understanding the impact of policies and programmes towards realising sustainable development and the

considerable developmental triple challenges that remain.

The theme for the 2024 HLPF on Sustainable Development will be *Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and Eradicating Poverty in Times of Multiple Crises: The Effective Delivery of Sustainable, Resilient and Innovative Solutions*. The HLPF in 2024 will review in-depth:

- SDG One. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- SDG Two. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- SDG 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- SDG 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- SDG 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

The emerging aspect and critical for VNRs is the integration of environmental sustainability, resilience and climate action in the analysis and implementation of the SDGs.

All members of BRICS recognise the importance of international cooperation in achieving their SDGs. BRICS is one of the most important actors in global governance.

Having South Africa host and chair the BRICS Summit in 2023 under the theme, *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*, offers great opportunities for enhancing economic cooperation, partnership and collaboration towards achieving the SDGs. South Africa adopts a comprehensive approach to SDG implementation.

It sees the alignment between the SDGs, the AU's Agenda 2063 aspirations and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Programme of the Southern African Development Community as key to achieving a better life for all.

The country's NDP reflects this convergence between these development plans from outside and the provincial and municipal integrated development plans. This alignment of the development plan presupposes an effective society-wide monitoring and evaluation system. Just how this alignment actually happens and how it bears on the SDG implementation is a key question to reflect upon.

This is a call on all South African stakeholders to make the necessary contributions towards the 2024 VNR to tell an inclusive South African narrative on the implementation of the SDGs. The implementation of the SDGs is multidimensional.

Moreover, we call on all to collaborate more to build back better from COVID-19 towards the accelerated implementation of the SDGs. ▬







With our natural resources, BRICS countries are major role players in the global supply of energy and its dynamics. BRICS countries have developed similar energy policies to manage energy risks. BRICS countries have both the expertise and technologies to use their energy resources to enhance energy security and cooperation.

natural gas. Brazil is rich in biomass energy with its output of 25% of the world's total biomass energy in 2020.

With our natural resources, BRICS countries are major role players in the global supply of energy and its dynamics. BRICS countries have developed similar energy policies to manage energy risks. BRICS countries have both the expertise and technologies to use their energy resources to enhance energy security and cooperation.

BRICS recognised these complementarities and in 2020, adopted the Roadmap for BRICS Energy Cooperation up to 2025, aimed at building a strategic partnership in energy cooperation. The roadmap is being implemented in phases.

The first phase is the research phase, which started under South Africa's Chairship of BRICS in 2018 with the establishment of the BRICS Energy Research Cooperation Platform. The platform brings together experts, companies and research institutes to coordinate common interests of BRICS in research and development of innovative technology and policies, with seven studies being released to date at BRICS Ministers of Energy meetings. Last year, China presented an additional study on the development of renewable energy and smart grids in the BRICS countries. This year, Russia is leading a study on energy security. The roadmap also established the publication of the annual *BRICS Energy Report*.

During the second phase, BRICS countries will identify the needs and challenges to energy security and find areas where BRICS cooperation can provide solutions. The third phase aims at advancing mutually

Fostering partnerships with BRICS energy investors

BRICS countries are uniquely positioned to support South Africa's energy recovery. BRICS countries contain almost half the world's population and account for approximately 40% of the world's energy consumption.

By Prof. Anil Sooklal
Ambassador-at-Large: Asia and BRICS and South Africa's BRICS Sherpa
Department of International Relations and Cooperation

South Africa took over as Chair of BRICS on 1 January 2023 in a difficult national and global economic environment. Globally, the conflict in Ukraine and the West's unilateral sanctions have battered economies that were struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. With Russia being the world's third-largest oil producer, second-largest natural gas producer and a top producer of steel and wheat, the conflict has led to substantial increases in food and energy prices that have disproportionately impacted us in the global South. As government, we have the South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan

with detailed interventions to address our energy crisis with the aim of fixing Eskom, fundamentally transforming the electricity sector to achieve long-term energy security and enabling an accelerating investment in the energy sector. It is clear that we cannot do this alone. President Cyril Ramaphosa has called on our BRICS partners to assist South Africa in its recovery.

Our first priority responds to the significant transformational changes we are making in our economy, particularly in the energy sector. We therefore aim to "Develop a Partnership towards an Equitable Just Transition". This priority aims to find solutions to transformational energy change, which will also improve people's lives and livelihoods in the sectors that supported the old economy, such as mining.

BRICS countries are uniquely positioned to support South Africa's energy recovery. BRICS countries contain almost half of the world's population and account of approximately 40% of the world's energy

consumption. As BRICS, we are responsible for 48% of the world's coal consumption, 22% of the world's oil consumption and 13.5% of the world's natural gas consumption.

While renewable energy consumption is only 16% at the moment, BRICS renewable energy consumption has been growing year by year, driven by most BRICS members' commitment to mitigating climate change.

BRICS countries are not only consumers of energy, as all members have substantial fossil fuels and available renewable energy resources. BRICS members account for 40% of the world's coal reserves, 25% of the world's natural gas reserves and 8% of the world's oil reserves. In the renewable energy sector, solar power from South Africa, Brazil and India; wind power from Russia and China; as well as biomass from Brazil, all enjoy substantial resource advantages.

Within BRICS, China is the world's largest coal producer with 50% of the world's output in 2020 and India with 10%. Russia produced 12% of the world's oil and 16% of the world's

The depth and strength of our BRICS partnership allow us to bring multiple BRICS solutions to the table, including financing, trade, investment, industrialisation, skills development and training, research, development and innovation, as well as partnerships with African countries and leading countries of the global South.

beneficial cooperation, including exchange of best practice, use of BRICS advanced technology as well as opportunities for trade and investment in each other's economies. Of course, we are not waiting for this third phase before we work with our BRICS partners on energy solutions.

India is already South Africa's biggest coal export market and brings in almost half of our total coal revenue. China is reopening opportunities for imports from South Africa, following its political fallout with Australia, previously an important coal source for them. China has substantial oil and gas trade with Russia, oil and gas cooperation with Brazil, a joint natural gas pipeline project with India as well as renewable energy trade with South Africa. South Africa is a pioneer in the area of clean coal, in which India and China have an interest. The Russian state energy company, Rosatom, has signed an agreement with South Africa to construct small hydropower plants in Mpumalanga as a key component of South Africa's energy security strategy.

Part of South Africa's response to the energy crisis involves implementing a just transition to a low-carbon economy. Climate change also poses considerable risks to jobs, businesses and the economy. South Africa is among the most water-scarce countries in the world, and recent events in KwaZulu-Natal have shown that extreme weather events such as floods are occurring more often, with devastating impact on our infrastructure.

The response to the electricity crisis provides an opportunity to also mitigate our contribution to, and the risks from, climate change and adapt to a low-carbon economy.

South Africa's Just Transition Plan aims to significantly lower emissions of greenhouse gases and harness investments in new energy technologies, electric vehicles and energy-efficient appliances. South Africa's Integrated Resource Plan, which drives our energy policy, therefore envisions that renewable solar and

wind energy will generate almost 25% of our electricity by 2030. Coal, which currently accounts for 85% of South Africa's electricity generation, will drop below 60% in less than a decade. The impact on communities reliant on coal extraction and production is an important element of the just transition as it aims to ensure that communities tied to high-emitting energy industries are not left behind and are provided with new skills and new economic and employment opportunities.

During South Africa's Chairship of BRICS in 2013, we established the BRICS Business Council to strengthen and promote economic, trade, business and investment ties among the business communities of the BRICS countries. The BRICS Business Council also identifies problems and bottlenecks and recommends solutions to BRICS.

This year, under South Africa's Chairship, the council's Energy and Green Economy Working Group is focussed on concrete outputs of the just transition. The council has developed an energy skills roadmap for South Africa, which will be rolled out to the other BRICS countries. The roadmap identifies the skills available as well as the skills necessary and identifies training programmes as well as sponsors across the BRICS countries.

There are discussions on the possible establishment of a BRICS African Centre of Excellence on the Just Energy Transition, which would support a network of researchers focussed on technology, socio-economic, environmental, financial and other aspects of the just transition that would inform policy-making in BRICS countries in collaboration with the BRICS Energy Research Cooperation Platform.

The question is how to identify funding for investment in renewable energy. There is a lot of money available globally for renewable energy projects, with National Treasury estimating that there are US\$12 trillion available from sources such as the Green

Climate Fund. However, developing countries struggle to access these funds because of the perceived risk of investing in a developing country. South Africa's policy uncertainty and regulatory challenges have been cited as obstacles to South African investment opportunities, with other funders also banning financing and investment in coal for energy, even if it is clean coal.

India and China are able to source their own international finance for renewable energy by offering their own-currency Green Bonds known as Green Masala Bonds and Green Panda Bonds. The Green Panda Bond is issued by the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB).

The NDB is a multilateral development bank established by BRICS countries to mobilise resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects. Sustainability is fundamental to the founding principles of the NDB and the bank aims to deliver transformative impact to BRICS member countries with a target of 40% of all the bank's loans funding projects relating to mitigation and adaptation for the effects of climate change by 2026.

South Africa and China have so far been the leading beneficiaries of sustainable financing from the NDB with respect to clean and renewable energy. South Africa is the beneficiary of 12 projects financed by the NDB to the value of US\$5.4 billion. Five of these projects support the energy sector, with three of those funding renewable energy projects to the value of R13 billion.

The opportunities for BRICS to support transformative change in our economy are obvious. As Chair of BRICS this year, our strategic vision is to harness our existing mutually beneficial BRICS cooperation to address issues of National Interest and national concern for South Africa in a holistic and multidisciplinary way.

The depth and strength of our BRICS partnership allow us to bring multiple BRICS solutions to the table, including financing, trade, investment, industrialisation, skills development and training, research, development and innovation, as well as partnerships with African countries and leading countries of the global South. ▬

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As Chair of BRICS this year, our strategic vision is to harness our existing mutually beneficial BRICS cooperation to address issues of National Interest and national concern for South Africa in a holistic and multidisciplinary way.

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Inspiring new ways



BRICS benefits Eastern Cape economy

Total South African trade with BRICS countries stands at R702 billion, a significant increase from R487 billion in 2017.

By the Department of Small Business Development

The Minister for Small Business Development, Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, held an important international BRICS roadshow on 20 June 2023 at the International Convention Centre in East London to promote economic partnership, development and growth between the companies from the bloc and their partners in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa.

The purpose of the roadshow was to raise awareness about the importance of the political as well as business alignment created by South Africa's involvement in BRICS and deliberate on how it is going to play a meaningful role in propelling the economic growth of the nation in partnership with its fellow member states.

"To achieve inclusive economic growth for its people as well as that of the continent, South Africa needs to claim its place around the business table and be able to address all societal issues such as poverty, unemployment and inequality as well as a myriad of economic challenges like the current energy crisis, food and water insecurities," said Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams in her opening speech.

This objective is strongly complemented by the exponential and accelerator growth potential, which BRICS engagement has delivered to the country and its neighbours.

South Africa aims to utilise its Chairship of BRICS in 2023 to vigorously pursue the potential for growing trade and investment, as well as intra-African trade and investment, while advancing the benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

The AfCFTA creates a predictable environment for investments by BRICS partners, particularly in infrastructure development across the continent. Individually, the BRICS countries all have

active partnerships in cooperation, trade and development on the African continent.

Under this priority, South Africa will be looking at building a partnership between BRICS and Africa to unlock mutually beneficial opportunities for increased trade, investment and infrastructure development.

According to Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams, total South African trade with BRICS countries stands at R702 billion, a significant increase from R487 billion in 2017.

The BRICS New Development Bank has to date approved 12 projects, valued around US\$5.4 billion, to improve service-delivery issues.

"The Buffalo City Metropolitan Council (BCM) benefits directly from BRICS and recently sent 20 students to Jinhua City in China on a business studies exchange programme," said BCM Mayor, Princess Faku.

"BCM is strategically located as a distinguished city, which means we are open for business, hence we have partnered with Transnet to expand infrastructure to increase volumes at the port and accommodate bigger passenger liners at the harbour in the coming 10 years," added Faku.

"The Eastern Cape welcomes this opportunity brought by BRICS and the Department of Small Business Development, led by Minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams," said Premier Oscar Mabuyane.

He further stated that the roadshow was a pre-awareness event to the main summit set for August 2023.

"We are using this opportunity to explore trade and investment opportunities emanating from South Africa's participation in this new and developing economic bloc.

"Brazil and South Africa's balance of trade currently is sitting on R740 million, the total of exports has gone up to R153 million whereas

imports stand at R893 million. The South African economy absorbed US\$80 million in direct foreign investment from Brazil, and this created 645 much-needed jobs," said Premier Mabuyane.

On trade with Russia, Premier Mabuyane stated that the province's fresh agricultural produce had found its way to shopping shelves in Moscow.

"Exports to Russia sit at R223 million whereas imports fluctuated from R195 to R39 million in 2022," he elaborated.

Eastern Cape foreign direct investment (FDI) from India has brought a positive impact in Tsitsikama and Bedford, creating 69 jobs and injecting US\$348 million in capital investment.

Gqeberha is another recipient of FDI from India and US\$18 million investment has opened job opportunities for 172 youths who were previously unemployed.

"As I have mentioned earlier, we share commonalities with India; Mahindra is a preferred truck by farmers in the Eastern Cape; you can see them everywhere on our roads delivering products to markets and that's how we feel India's presence here every day," he added.

Premier Mabuyane elaborated on more economic prosperity stories emanating from South Africa's involvement in the BRICS bloc of nations.

The Eastern Cape has attracted US\$1.12 billion investment from China,

The BRICS New Development Bank has to date approved 12 projects, valued around US\$5,4 billion, to improve service-delivery issues.



creating approximately 2 200 jobs between January 2003 and April 2023. "Our trade and exporting opportunities, including investment facilitations are coordinated by the Eastern Cape Development Corporation and it is working hand in hand with the East London Industrial Zone (ELIDZ), Coega Development Corporation and relevant shareholding departments to facilitate formidable support to investors," he said.

ELIDZ houses 40 manufacturing companies and is bordered by four industrial parks in Vulindlela, Fort Jackson, Butterworth and Dimbaza, respectively. Coega covers an area of 9 003 hectares and is demarcated into 14 zones with a combined investment value of US\$12 billion.

Agriculture investment specialist Wandile Sihlobo recently gave a summary of the benefits of BRICS membership to the country's agricultural sector:

"US\$764 million has been spent by BRICS countries on South African agricultural imports despite the country being a small player in that regard. China imports amount to 67%, Russia 16%, India 12% and Brazil

sits on 5%. This means South Africa should advocate for lower import tariffs on agricultural products, specifically from India and China," said Sihlobo.

"BRICS nations should negotiate for the lowering of tariff imports, particularly with China.

"South Africa must discuss this reduction for its wines, citrus fruits and vegetables to enter the lucrative Chinese market, which offers 0% tariffs to countries like Australia and Chile," he added.

China imports only 5% of local products such as wool, beef, nuts and grapes. Russia accounts for 2%, which includes citrus fruits, apples, pears, grapes as well as wines. India and Brazil are negligible importers of South African agricultural products and only participate meaningfully in other sectors of the economy.

"The BRICS Chairship presents us with remarkable opportunities across various sectors in all provinces, particularly here in the Eastern Cape and I hope that those identified will go a long way into benefitting the population in the entire province.

"The depth and strength of our BRICS partnership allow us to bring multiple solutions to the table, including financing trade, investment, tourism and academic partnerships to benefit citizens in the province," said Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams.

"The Eastern Cape has abundant natural resources that need to be tapped and utilised and we hope BRICS members will assist us in that regard," she concluded. u

"The depth and strength of our BRICS partnership allow us to bring multiple solutions to the table, including financing trade, investment, tourism and academic partnerships to benefit citizens in the provinces," said Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams.

BRICS COOPERATION: SCIENCE DIPLOMACY BEST PRACTICE IN ACTION

The most important achievement of BRICS cooperation in “diplomacy for science” is undoubtedly the successful negotiation and then implementation of the BRICS Framework Programme for STI.

By Daan du Toit

Deputy Director-General: International Cooperation and Resources
Department of Science and Innovation

Science diplomacy has become one of the buzzwords of our time in foreign- as well as science-policy circles. But what does “science diplomacy” mean in practice? Most commentators and experts now agree on a triple definition, which proposes that science diplomacy includes the use of “diplomacy for science”, the role of “science in diplomacy” as well as the potential to use “science for diplomacy”.

“Diplomacy for science” entails the use of diplomatic channels and instruments, such as the negotiation of intergovernmental agreements, to enable international cooperation in science. “Science in diplomacy” involves the critical role of scientific advice to inform and guide international collaboration (diplomatic) efforts in responding to global challenges, such as climate change.

“Science for diplomacy” relates to the use of international scientific cooperation to build longer-term global solidarity and strengthen multilateralism, bringing people and countries together around shared objectives, bridging conflicts and divides.

The BRICS partners in 2015, in Brasilia under Brazil’s leadership, concluded a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a formal BRICS cooperation framework in science, technology and innovation (STI), concluding a process initiated during South Africa’s first tenure as BRICS Chair in 2013.

South Africa’s hosting of the 2023 BRICS Summit is therefore an ideal opportunity to assess the impact of BRICS cooperation in STI over the past decade.

It is an analysis, which will reveal that BRICS cooperation, viewed through the lenses of all three dimensions of science diplomacy (as described above) achieved important and concrete results, advancing “diplomacy for

science”, “science in diplomacy” and “science for diplomacy”.

The most important achievement of BRICS cooperation in “diplomacy for science” is undoubtedly the successful negotiation and then implementation of the BRICS Framework Programme for STI. This programme brings together 15 national research and innovation funding agencies of the BRICS partners to jointly select and then fund cooperation projects across various scientific disciplines. Since its inception, and through five rounds of competitive calls for proposals, the programme has already funded more than 150 projects (and significantly every project includes the participation of at least three different countries from the BRICS partnership).

It is testimony to the excellent relations between the respective BRICS ministries responsible for science, that the funding agencies implementing the BRICS Framework Programme could rapidly agree on what could potentially have been contentious aspects related to the implementation of the programme, such as the evaluation process for the selection of projects or the rules for intellectual property management. In this regard, special mention should be made of the outstanding support provided by the Framework Programme Secretariat hosted by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research. The partnership has great ambitions for the Framework Programme with a new call for proposals being planned for 2024, to fund flagship projects in strategic themes with significantly increased budgets to be availed by all BRICS partners.

Throughout history, science has always progressed when humanity expanded the frontiers of knowledge through the sharing of experience and expertise across national borders. Putting “diplomacy for science”

in practice, the BRICS partnership has established more than 20 thematic working groups and other fora to enable regular exchanges and mutual learning in priority science and technology disciplines. An intensive annual work programme sees meetings taking place almost every month, either in-person or on digital platforms, bringing BRICS experts together in disciplines as diverse as astronomy, marine and polar science, nanotechnology, photonics, biotechnology, genomics or neuroscience, to name but a few.

The establishment of the BRICS GRAIN (Global Research Advanced Infrastructure Network) platform also numbers among the “diplomacy for science” successes. Research infrastructures are facilities, equipment, instruments or digital resources required to support the scientific enterprise.

Large-scale or “mega” research infrastructures are expensive to construct and operate and international collaboration is thus essential for countries to secure optimal access to them for their scientific communities. This is exactly the cooperation the BRICS GRAIN platform seeks to promote by facilitating transnational access for BRICS researchers to national infrastructures located in other BRICS countries.

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The BRICS partnership has also concertedly joined forces to enhance the role of “science in diplomacy” as perhaps best illustrated by cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly after the outbreak of the pandemic, in a matter of weeks, the BRICS partners agreed to mobilise the BRICS Framework Programme to enable BRICS scientific cooperation as a resource for the fight against COVID-19. Following a special call for proposals, the programme funded 12 projects, through which BRICS collaborations made decisive contributions to enrich global knowledge resources for the fight against COVID-19.

The BRICS Framework Programme COVID-19 Project portfolio responded to strategic objectives such as the development of new technologies and tools for diagnosing COVID-19; the development of new vaccines and therapeutic drugs; genomic sequencing of the virus; and epidemiological studies, including mathematical modelling; the use of digital technologies, especially Artificial Intelligence in drug and vaccine development, and in supporting public health infrastructure and systems; as well as the understanding of the co-occurrence of the SARS-COV-2 virus with comorbidities, especially tuberculosis. These projects also made valuable contributions to bolstering global preparedness to respond to future pandemics. In this regard, the leadership of China’s Ministry of Science and Technology to enable the successful launch of the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre in 2022 (a concept first proposed by South Africa in 2018), should especially be acknowledged.

With the need for a concerted global response to climate change, based on best available science ever more pressing, including to inform the outcomes of the forthcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change’s COP28, the BRICS Framework Programme is again responding in a timely manner to ensure science plays its required role in diplomacy.

In August 2023, the funding agencies will be launching a dedicated call for proposals, focussed on supporting BRICS cooperation in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The call will cover themes such as building resilience through local scale adaptation and adaptive responses at catchment scale;

using Earth observation technology-based assessments to understand the impacts and consequences of climate change; developing systematic responses using the WEF (water, energy, food) nexus approach for a cross-sectoral management of climate change; and mitigating risks to low-lying coastal socio-ecological systems.

Encouraged by India’s strategic leadership of the research and innovation agenda during its G20 Presidency, under the theme of *Research and Innovation for an Equitable Society*, the BRICS partners will also continue to promote the role of “science in diplomacy”, in other multilateral fora, enabling notably concrete progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The BRICS partnership also achieved marked success in unleashing the potential of “science for diplomacy”, especially by investing in that most precious of resources, relations between people.

For several years now, the annual BRICS Young Scientists Forum brings together young and emerging researchers from BRICS countries with the aim of fostering enduring partnerships and above all, friendships, to last a career and a lifetime.

It is an investment in our future, which has in recent years been broadened to include the participation of young entrepreneurs, competing for the now prestigious annual BRICS Young Innovators Prize.

In 2023, the BRICS Young Scientists Forum will take place in Gqeberha, in the Eastern Cape, on the occasion of South Africa’s hosting of the BRICS STI Ministerial Meeting, and will see the participation of more than 100 young BRICS scientists debating topical themes such as the role of science in shaping the future of society.

The 2023 BRICS Young Innovators Prize will see dynamic competition with entrepreneurs presenting their innovations, which can enhance the competitiveness of the BRICS economies and unlock new sources of growth such as in the digital economy.

The relationships to be fostered on South Africa’s Indian Ocean seaboard will be an additional strategic investment in long-term BRICS solidarity and cooperation, also in the political, economic and social spheres, as evidenced by the consistent recognition of the importance of collaboration in STI in the

declarations of successive BRICS summits. The theme of the 2023 Ministerial Meeting will be *BRICS and Africa: Enabling Inclusive, Sustainable Development in a Changing World through Knowledge Partnerships*. South Africa’s Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, host of the meeting, chose this theme to ensure alignment with the South African Government’s overall theme for chairing BRICS in 2023: *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*, an objective in which the achievement of science diplomacy has a crucial role to play.

The theme chosen by Minister Nzimande also directly seeks to translate into action Article 2 (d) of the BRICS Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in STI, which sets the objective to “promote, where appropriate, joint BRICS science, technology and innovation partnerships with other strategic actors in the developing world”.

It is within this context that under Minister Nzimande’s leadership, South Africa is proposing to BRICS partners new science diplomacy initiatives, which will add significant strategic value to the existing partnership.

This notably includes a first scoping of opportunities for appropriate participation by other African countries in BRICS collaboration initiatives such as the Framework Programme.

Other initiatives South Africa is proposing in 2023, includes the organisation of a first exchange between BRICS entities tasked with providing their governments with science and innovation policy advice, as well as exploring how best to advance BRICS collaboration with regard to research, innovation and training in the responsible use of natural medicine.

South Africa is privileged in 2023 to lead a science diplomacy partnership, which has over more than a decade actively sought and indeed has succeeded to translate policy jargon into concrete initiatives, firmly establishing BRICS cooperation as science diplomacy best practice into action.

Mobilising diplomacy for science, supporting science in diplomacy and harnessing science for diplomacy are important steps towards creating a better South Africa, in a better Africa, in a better world. ♪



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What is a Sherpa?

The role of the Sherpas can be seen as "informal" in nature, but in terms of enhancing cooperation and consensus-building, it is a critical one.

By Prof. Anil Sooklal

Ambassador-at-Large: Asia and BRICS and South Africa's BRICS Sherpa
Department of International Relations and Cooperation

South Africa, as the Chair of BRICS in 2023, is hosting the XV BRICS Summit from 22 to 24 August in Sandton, Johannesburg, under the theme, *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*.

The build-up to the summit consisted of many sectoral meetings hosted by South Africa, among others, the meetings of the BRICS Sherpas/Sous-Sherpas.

The first BRICS Sherpa and Sous-Sherpa Meeting of 2023 was held at Mabula Game Lodge in Limpopo in February. The meeting served to brief South Africa's BRICS partners on South Africa's priorities for BRICS

cooperation and working arrangements for the year.

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor, hosted the meeting of BRICS ministers of foreign affairs and international relations on 1 June 2023 in Cape Town. The mid-term meeting provided an opportunity for BRICS foreign ministers to reflect on regional and global developments.

Sherpa is the English modification of a Tibetan word meaning "dweller in an eastern country", originally referring to the Sherpa people; Asian nomads who migrated from Eastern Tibet to Nepal. The word is also used in the personal names of the ethnic group.

Minister Pandor, as the Chair of the BRICS Ministerial Meeting, continued with the policy of inclusive engagement by inviting 15 foreign ministers from Africa and the global South to the Friends of BRICS Meeting, held on 2 June 2023.

The ministerial meetings were preceded by a meeting of Sherpas and Sous-Sherpas from 29 to 30 May 2023.

A key element in all these interactions undertaken to prepare for the annual BRICS Summit is the Sherpa. Often their role is not publicised and not many know their key role/function.

What is a Sherpa?

The role of the Sherpas can be seen as "informal" in nature, but in terms of enhancing cooperation and consensus-building, it is a critical one.

In the governmental and diplomatic arena, a Sherpa is usually a senior official, often a career diplomat who has been appointed by a head of state or government. They are tasked with being their countries' representatives in multilateral organisations or fora. This is in respect of preparatory work and coordination concerning their countries' activities and events, linguistic inputs, as well as positions on particular issues within a particular organisation such as the G20, BRICS or IBSA.

The Sherpas guide their principals in terms of policy, agenda-setting for cooperation and the drafting of resolutions, declarations, communiqués or statements. This entails decisions taken at high-level meetings and/or summits.

Historical background of the term

In attempting to trace the origins of the term "Sherpa", *The Ascent of Sherpa* by Nancy Friedman (2013) refers to the momentous historical milestone of the first humans to summit Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world. The ascent of Edmund Hillary from New Zealand and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay of Nepalese descent, on the morning of 29 May 1953 to the summit of Everest brought acclaim to the Sherpa clan.

Sherpa is the English modification of a Tibetan word meaning "dweller in an eastern country", originally referring to the Sherpa people; Asian nomads who migrated from Eastern Tibet to Nepal. The word is also used in the personal names of the ethnic group.

According to Bruce Foreman's *The Sherpa Cheat Sheet: 9 Things you were*

Embarrassed to Ask (2017), the word is pronounced "shar-wa" by the Sherpa clan. Sherpas climb and assist expeditions up the Himalayan Mountains. They prepare camps, the load and meals and they chart the course for the professional climbers. In essence, they conduct the risky part of the enterprise by running ahead and setting up the ropes and ladders to ensure the safety of their clients and to enable them to reach the summit.

Before going further with the explanation of the term "Sherpa" within the realm of diplomacy, it is important to understand the origins of another term to which Sherpa is often connected, i.e. summit. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a summit as "the highest point of the hill or mountain". Within diplomacy and politics, the term was reportedly first used by Sir Winston Churchill. (*The Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Diplomacy*, 2003). This was during the Cold War, in order to describe a face-to-face meeting between heads of state/government, especially at a time when these meetings were a rare occurrence. Although the term "Sherpa" has been used in various contexts, such as in fashion or business, it has equally been used in the diplomatic field, where the symbolism of "reaching the top" is more pronounced. Its origins in this regard date back to the 1970s (Michael Quinion, *World Wide Words*, 2005). Thomas P Thornton stated that former President Jimmy Carter was referring to Ambassador Henry Owen in a self-effacing statement in a letter, made in respect of the latter's contribution as a Sherpa in the Group of Seven (G7) Summit preparations in 1977. He wrote: "You did a superb job on the Summit meeting in London. Your tremendous talents really paid off. Thank you for letting me take credit for your good work." (Alan Beattie *et al*, *Sherpas are the Unsung Heroes at the G7 Negotiations*, 2016)

The initiative of "Sherpas" preparing the work ahead of the G7 Summit was a result of the former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who invited the leaders of Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States to meet in 1975. He invited the leaders to appoint representatives (from the foreign and finance ministries, as well as note-takers) to meet ahead of time

In the governmental and diplomatic arena, a Sherpa is usually a senior official, often a career diplomat who has been appointed by a head of state or government. They are tasked with being their countries' representatives in multilateral organisations.



Although the role of the Sherpa is similar in most of the multilateral organisations, the differences pertain to what mandate or level of authority/decision-making they are given by their Head of State/Government.

for "fire-side chats" in order to prepare for the "Summit". The aim was to cut out the "bureaucracy and formality" and to ensure a relatively nimble decision-making apparatus (Alan Beattie *et al.*, 2016).

According to Friedman, the term Sous-Sherpa ("Sous": a French word meaning "under") refers to the official/s who work closely with the Sherpa – subject matter experts in finance/economics or diplomacy who report to the Sherpa. The word was informally used first by the European Union (taken from the term "Sous-chef").

The profile of a Sherpa

Although the role of the Sherpa is similar in most of the multilateral organisations, the differences pertain to what mandate or level of authority/decision-making they are given by their Head of State/Government. This renders their roles different from country to country and organisation to organisation. Several articles noted the following about what their role entails: among others, that Sherpas "prepare leaders to scale a summit"; have a "peculiarly discreet and yet influential role"; and are "senior officials working behind the scenes [who] do much of the heavy lifting".

The Sherpas also highlight possible divergence and try to find convergence. Therefore, they assist in resolving the contentious issues ahead of the high-level meetings. This eases the discussions at the level of the heads of state/government when they eventually meet at the "Summit". The Sherpas meet several times a year before and after summits.

A Japanese G7 Sherpa is quoted as saying that the Sherpas need to bond, therefore their meeting locations "away from the capital" create the right ambience for cordial discussions.

This rests on the fact that they spend much of their time negotiating face to face for days at a time and, as such, a sense of teamwork, fraternity and solidarity is necessary to progress in their work and to ensure that all sensitive differences are worked out in advance to ensure consensus and success, while still protecting their nations' sovereign interests and status.

The BRICS Sherpas/Sous-Sherpas work according to a Terms of Reference document

that outlines their levels of engagement and sets the norms and standards for their cooperation. The Sherpas meet several times a year; at least on five different occasions. The first meeting is usually an introduction by the host country chairing in the particular year. Conversely, the last meeting concludes proceedings for the host country and a handover is put into play for the next host country.

The main Sherpas' meeting is the meeting preceding the BRICS Summit. They also meet on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York ahead of the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting there. Sherpas also meet prior to the Informal Meeting of BRICS Leaders on the margins of the Group of Twenty (G20) Summit.

The engagements in the G20 consist of two channels: "a Sherpa track" and a "Finance track". The former is led by the foreign affairs/international relations ministries of the respective member states, while the latter is driven by the finance or economic ministries. The various member states have one Sherpa each. Depending on which country is the "rotational Chair", the frequency of their meetings is the aforementioned five times a year, including the meeting prior to the G20 Summit. The Sherpas work on technical and policy matters related to development, and the Sherpa track itself consists of working groups. The two tracks then meet to finalise the G20 Communiqué that will be issued by the leaders as the outcome document at the G20 Summit. Like the BRICS Sherpas, the G20 Sherpas coordinate inputs regularly and meet in various locations within the Chair's country to deliberate on the priorities and objectives for the year and the implementation thereof.

In both instances, the agendas of the two groupings have grown substantially and,

therefore, there are cross-cutting issues that necessitate the Sherpas referring technical issues to other officials and related agencies at Head Office. They have to be agile and keep learning as new trends and issues are introduced as subsets of the agenda.

A study conducted by Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol *et al.* (2014), providing a comparison of the G7/8 Sherpas who held the role from 1975 to 1991 (over 17 summits), provides interesting insights into the characteristics of a Sherpa, revealing the common traits as well as differences. The results of this study, published in *International Summity and Global Governance. The Rise of the G7 and the European Council, 1974-1991*, highlighted the following. The G7 Sherpas are typically males in their mid-50s, who are mostly civil servants. The majority have a diplomatic background, with some experience working in an international organisation, while others may have expertise in economics or hail from academia. Their level of education is usually at a doctorate level with a strong research focus. Their tenure as Sherpas often extends for a few summits, therefore the continuity and their performance are well regarded.

It is now clear to see that, just as Sir Edmund Hillary (who was a professional and leader in his own right) entrusted Sherpa Tenzing Norgay to guide his expedition, heads of state/government of multilateral fora such as BRICS, the G20, the G7, and to some extent, the European Union in the case of "Brexit", entrust Sherpas to be their "personal representatives". Norgay was knowledgeable and experienced and assisted in the preparations of the journey. He would take the risks and safeguard his client.

The Sherpas in these fora are tasked with a Tenzing Norgay-esque role within the arena of politics and diplomacy. Their role is that of laying the ground in a way that allows their principals to be successful in their "summits" or talks, without the Sherpas themselves taking any of the credit for the success achieved. Their existence and goal are unequivocally one of solid preparatory support and are indeed invaluable. u

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“We must dare to invent the future”

Where there is strong collaboration among all organs and specialised agencies of the African Union and regional economic communities, accelerating the implementation of the AfCFTA will produce the results we all desire.

By Wamkele Mene
Secretary-General, African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat

The African Union (AU) theme of the year for 2023 is *Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation*.

The theme coincides with the 60th commemoration of the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in the historic city of Addis Ababa. Sixty years after our founding mothers and fathers established the OAU, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a tool to be deployed by the AU to position Africa to adequately respond to the challenges confronting our continent, the public health crisis from which the continent is emerging and the food insecurity crisis that is attributable to the current geopolitical context.

In the area of public health, the concluded Protocol on Intellectual Property Rights, which the assembly adopted recently, is an

important instrument that has the potential to address Africa's public health and industrial development imperatives. To address the food insecurity crisis, the Council of Ministers of Trade resolved to develop a strategy for boosting intra-Africa trade in agricultural products; an important outcome of a recent meeting of the Council of Ministers Responsible for Trade that was held in Gaborone, Botswana.

The recent conclusion of the Protocol on Investment, Competition and Intellectual Property Rights provides a legal basis to anchor an effective and comprehensive “one African market” and will be an accelerator for reaching the aspirations of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

Having concluded the Protocol on Investment, Competition and Intellectual Property Rights in this year of accelerated implementation of the AfCFTA, we are on track to conclude the Protocol on Digital Trade and the Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade. The Protocol on Digital Trade, among other important objectives, is set to broaden access to trade – particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are led by women and young entrepreneurs – thereby addressing the critical imperative of digital financial inclusion and the need for more investment in such inclusion.

The acceleration of the implementation of the AfCFTA will not only be in the context of concluding the establishment of the legal construct, it will also be in accelerating commercially meaningful new market access across the AfCFTA market. In this regard, the Council of Ministers of Trade congratulated and welcomed the Market Access Offer or Tariff Offer that the Southern African Customs Union recently submitted; an important step in our desire to boost intra-Africa trade and create commercially meaningful opportunities for our private sector, particularly SMEs that are led by women and young Africans.

Where there is strong collaboration among all organs and specialised agencies of the AU and regional economic communities (RECs), accelerating the implementation of the AfCFTA will produce the results we all desire. In accelerating the implementation of the AfCFTA in accordance with the theme of this year, we must leverage on Africa's development finance institutions such as our strategic partners Afreximbank and AfDB, to ensure that we build on the success recorded thus far.

Working together with the AU family, Afreximbank and AfDB, we have achieved significant success since February 2020. Under extremely difficult circumstances caused by the pandemic and the challenging

The comprehensive roadmap for implementation of the theme for this year, relies significantly on all AU organs, agencies and RECs for successful implementation and to enable us to transition from negotiations to practical steps that have to be taken for implementation of the AfCFTA.

geo-economic context of our time, we have been able to make significant and meaningful advancements:


- We established the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund, which through Afreximbank, already has a US\$1-billion capitalisation and more will be raised to enable all AfCFTA state parties to benefit from the AfCFTA.
- We commenced commercially meaningful trade under the Guided Trade Initiative, where eight countries: Ghana, Egypt, Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Mauritius, Cameroon and Tunisia, traded goods under the preferential rules of the AfCFTA. The most important aspect of the Guided Trade Initiative was in demonstrating that beyond enhanced trade flows in Africa – which is important – the AfCFTA can deliver inclusive benefits and opportunities for the marginalised. The tea that was exported from Kenya to Ghana was produced by small-holder farmers, whom the Government of Kenya has organised into cooperatives for export under the AfCFTA. A remarkable story of inclusivity in trade; a remarkable story of Africa demonstrating that trade does not have to be intrinsically a zero-sum game.
- Working with Afreximbank, we launched the Pan-African Payments and Settlement System (PAPSS) to facilitate trade in local currency under the AfCFTA. The immediate beneficiaries of the PAPSS are SMEs that are led by women and young entrepreneurs who seek to take advantage of a market whose combined GDP is projected to be close to US\$7 trillion by the year 2035.
- In record time, we established a fully functional secretariat that has 50/50 gender parity, that has as many men as it has women, including in the most senior leadership positions, and that has language and representation of all of Africa's region. Some 35% of the staff of the Secretariat are under

the age of 35, yet we have to do more to ensure youth empowerment and to advance gender parity, particularly in the male-dominated area of trade law and trade policy.

- On Rules of Origin, for the first time in the economic history of Africa, we have reached 88.3% convergence. In the almost 5 000 products that are traded in Africa, we now have a single set of rules for trade in 88.3% of those products, which has the potential to position our continent as an appealing investment destination and for accelerated industrial development.

The comprehensive roadmap for implementation of the theme for this year relies significantly on all AU organs, agencies and RECs for successful implementation and to enable us to transition from negotiations to practical steps that have to be taken for implementation of the AfCFTA.

I have not mentioned the challenges that we shall confront along the way, because the challenges that we certainly shall confront must not define our resolve to succeed. As we take a positive step towards reaching the milestones of the Abuja Treaty, we must expect that economic and market integration is a difficult yet worthwhile task.

I conclude with the words of the late Comrade President Thomas Isidore Sankara, “We must dare to invent the future”. We must dare to invent the economy and future of the Africa that we want. 

As we take a positive step towards reaching the milestones of the Abuja Treaty, we must expect that economic and market integration is a difficult yet worthwhile task.





Investors should seize the economic and business opportunities to establish a commercial presence in South Africa, said Secretary-General of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, Wamkele Mene.

Mene was addressing delegates from varying industries in South Africa and across the world at the fifth South Africa Investment Conference (SAIC) on Thursday, 13 April 2023.

Mene outlined the value proposition for the AfCFTA Agreement, saying that it will allow investors to gain access to a single market, which is projected to grow to 1.7 billion people and US\$6.7 trillion in consumer and business spending by 2030.

"By 2050, the continent will be home to 2.5 billion people. The largest working force in the world by 2050 will be in Africa. At that point, estimates are that consumer spending and business spending in Africa will be in excess of US\$16 trillion.

"This is an opportunity that our continent and our investors should not miss. It is of course expected that there will be challenges but I encourage everyone to look at Africa with a long-term view of investing and to see your returns in your investments," Mene said at the gathering held at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg.

According to World Bank projections, by implementing the trade agreement, Africans will have an opportunity to lift 100 million people out of poverty, 60 million Africans out of abject poverty and the rest out of moderate poverty.

Increasing Africa's GDP

The implementation of the agreement is also expected to contribute US\$450 million combined gross domestic product (GDP) to Africa's GDP and increase wages by close to 9%.

"We project that the most immediate beneficiaries will be small, micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs) that are led by women; this is why this agreement is so important for the future of our continent," he said.

The AfCFTA Agreement seeks to eliminate trade barriers and boost intra-Africa trade. In particular, it is to advance trade in value-added production across all service sectors of the African economy.

The AfCFTA will contribute to establishing regional value chains in Africa, enabling investment and job creation. The practical implementation of the AfCFTA has the potential to foster industrialisation, job creation and investment, thus enhancing the competitiveness of Africa in the medium to long term.

"The longstanding ambition of the African Union (AU) is that one day, our continent must be a common one. That is why we recently concluded protocols on investment protection with some ratifications to be done on international property rights and competition, which are so critical for the economic integration in Africa," Mene said.

Protocol

Heads of state and the ministers of trade are expected to conclude two additional legal instruments that include a protocol on digital trade and a protocol on women and youth in trade.

"The Protocol on Digital Trade represents a very unique opportunity for Africa to create digital economy jobs and enhance digital innovation. It will also address the imperative of inclusion, particularly the inclusion of SMMEs led by women and young entrepreneurs.

"With the direction of the heads of state, the Protocol on Women and Youth and Trade should enable us to move beyond aspirations for inclusion and present concrete commercially meaningful opportunities for women and young people through this protocol," he said.

Manufacturing

In 2019, Africa imported US\$16 billion worth of pharmaceuticals and it presents an opportunity to enhance the local production in pharmaceuticals. Mene noted that the continent had a challenge of over-reliance on imports for pharmaceuticals.

"In 2020, the challenge with the onset of the pandemic has proven to be an opportunity for job creation in Africa and an opportunity to address Africa's reliance on the protocol for international property rights," he said.

In July 2022, BioNTech established the first mRNA Vaccine Manufacturing Facility in Rwanda with plans for vaccine manufacturing that span the continent and includes South Africa, Ghana and Senegal.

"South Africa has a very strong manufacturing sector. By the year 2035, Africa shall require five billion units of vehicles ... this is an opportunity for us to include other countries in Africa who want to be part of the auto value chain in manufacturing components and part of trade under the AfCFTA.

"The agreement also presents an opportunity for countries that are producers of lithium. Three of them, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo, are on the continent. They should be in the top five of producers in the world so that when the transition from combustion engines to electric vehicles takes place, Africa takes the lead in the production of vehicles that are powered by lithium engines," Mene said.

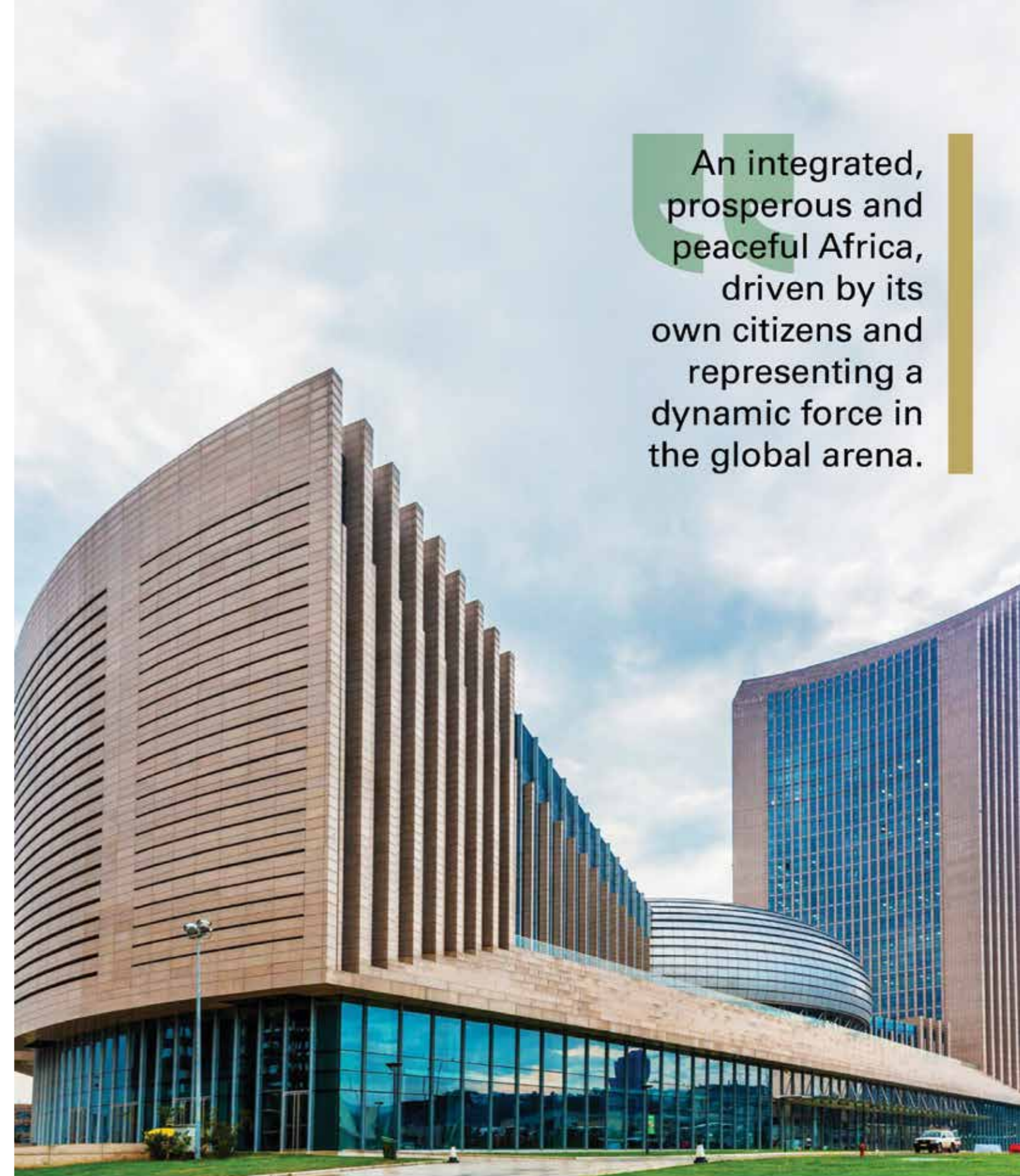
Ministers of trade have concluded 88.3% of the rules of origins for trading in Africa. However, the textile and auto sectors remain unresolved by the ministers.

"We have operationalised a protocol that will assist in resolving disputes that might arise and will be adjudicated by a competent and impartial panel of experts that will be nominated by the private sector," he said.

Although there are safeguards in place to mitigate challenges, Mene acknowledged that challenges that might arise include institutional capacity at national level, the cost of trade finance, which has to be brought down, and the lack of trade support of infrastructure.

"We will have to confront [this] as we implement the agreement. It is a very ambitious agreement, wide in scope and ambitious in the direction of economic integration of the continent. The fact that 47 countries have ratified the agreement symbolises strong commitment on their part," Mene said.

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Promoting investment to power Africa's single market

Regional investment initiatives have existed in Africa for some time and provide valuable lessons for the AfCFTA.

By Teniola Tayo

Institute for Security Studies Consultant and Principal Adviser, Alainett Adviser

The landmark African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aims to increase Africans' prosperity through more intra-African trade by eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers. There is, however, the question of the production of the goods and services that will be traded.

Scaling up production will require an injection of local and foreign investment into African industries. The increased focus on investment is a logical next step in the AfCFTA's implementation process.

In February, a draft protocol on AfCFTA investment was submitted to the African Union Heads of State Summit. The protocol is part of the second phase of the free trade area negotiations. It aims to facilitate and protect intra-African investment and improve the attractiveness of the single market to foreign direct investment.

Among other things, the draft protocol provides for a Pan-African Investment Agency to help coordinate investment promotion by AfCFTA member states. To ensure its success, lessons from previous attempts must be examined.

Linked to the goal of scaling up African industries is a recognition of the role of regional value chains in a free trade area. The AfCFTA Secretariat has identified some key value chains to prioritise for their export potential. These include automotives, textiles and apparel, pharmaceuticals and cocoa, among others.

These regional networks are one of the solutions to the anticipated competition among AfCFTA member states in developing specific sectors. The clashes between national industrial policies and the AfCFTA's aspirations are already proving a challenge to the negotiations.

Given that regional value chains may require cross-border investment, a coordinated approach is ideal. Such regional investment promotion activities are often carried out by investment agencies and have existed in Africa for some time.

Some initiatives were started by regional blocs and national governments, others by international organisations. They have taken the form of policies, networks, fora or actual agencies.

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) launched the COMESA Regional Investment Agency in 2006. Beyond promoting the region, the agency aimed to strengthen the capacity of national investment promotion agencies within its jurisdiction. However, it has faced some challenges, including a lack of political credibility and resources.

At national level, the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission embarked on the National Investment Certification Programme for States in 2016. To ensure the investment readiness of the country's states, the project provided capacity-building to help get states' investment promotion structures certified.

One challenge was the varying levels of capacity within the states as well as

their differentiated investment promotion mechanisms. There have been recent attempts to relaunch the programme.

A third initiative is the Africa Investment Promotion Agency Network (AfrIPANet), initiated by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) in 2001. AfrIPANet was designed as a common platform to discuss and design investment promotion strategies and recorded some achievements. Although AfrIPANet appears to be on hold, UNIDO continues to support African investment promotion agencies through its Invest-in-ACP initiative – a cloud-based, digital platform.

The Economic Community of West African States created a Regional Investment Policy Framework in 2007 but assessing how much has been achieved is difficult. The East African Community has a Business and Investment Forum, and the African Development Bank has the Africa Investment Forum, which is held every year.

Major challenges facing all these initiatives are their sustainability and difficulty measuring their impact. Mobilising resources to keep them effective becomes more complex over time, especially when they are tied to specific donor projects with limited funding cycles.

Aside from the varying capacities of investment promotion agencies, there is also the challenge of varying political will across the blocs to implement needed reforms. The proposed Pan-African Investment Agency will be established within the same tricky ecosystem with bureaucratic hurdles, insufficient political will and funding constraints.

To maximise the agency's potential, it must be set up to cooperate with existing regional and national investment promotion agencies to avoid duplication and leverage resources more efficiently. A monitoring and evaluation framework will be needed to track progress and identify areas for improvement.

A gradualist approach should also be considered, where an investment promotion unit is created within the AfCFTA Secretariat ahead of a full agency. This could improve agility and allow an iterative approach to coordinating investment promotion efforts.

Digital platforms are vital for streamlining access to investment-related information and promoting transparency. By developing a digital platform, the Pan-African Investment Agency can centralise data and facilitate information-sharing among stakeholders. It can also enable transnational collaboration among national investment promotion agencies by designating focal points in each AfCFTA member state.

Coordinating investment promotion among the AfCFTA's 54 member states won't be easy. But doing so, is crucial to resolving the clashes between the free trade deal's continental aspirations and member states' national policies and realities. Knowledge accumulated from initiatives in and outside the continent must be examined to improve the chances of success. ¹

Given that regional value chains may require cross-border investment, a coordinated approach is ideal. Such regional investment promotion activities are often carried out by investment agencies and have existed in Africa for some time.





Africa's tourism sector is open and thriving

As Africans, together, we will craft a narrative that tells our story in our own words, sharing with the world the unique contributions we bring to the global tourism community.

By Patricia de Lille
Minister of Tourism

In May 2023, the City of Durban hosted the 2023 Africa Travel Indaba at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre, named after Africa's first Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, to celebrate Africa as we all pull our efforts towards our sector's recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In one of his famous quotes, Inkosi Luthuli expressed his strong connection to Mother Africa, saying: "I am an African. I am bound to Africa by the ties of blood, race, history, culture and language."

During the month of May, we also celebrated Africa Month, honouring the African people's incredible ingenuity, fortitude and magnificence.

As Africans, together, we will craft a narrative that tells our story in our own words, sharing with the world the unique contributions we bring to the global tourism community.

A repositioned Africa's Travel Indaba

A lot has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we felt it necessary and critical to reposition Africa's Travel Indaba to ensure it remains relevant in the current environment.

This year, we hosted the Indaba under the mantra, *Shaping Africa's Tomorrow, Through Connection Today*. This positioning speaks to the essence of Africa's Travel Indaba, bringing the world to Africa to positively influence the continent's economic and cultural trajectories.

One of Africa's best exports, Ben Okri, the Nigerian author and poet, was on point when he wrote: "The most authentic thing about us, as Africans, is our capacity to create, to overcome, to endure, to transform, to love, and to be greater than our suffering."

The 2023 Africa's Travel Indaba, at near the pre-pandemic scale, demonstrated that we can host world-class events as Africans.

This year, we worked hard to exceed pre-COVID attendance numbers and have an estimated 6 000 people attending from all over South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world.

This year's Indaba saw more than 350 tourism products being showcased, 1 000

buyers from across the tourism ecosystem and just under 1 000 exhibitors.

The attendees included destination marketing bodies, hotel groups, airlines, tour operators and 10 African tourism boards and 21 African countries represented.

Competition and collaboration

Competition is often considered the lifeblood of destination marketing and tourism. However, it is important to note that competition should always be balanced with collaboration.

While healthy competition can drive growth and innovation, unhealthy competition can lead to a race to the bottom, with businesses and destinations undercutting each other on price and quality. Therefore, as the tourism industry, let us foster a culture of healthy competition, where businesses and destinations are encouraged to compete on quality and innovation.

This year's Indaba saw more than 350 tourism products being showcased, 1 000 buyers from across the tourism ecosystem and just under 1 000 exhibitors.

Long-term success in the industry depends not only on competing but also on recognising the value of collaboration and partnerships.

Each player in the value chain has a unique role to play, and by working together, we can create seamless and memorable travel experiences for visitors.

Supporting tourism enterprises

The Department of Tourism keenly understands the value of tourism businesses, especially small to medium enterprises and that is why I am proud of the investment we have made in this regard as part of our Market Access Support Programme (MASP), which, among others, supported 123 local small inbound tourism enterprises to showcase their products and services at the Hidden Gems pavilion during Africa's Travel Indaba.

The total value of support approved for the 123 enterprises amounted to R11.7 million and this investment enabled these small businesses to display their unique products and services, expand their networks and foster partnerships that will drive the growth and sustainability of the tourism industry in South Africa.

Africa's tourism sector performance

Africa's tourism sector is open and thriving, offering various products and experiences, catering to travellers' needs and preferences.

South Africa has seen encouraging growth in its tourist arrival numbers between January and December 2022, when it reached nearly 5.8 million with over four million of those arrivals from African countries.

This represents an overall inbound increase of 152.6% for South Africa compared to January to December 2021.

The future looks bright. We have, as a collective, weathered the COVID-19 hurricane and it should only propel us to exceed our targets.

After stronger than expected recovery in 2022, this year could see international tourist arrivals to South Africa return to pre-pandemic levels in Europe and the Middle East. These numbers demonstrate the immense potential of tourism in Africa, not only as a revenue generator but also as a job creator and a catalyst for faster economic growth.

At Africa's Travel Indaba, the African tourism sector worked together to create sustained growth and economic impact and it provided the ideal platform for us to collectively showcase our African products and experiences. The business opportunities and quality connections gained at this trade show will certainly shape Africa's tomorrow.

Challenges to overcome

In addition to collaboration across the value

chain, there are other areas where we need to work together to unlock the full potential of the African tourism sector.

One of these is the visa regime in all African countries.

We must have a harmonised visa regime across the continent to make it easier for visitors to move from one country to another.

We must also simplify the e-visa application process and reduce visa costs to make Africa a more attractive destination for both Africans and international travellers.

In this regard, South Africa has visa waivers for several African countries for a specified period and up to a maximum of 90 days, including Southern African Development Community countries such as Tanzania, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Mauritius, Malawi and Botswana.

We have also rolled out the e-visa system to several countries, including Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo and we are expanding the e-visa system to an additional 20 countries.

Another critical area is airlift capacity.

On the global stage, Africa is the strongest performer currently with international air connectivity in Africa.

However, this growth has been uneven, with some African regions and countries having better airlift connectivity than others.

I am looking forward to work with various partners in reducing the high cost of air travel in Africa as we know that this deters visitors and thereby limits tourism growth.

Despite some challenges, there are some positive developments in the African aviation sector.

For example, some African airlines are expanding their fleets and increasing their routes to meet the growing demand for air travel.

The African Union (AU) has also launched the Single African Air Transport Market, which aims to liberalise air transport on the continent and promote greater competition and connectivity.

Sustainable tourism

We must prioritise sustainable tourism practices that address climate change and protect our environment and cultural heritage while promoting economic development.

One of the key projects of the Department of Tourism to help businesses mitigate climate change and adapt to energy constraints is the Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP).

The programme encourages and incentivises private-sector tourism enterprises to move towards the installation of solutions for the sustainable management and usage

of electricity and water resources through the installation of solar-system and water-saving technologies.

The GTIP also ensures an uninterrupted visitor experience for tourists, reduces operational input cost and facilitates increased competitiveness and operational sustainability in the tourism sector.

Apart from providing funding to 130 tourism businesses under this programme, the Department of Tourism also invested R98.5 million to retrofit eight state-owned tourist attractions. Combined savings for all eight sites were estimated to be just under R40 million by the end of the 2022/23 financial year.

Sustainability is big for the tourism sector. We must invest in sustainable tourism to protect communities' natural resources, cultural heritage and social fabric while creating economic opportunities.

Again, collaboration and partnerships between African countries and the public and private sectors will be critical in achieving this objective.

We must also prioritise innovation and technology, which can help us develop and promote our tourism offerings more effectively and efficiently.

Finally, we must ensure that our efforts to promote the African tourism sector are inclusive and benefit all members of our society.

We must work to ensure that the benefits of tourism are distributed equitably and that all members of our communities can access the opportunities created by the sector.

At the very least, that is what the future generation of African children expect and deserve.

Our top-notch hospitality, favourable weather and unique wildlife are just a few examples of what makes Africa an attractive tourism destination.

Through tourism, we can help create cultural exchanges, promote understanding and break down stereotypes.

This can help to build bridges between different communities and contribute to the peaceful coexistence of different cultures and religions.

On a domestic front, South Africa must keep our country's domestic sectors going. Countries with a strong domestic tourism sector are generally better equipped to withstand fluctuations in international demand as has been witnessed with the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

For us in South Africa, growing our country's tourism sector is a key aspect of the country's Tourism Sector Recovery Plan and aims to ignite economic growth and create jobs.

It is possible. Let's do it together.

For 28 years, since 1996, Hisense has been rooted in the South African market. Last year alone, the sales revenue of Hisense South Africa increased by 10% year-on-year.

At present, it has reached a scale of US\$447 million. Hisense has become a well-known brand in South Africa and is one of the best examples of a Chinese brand operating in a local market. In terms of performance, the brand has taken the leading position in the South African market, ranking first in the TV market share with 32.3%. In refrigeration (Hisense and MORA), the market share is 30.8%, also ranking first in the industry.

Adhering to local operations, insisting on producing high-quality products with advanced technology and building an efficient supply chain system are important reasons for Hisense's solid success and vigorous growth in South

Africa. The business has observed growth in TVs, mobile phones, laser TVs, refrigerators, air conditioners, freezers and other categories.

The commissioning of the Hisense South Africa Manufacturing Company Ltd, based in the Atlantis Special Economic Zone just 40 kilometres from Cape Town, has promoted the development of the local economy, creating many employment opportunities for residents of the surrounding communities.

To date, the Hisense Industrial Park has created 1 000 direct employment opportunities and has driven rapid development and growth of indirect enterprises in the local economy.

Quality Hisense products, produced by local South African staff, are exported to African and European countries. Hisense has also continuously provided employment support for local youth in

Atlantis in a targeted manner so that they can improve both their skills development and lives. Before the epidemic, Hisense South Africa trained about 1 000 unemployed rural youth aged 18 to 25.

At the same time, it also established strategic cooperation with Atlantis Middle School to provide a foundation for talent transfer.

As a company with a high sense of social responsibility, Hisense actively participates in the construction of local social welfare and insists on giving back to the society in which it operates. In 2014, Hisense donated products and materials to the Orion Organisation for the disabled as well as several orphanages in Kids Haven.

During the epidemic, the business donated refrigeration appliances to the Paediatric Ward at Paarl Hospital to store medicine and donated personal

protective equipment worth R600 000 to the Charlotte Maxeke Academic Hospital – the largest COVID-19 testing centre in Johannesburg. In May 2023, Hisense South Africa Industrial Park and the China-Africa Development Fund jointly launched the “Light of Hope” China-Africa Love Donation Ceremony where 800 solar desk lamps were donated to improve the learning environment for rural learners.

At the same time, a scholarship funding plan was released. Hisense South Africa will subsidise the tuition fees of the top five students for one year.

In future, Hisense will continue to adhere to South African operation standards and continue to fulfil its social responsibilities through expanding the Industrial Park's production capacity and automation levels, as well as creating more employment opportunities for local communities.



Five things you didn't know about Africa's most loved destinations

It is no surprise that the Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius and Zanzibar stood out as winners for beach holidays, while South Africa's Stellenbosch, Cape Town and Hermanus were ranked highly for their food, restaurants and wildlife, respectively.

Unlike traditional tourism awards or surveys, the Tourism Sentiment Index (TSI) sources data from more than 500,000 online, peer-to-peer communication platforms, including all major social networks and review sites, to deliver the clearest picture of what people

are talking about and writing about when it comes to travel, tourism and the hottest destinations around the globe. The latest TSI data shows five African destinations are proving to be crowd favourites.

It is no surprise that the Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius and Zanzibar stood out as winners for beach holidays, while South Africa's Stellenbosch, Cape Town and

Hermanus were ranked highly for their food, restaurants and wildlife, respectively.

Goodthingsguy asked travel industry and destination experts to weigh in on the accolades and share things many probably didn't know about the African destinations currently being so popular.



Cape Town – home to cuisine over 350 years old

Cape Town restaurants regularly feature in The World's 50 Best Restaurant Awards – with Fyn Restaurant earning the plum spot of 37 in 2022.

Robert More, custodian and CEO of MORE Family Collection, who recently launched Upper Union Restaurant in Cape Town, notes that Malay Cape Cuisine has become

synonymous with fine dining in the Mother City. "Chefs are drawn to the complex combination of strong, spicy and aromatic flavours. It's no surprise that Malay cuisine is used and interpreted in many Cape Town restaurants, including Upper Union, which is a perfect addition to our globally inspired menu," says More.

"During colonial times, many Malaysian, Indonesian and East African slaves who were taken to the Cape in the 17th and 18th centuries had limited access to their traditional ingredients and therefore had to improvise. This has resulted in a cuisine, which is solely unique to the Cape, and steeped in history and tradition."



Seychelles – only 1% of the country is solid land

With over 115 islands but only 459 square kilometres of land, an astounding 99% of this paradise is made up of water. And the island nation has taken impressive steps to protect it, designating 30% of its waters as marine protected areas. "We're not surprised that Seychelles ranked fourth in the world in the Tourism Sentiment Index. Seychelles'

water means everything to our people and the economy, and we are doing everything possible to protect it with our new Marine Spatial Plan," says the Principal Secretary for Environment, Dennis Matatiken.

Matatiken continues: "Visitors to Seychelles are likely familiar with its gorgeous coral-filled reefs, but few know that these same waters

act as a stopping point for whale sharks migrating from east to west each year. These majestic creatures make their way to Australia annually, taking advantage of this idyllic oasis before continuing their journey."

Known for its incredible selection of wine farms, Stellenbosch is a mecca for oenophiles worldwide – hence it scooping the 34th spot in the TSI 2023.



Stellenbosch – the birthplace of a unique wine variety

Known for its incredible selection of wine farms, Stellenbosch is a mecca for oenophiles worldwide – hence it scooping the 34th spot in the TSI 2023.

It took top honours at the 2022 International Wine and Spirit Competition in 2022 with top trophies for both best red and white wine producers of the year. With more than 200 wine farms to choose from, visitors are spoilt for choice when seeking out their ideal winery

experience and in the case of Pinotage, it's one you can't replicate anywhere else in the world. That's because scientist Abraham Perold created Pinotage in 1925 in Stellenbosch. He crossed the Cinsaut and Pinot Noir varieties, explains Visit Stellenbosch CEO, Jeanneret Momborg.

"Pinotage wine is becoming increasingly popular as wine drinkers worldwide discover its dark fruit and oak flavours. We've been

excited to see that as it has increased in popularity, more visitors come to Stellenbosch on Pinotage pilgrimages," says Momborg.

She notes Kanonkop Estate, Beyerskloof and Kaapzicht are prime examples of wine farms in Stellenbosch benefitting from the worldwide "passion for Pinotage".

While South Africa's game lodges and reserves are world-renowned, Hermanus wins bragging rights as a wildlife destination of choice thanks to the majestic southern right whales that are drawn to its shallow, sandy covers to breed.



Hermanus – has a resident whale crier

While South Africa's game lodges and reserves are world-renowned, Hermanus wins bragging rights as a wildlife destination of choice thanks to the majestic southern right whales that are drawn to its shallow, sandy covers to breed.

"The unique geography of the shoreline of Hermanus means that these gentle giants can

easily be observed from the land – or your hotel room, in the case of The Marine Hotel, which overlooks the whale sanctuary," says Giltedge Group CEO, Murray Gardiner.

It was in 1991 when Hermanus first made history as the only town on Earth to have its very own whale crier. The tradition began

informally, with a local alerting tourists of whale sightings, and soon became officially recognised, explains Gardiner.

"Thanks to this remarkable innovation, everyone visiting Hermanus is now treated to a unique experience," he says.



Mauritius – it has more than one island

The Republic of Mauritius is renowned for its idyllic tropical beaches on the coastline, approximately 330 km long. But the country of Mauritius includes the island of Mauritius, Rodrigues and the constituent outer islands of Agaléga and St Brandon.

Antoinette Turner, GM of Flight Centre South Africa, offers her insights into Rodrigues, a gorgeous destination with just a short boat or plane trip away from Mauritius.

She explains: "This is an area of incredible beauty that remains largely undisturbed and

unspoilt and is a must-visit for those keen on water sports." ♪

Tourism Sentiment Index / www.goodthingsguy.com

Agenda 2063



THE AFRICA WE WANT

Our Aspirations for the Africa We Want

- A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development
- An integrated continent, politically united, and based on the ideals of Pan Africanism
- An Africa of good governance, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law
 - A peaceful and secure Africa
- An Africa with a strong cultural identity, Common Heritage, values and ethics
- An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential offered by African People, particularly its women and youth, and with well cared for children
 - Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner

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South Africa: The Cradle of Humankind



South Africa is a country where various cultures merge to form a unique nation proud of its heritage. Her biggest asset is her people – a rainbow nation with rich and diverse cultures.

South Africa is a country where various cultures merge to form a unique nation proud of its heritage. The country boasts some of the world's most breathtaking scenery and features an amazing display of bird- and wildlife species, which include the Big Five (lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo and rhino).

South Africa's biggest asset is its people – a rainbow nation with rich and diverse cultures.

South Africa is often called "The Cradle of Humankind" for this is where archaeologists discovered 2,5-million-year-old fossils of our earliest ancestors, as well as 100 000-year-old remains of modern man.

History

The first European settlement in southern Africa was established by the Dutch East India Company in Table Bay (Cape Town) in 1652. Created to supply passing ships with fresh produce, the colony grew rapidly as Dutch farmers settled to grow crops.

South Africa's democracy was a victory over struggle and a triumph for diversity.

Our rich, deep and diverse cultures and complex history combine to create a rich tapestry of human experience.

The country's liberation from apartheid and the construction of a multiracial democratic dispensation is a benchmark for the universal aspirations of peace, freedom, equality and dignity.

Geography

South Africa occupies the southernmost tip of Africa. The country stretches latitudinally from 22° to 35° S and longitudinally from 17° to 33° E. Its surface area is 1 219 090 km².

The country has common boundaries with Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe, while Mozambique and Swaziland lie to the north-east. Completely enclosed by South African territory in the south-east is the mountain kingdom of Lesotho.

To the west, south and east, South Africa borders on the Atlantic and Indian oceans. Isolated, some 1 920 km south-east of Cape Town in the Atlantic, lie the Prince Edward and Marion islands, annexed by South Africa in 1947.

The country's physical features range from bushveld through deserts and forests, up majestic mountain peaks and down to wide unspoilt beaches and coastal wetlands.

The oceans

South Africa's largest neighbours are the Atlantic and Indian oceans, which meet at the southwestern corner of the continent.

The warm Mozambique-Agulhas Current skirts the east and south coasts as far as Cape Agulhas, while the cold Benguela Current flows northwards along the west coast as far as southern Angola.

The contrast in temperature between these two currents partly accounts for important differences in climate and vegetation between the east and west coasts of South Africa.

The coastline stretches more than 3 000 km and is an even, closed one with few bays or indentations naturally suitable for harbours.

Climatic features

Although the country is classified as semi-arid, it has considerable variation in climate.

The subtropical location, on either side of 30° S, accounts for the warm temperate conditions so typical of South Africa, making it a popular destination for foreign tourists.

Being in the southern hemisphere, the seasons in South Africa are opposite to those of Europe and North America.

The country also falls squarely within the subtropical belt of high pressure, making it dry with an abundance of sunshine. Although Durban (east coast) and Port Nolloth (west coast) lie more or less on the same latitude, there is a difference of at least 6° C in their mean annual temperatures.

Temperature conditions in South Africa are characterised by three main features: they tend to be lower than in other regions at similar latitudes, for example, Australia, due primarily to the greater elevation of the subcontinent above sea level; despite a latitudinal span of 13°, average annual temperatures are remarkably uniform

throughout the country; and there is a striking contrast between temperatures on the east and west coasts. Owing to the increase in the height of the plateau towards the north-east, there is hardly any increase in temperature from south to north.

Temperatures above 32° C are fairly common in summer, and frequently exceed 38° C in the lower Orange River Valley and the Mpumalanga Lowveld.

- Spring: September, October, November
- Summer: December through February
- Autumn: March, April, May
- Winter: June through August.

Population

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) estimated the mid-year population at 60,60 million people in 2022. Approximately 51,1% (approximately 30,98 million) of the population is female.

By 2022, there was a rise in life expectancy at birth, estimated at 60,0 years for males and 65,6 years for females. Overall life expectancy at birth increased to 62,8 in 2022 from 61,7 (peak of COVID-related deaths) in 2021.

Gauteng comprises the largest share of the South African population, with approximately 16,10 million people (26,6%) living in this province.

KwaZulu-Natal is the province with the second-largest population, with an estimated 11,54 million people (19,0%) living in this province.

Northern Cape remains the province with the smallest share of the South African population.

About 28,07% of the population is aged younger than 15 years (17,01 million) and approximately 9,2% (5,59 million) is 60 years or older.

Government system

South Africa is a constitutional democracy with a three-tier system of government and an independent judiciary.

The national, provincial and local levels

of government all have legislative and executive authority in their own spheres, and are defined in the Constitution as distinctive, interdependent and interrelated. Operating at both national and provincial levels are advisory bodies drawn from South Africa's traditional leaders.

It is a stated intention in the Constitution that the country be run on a system of cooperative governance.

Government is committed to the building of a free, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic, united and successful South Africa.

Parliament consists of the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). Parliamentary sittings are open to the public. Several measures have been implemented to make Parliament more accessible and accountable.

The NA consists of no fewer than 350 and no more than 400 members, elected through a system of proportional representation for a five-year term.

It elects the President and scrutinises the executive.

The NCOP consists of 54 permanent members and 36 special delegates. The purpose of the NCOP is to represent the interests of the provinces in the national sphere of government.

Constitution

South Africa's Constitution is one of the most progressive in the world and enjoys high acclaim internationally. Human rights are given clear prominence in the Constitution.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 was approved by the Constitutional Court on 4 December 1996 and took effect on 4 February 1997.

The Constitution is the supreme law of the land.

No other law or government action can supersede the provisions of the Constitution.

Judicial system

The judicial authority in South Africa is vested in the courts, which are independent and subject only to the Constitution and the law.



No person or organ of State may interfere with the functioning of the courts, and an order or decision of a court binds all organs of State and people to whom it applies.

The Constitution provides for the following:

- Constitutional Court
- Supreme Court of Appeal
- High Courts, including any High Court of Appeal that may be established by an Act of Parliament to hear appeals from high courts
- Magistrates' courts
- any other court established or recognised in terms of an Act of Parliament, including any court of a status similar to either high courts or magistrates' courts.

Other courts include: Income tax Courts, the Labour Court and the Labour Appeal Court, the Land Claims Court, the Competition Appeal Court, the Electoral Court, divorce courts, small claims courts, military courts and equality courts.

Decisions of the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court of Appeal and the high courts are an important source of law. These courts uphold and enforce the Constitution

International relations

South Africa's unique approach to global issues has found expression in the concept of Ubuntu.

This concept informs the country's particular approach to diplomacy. This philosophy translates into an approach to international relations that respects all nations, peoples and cultures. It recognises that it is in South Africa's National Interest to promote and support the positive development of others.

South Africa therefore accords central importance to:

- its immediate African neighbourhood and continent
- working with countries of the South to address shared challenges of underdevelopment, promoting global equity and social justice

- working with countries of the North to develop a true and effective partnership for a better world
- doing its part to strengthen the multilateral system, including its transformation, to reflect the diversity of nations and ensure its centrality in global governance.

By prioritising Africa and promoting its renewal, development and reconstruction, South Africa is contributing to building a better Africa, which is the central foreign policy goal of the South African Government.

After the democratic elections in 1994, South Africa ceased to be the pariah of the world; it regained its rightful place in Africa, in the United Nations and in the family of nations.

South Africa emerged as a democratic country into a fundamentally transformed world with a visionary foreign policy that promotes relations with other countries.

South Africa maintains diplomatic relations with countries and international organisations through its missions abroad, and through the accreditation of countries and international organisations resident in South Africa.

The diplomatic and consular missions implement South Africa's foreign policy to enhance its international profile and serve as strategic mechanisms for the achievement of National Interest.

South Africa is a member of various regional, continental and international organisations.

Economy and investment

South Africa defines itself as an investment-friendly environment and has piqued interest with global investors through increasing engagement and networking.

As one of the most open economies in the world (exports and imports collectively represented approximately 51% of gross domestic product [GDP] in 2020), and with preferential access to numerous global markets, South Africa's investment drive aims to improve confidence in the country's economy and achieve balanced, sustainable

and inclusive growth. With developed first-world economic infrastructure and a growing emerging market, South Africa's investment potential lies in its diversity of sectors and industries, South Africa is also a major trading nation, exporting and importing billions worth of goods globally every year.

South Africa remains an investment destination of choice for many global corporates, with more than 180 Fortune Global 500 companies having a footprint in the country.

South Africa is the preferred location for multinational investors in Africa. Its unique value proposition makes the country an attractive destination for a growing array of investors and industries.

Today, South Africa is not only a resource-rich economy with access to both a vibrant local market and a growing regional market but also a financial, technical and innovation hub attracting companies looking to tap into the country's talent pool.

Transport

South Africa has a modern and well-developed transport infrastructure. The air and rail networks are the largest on the continent, and the roads in good condition.

The country's ports provide a natural stopover for shipping to and from Europe, the Americas, Asia, Australasia and both coasts of Africa.

South Africa's three major international airports are OR Tambo International Airport (ORTIA) (Johannesburg); Cape Town International Airport; and King Shaka International Airport (Durban).

There are also many regional airports, including the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport in Mbombela (Nelspruit).

The Gautrain is an 80-kilometre (50-mile) high-speed express commuter rail system in Gauteng, which links Johannesburg, Pretoria, Kempton Park and ORTIA.

It takes 15 minutes to travel from Sandton to ORTIA on the Gautrain and 35 minutes from Pretoria to Park Station in Johannesburg.

FAST FACTS

HEAD OF STATE	President Cyril Ramaphosa
GOVERNMENT	Constitutional multiparty democracy, with three spheres – local, provincial and national government.
NATIONAL DAY	Freedom Day, 27 April. Freedom Day commemorates the first democratic elections held in South Africa on 27 April 1994.
POPULATION	Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) estimated the mid-year population at 60,60 million people in 2022. Approximately 51,1% (approximately 30,98 million) of the population is female.
LANGUAGES	The country is multilingual with 12 official languages, each of which is guaranteed equal status. Most South Africans are multilingual and able to speak at least two or more of the official languages. The languages are: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga and Sign Language. Attention is also paid to the Khoi, Nama and San languages.
RELIGION	South Africa is a secular democracy with freedom of religion. Many religions are represented in the ethnic and regional diversity of the population. The majority of South Africans, or 79,8%, are Christian.
LAND SURFACE AREA	1 219 602 km ²
CAPITALS	Pretoria (administrative); Cape Town (legislative); Bloemfontein (judicial). The Constitutional Court is located in Johannesburg.
PROVINCES	Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape.
CURRENCY	Rand (ZAR) – 100 cents equals one rand.
TIME	GMT +2 hours

The Gautrain has 10 stations. Buses, shuttles and midibus services are available to transport passengers to and from all stations, excluding the ORTIA Station.

Mineral wealth

South Africa's mineral wealth translates into, among others, 96% of known global reserves of platinum-group metals, 74% of chrome, 80% of manganese, 25% of vanadium and 11% of gold reserves.

Mining is one of the centres of South Africa's economy. It accounts for 7,9% of GDP and employ almost 460 000 people.

Agriculture

The agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors were South Africa's fastest-growing

sectors in 2020 and 2021. The sector grew its gross value-added by 13% year on year in 2020 and by 8.3% year on year in 2021, underscoring its value as a sector that can deliver growth and is not correlated to the fortunes of most other sectors of the economy.

Environment

South Africa has 10 world heritage sites proclaimed by UNESCO, namely:

- Robben Island (Western Cape)
- iSimangaliso Wetlands Park (KwaZulu-Natal)
- Fossil Hominid Sites (Gauteng)
- Maloti-Drakensberg Park (KwaZulu-Natal)
- Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape (Limpopo)

- Cape Floral Kingdom (Western Cape)
- Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape (Northern Cape)
- Vredefort Dome (Gauteng)
- ‡Khomani Cultural Landscape
- Baberton Makhonjwa Mountains (Mpumalanga).

SANParks manages a system of 19 functional national parks in seven of the nine provinces of South Africa with a total area of just over four million hectares comprising 67% of the protected areas under state management.

SANParks is recognised as a world leader in conservation and protected area management.



Biodiversity

South Africa is among the smaller of the world's 17 megadiverse countries, which together contain more than two thirds of the world's biodiversity.

Three of the 36 biodiversity hotspots of the world (regions that are biologically rich and highly threatened) occur in South Africa: the Succulent Karoo, the Cape Floristic Region and the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany.

South Africa has a wide range of bioclimatic, oceanographic, geological and topographical settings.

These create high ecosystem diversity and endemism across terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems, which are recognised globally.

Communications

South Africa has a well-developed communications infrastructure. A number of cellphone providers offer national coverage and there are well-established landline phone networks. Internet and Wi-Fi are easily accessible in most urban areas.

According to Stats SA, 77.5% of South African households had at least one member who had access to or used the Internet at locations such as their homes, work, place of study, Internet cafés or at public hot spots. Access to the Internet using all available means was highest in Western Cape (89,1%)

About 40% of South Africa's population are active social media users.

Media

South Africa has a vibrant and independent media.

According to the Bill of Rights, as contained in the Constitution, everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes:

- freedom of the press and other media
- freedom to receive or impart information or ideas
- freedom of artistic creativity
- academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) is the country's only public service

broadcaster. There are several private and community radio and television stations in South Africa.

Technical handling of the print media in South Africa rates among the best in the world. This is one reason why newspapers and magazines have held their own in a volatile information era, characterised by the vast development of various new forms of media-delivery platforms via the Internet.

Most South African newspapers and magazines are organised into several major publishing houses.

Health

South Africa has been well known for its medical skills since Professor Christiaan Barnard performed the first successful human heart transplant in the country in 1967. There are many world-class private hospitals and medical centres around the country, especially in the urban areas, while many state hospitals also offer excellent care, among them Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town.

Most of South Africa is malaria-free, but visitors to the Kruger National Park or low-lying parts of northern KwaZulu-Natal are entering malarial areas and should take precautions in the form of prophylactic medication.

Tourism

South Africa's tourism industry is well established, with an exciting sector of emerging entrepreneurs. The country is strong on adventure, sport, nature and wildlife, and is a pioneer and global leader in responsible tourism.

From January to March 2023, 2.1 million visitors came to South Africa's shores – a 102.5% increase compared to the same period in 2022. While still 21.5% lower than 2019 levels, the tourism industry is gaining ground rapidly.

The African continent led the way with 1.6 million arrivals, followed by Europe's 387 000 and the Americas' 104 000 visitors.

Popular tourist attractions include:

- Kruger National Park on the border of Limpopo and Mpumalanga
- Table Mountain and Robben Island in the Western Cape

- Durban's beaches and the Drakensberg mountain range in KwaZulu-Natal
- Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape in Limpopo
- Addo Elephant National Park and the Wild Coast in the Eastern Cape
- Apartheid Museum and the Cradle of Humankind in Gauteng
- Pilanesberg Game Reserve and Sun City in North West
- Vredefort Dome and the eastern Free State
- The Big Hole and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park in the Northern Cape
- The Garden Route along the Indian Ocean from Mossel Bay, in the Western Cape, to the Storms River, in the Eastern Cape
- Stellenbosch in the Western Cape
- iSimangaliso Wetland Park in KwaZulu-Natal
- Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve in Mpumalanga
- Boulders Penguin Colony, Simon's Town, in the Western Cape
- the Wild Coast in the Eastern Cape.

Sport

South Africa is among a few countries that have participated in world cups of all three major and arguably most popular sports – cricket, football and rugby.

South Africa has hosted a number of international sports meetings such as the 1995 Rugby World Cup, 1996 African Cup of Nations, 2003 Cricket World Cup, the 2007 World Twenty20 Championship and the 2010 FIFA World Cup, making it the first African country to ever host the FIFA World Cup.

Our sportsmen and women have proven countless times why we retain world champion status in green, gold and white.

More recently, the 2023 ICC Women's T20 World Cup was held in Cape Town in February 2023. The Netball World Cup 2023 was held in Cape Town from 28 July to 6 August 2023 and was the first to take place on the continent of Africa. ♪

Sources: Mid-year population estimates, 2022, Statistics South Africa; *Pocket Guide to South Africa 2021/22*; www.brandsouthafrica.com; www.southafrica.net.

1994 | SOUTH AFRICA

> THIS IS WHO WE ARE

More than 60 million different voices echoing in harmony from the southernmost part of the continent.

Where ordinary people have carved their names in an extraordinary history by showing the world that peace is always better than war.

Our reach is not limited by our borders, bringing joy in people's hearts and a spark of rhythm to their moves.

This is a welcoming home of opportunity, inspiring millions to look here in search of a better life; and sharing our best with the world.

We are home to undulating mountains, flowers, endless seas, the beautiful animal kingdom and the ever-changing seasons that colour our world.

We are the birthplace of humanity, and a showcase of human excellence.

We believe in South Africa.

We are inspired by our victories of the past and our strong institutions to overcome the challenges of today and build a better tomorrow.

This is who we are – South African



Esther Mahlangu: South Africa's global cultural ambassador

Dr Mahlangu has spent more than seven decades practising her art form and has travelled extensively to collaborate with the world's most respected museums, galleries, curators, art fairs, celebrities and global brands.

Esther Mahlangu is globally acclaimed for her bright and bold abstract paintings that are inspired by Ndebele design. She was a disruptor from an early age, becoming the first person to reimagine Ndebele design, which is traditionally used for decorating houses, and on contemporary mediums.

She was born in 1935 on a farm outside Middleburg, in what is now the Mpumalanga province. She was the first of nine children: six boys and three girls.

Following traditions passed down from her mother and grandmother, she learned traditional Ndebele wall painting and beadwork as a child.

She became an expert in executing murals as a teenager, using a wide range of paint colours that emerged in the 1940s. She married and had three sons but lost her husband and two of her children. Between 1980 and 1991, she lived and worked at the Botshabelo Historical Village, an open-air Ndebele museum.

In 1986, researchers from Paris who were travelling the world to document traditional arts saw the paintings on Mahlangu's house. They invited her to create murals for an exhibition of international contemporary art, the *Magiciens de la Terre* ("Magicians of the World").

She travelled to France in 1989, staying there for two months and painting a house in front of thousands of spectators. She also decorated a wall inside the *Musée d'Angoulême* (Angouleme Museum of Fine Arts) and showed her work at other locations in France. In 1990, she began to paint murals for public venues in Johannesburg

and elsewhere in South Africa, soon followed by locations in Europe and the United States. Her work has appeared in exhibitions in more than a dozen countries worldwide.

Dr Mahlangu has spent more than seven decades practising her art form and has travelled extensively to collaborate with the world's most respected museums, galleries, curators, art fairs, celebrities and global brands.

In 1991, she became the first lady and first African to participate in the BMW Art Car Collection alongside other notables of the likes of Andy Warhol, David Hockney, Roy Lichtenstein and Frank Stella.

The bold Ndebele-inspired artworks for which she is globally acclaimed grace many of the world's most respected museums, and private, public and corporate collections. Many experts believe that any important Pan-African contemporary collection cannot be considered complete without including one of her works.

While firmly anchored in her traditional Ndebele culture, and choosing to live in rural Mpumalanga, Dr Mahlangu continues to spend considerable time in many of the world's largest and most modern cities collaborating with museums, art fairs, curators, celebrities and respected global brands. Some of her most famous murals have been exhibited at the New Identities Exhibition in the Bocom Museum in Germany, at the Virgin Atlantic's music store in Times Square, the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington DC and at the Civic Theatre in Johannesburg.

She is considered a visionary and has painted anything from canvases, walls, ceramic pots, sneakers and doors to cars,

bicycles, motorbikes and skateboard decks. This has led her to well-known global collaborations with the likes of Rolls-Royce, BMW, Fiat, South African Airways, British Airways, John Legend, Belvedere Vodka, The Smithsonian Museum, Freshpak Rooibos, and many others.

In 2018, Dr Mahlangu was presented with two honorary doctorates, and in 2019, she was appointed as Officer of Arts and Letters, which is France's highest decoration for her contribution to the arts; the Department of Arts and Culture published a book in her honour; and she received an award from the United Nations in Johannesburg.

She also received the South African Government's Order of Ikhamanga, Silver Class, in 2006 for her excellent contribution to the development of the indigenous Ndebele

the world to be commissioned to paint an artwork for the "gallery" of a new Rolls-Royce Phantom, which they named *The Mahlangu* in her honour.

With the goal of preserving her cultural heritage, Dr Mahlangu started an art school in the backyard of her home in Mabhoko (Weltevreden) in the KwaMhlanga district in Mpumalanga. She funded the school herself, and when not travelling for exhibitions, she mentors young artists in the traditional style of Ndebele design. Pupils learn how to mix pigments and paint straight lines, freehanded and without sketches, using their fingers or chicken feathers.

Dr Mahlangu is exclusively represented by The Melrose Gallery in Johannesburg. U

www.sahistory.org.za / themelrosegallery.com

Many experts believe that any important Pan-African contemporary collection cannot be considered complete without including one of her works.





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Embark on an extraordinary journey with Veenwouden, a boutique winery epitomising unmatched luxury and sophistication in Paarl. Since 1989, Veenwouden has revolutionised winemaking, crafting wines that redefine excellence and establishing an unrivalled reputation. Our vineyards grace the valley, producing grapes of unparalleled perfection, fuelled by the cool Atlantic Ocean breezes and a Mediterranean-like microclimate.



Unleash the Unrivalled Excellence of Veenwouden Wines

Veenwouden stands as a pioneer of ingenuity with a meticulous selection of noble cultivars, including: iconic Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Malbec. The world has taken notice of our greatness, with Veenwouden wines chosen for South African state dinners by three visionary presidents.

Our heritage wines are chosen as the ultimate gifts from South African presidents to visiting heads of states, symbolising our nation's essence and hospitality.

Indulge in Veenwouden Embrace Unrivalled Excellence

The empire sings back:

The deep history behind South African soprano Pretty Yende's triumph

Born into the oppressive legacy of colonialism and apartheid, she has adopted a Eurocentric art form and mastered it with skills honed by communal African tutelage. The result is a unique and resilient force.

By **Thembela Vokwana**
Lecturer, University of Fort Hare

Among the invited artists at the coronation of Britain's King Charles III was the South African soprano, Pretty Yende. Coronations are not events that take place often. What made the moment special is not just singing for a new king, but the rareness of the occasion. After millions of global television viewers experienced her soaring high notes, stage presence, musicality and star quality, audiences were no doubt asking, "Who is she, where does she come from?"

As a scholar of African opera with a particular research interest in various South African singers, including Pretty Yende – and what is sometimes called Black vocality – I would like to present a slightly different history of her than most writers do. My interest here is showing Yende as a product of global histories and processes across time and space. That her singing is in fact embedded in the globalisation of the 1800s and its continuity to the 2000s. The varied and painful tapestry that ultimately led Yende back to Britain has a long historical basis.

My interest is to excavate Yende's vocal memory by looking at history and the community. Opera stardom did not surreptitiously land in her lap. Instead, home, church and school singing was foundational. For someone with no foundational classical education, to go on to sing in French, Italian and German (and speak these languages with ease) reveals how she has triumphed against the limitations of both empire and the legacy of apartheid's lack of opportunities for black South Africans.

Amakwaya

During the reign of Queen Victoria, in the early to mid-1800s, a group of British settlers entered the port of what became known as Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha) in South Africa. As they gradually moved east, a small group of Scottish missionaries settled on the banks of the Tyhume River to establish what was eventually known as Lovedale College.

It was at Lovedale that most locals learned to read, write and – importantly for the discussion here – sing and compose by notating music. It was in the *Lovedale Press* that the country's first choral composition was published. This space formed the seeds of a choir singing tradition called *amakwaya*.

Many Black South Africans owe their musical prowess to being part of a choir at school or in the community. The joy of singing came through preparing for competitions. Ever since the 1800s choir competitions pervade various sectors of society – schools, churches, government departments. These have eliminations which culminate in national finals. These competitions were based on Welsh *eisteddfods*.

Over the years, there have been modifications to suit local needs and tastes

in the major national festivals. Uniquely for the late 1990s and early 2000s, opera arias, ensembles and choruses were prescribed in the repertoire.

Black communities in South Africa have no formal music tuition. Forms of training are relational, through singing with the family at home, and communal singing at school and church. This too is a product of historical processes. After colonialism, the white-minority apartheid government (1948 to 1994) provided a system of inferior education to black students who attended schools which did not have the resources to provide quality music education, a legacy that continued into post-apartheid South Africa. Born in 1985, Yende began her schooling in the early 1990s, as a transition to democracy was taking place in the country.

Thousands of kilometres from Lovedale, in the small town of Piet Retief in Mpumalanga province, Yende's musicality was incubated in her family's lounge. She sang with siblings, uncles and her grandmother, gogo KaDladla, who taught her choruses from a church-based form of music called *amakhorasi* that's accompanied by dancing and clapping of hands. She developed her voice there and at Ndlela High School, under the guidance of conductor Ndumiso Kwazikwenkosi Sithole, and in community



Through sheer resilience and some good fortune, opera singers like Yende, Pumeza Matshikiza, Vuvu Mpofo, Musa Ngqungwana and Cecilia Masabane Rangwanasha made strides towards international stardom. None of them knew, as they joined a junior school choir, that they would become opera stars.

She has shattered all imaginable glass ceilings. And this at only 38 years old.

choirs, particularly the Africa Sings Choir under George Mohlala.

Thus, although first hearing French composer Léo Delibes' *Flower Duet* sparked great awe and interest in a genre she hadn't known existed before – opera – she was already part of a grassroots network of music making before embarking on an opera path. In a newly democratic South Africa, Yende won the national schools championship singing Austrian composer Wolfgang Mozart's *Batti, Batti, O Bel Masetto*. She earned a platinum category result, which means she bagged 90-100%. It would be just one of several competition victories that left judges like choir conductor Themba Madlopa mesmerised by her talent.

It is again from the community music scene that Yende received opera assistance and coaching – from the likes of choral music champion and opera singer Nolufefe Mtshabe and leading choir competition organiser Mzwandile Matthews. Yende finally benefitted from a formal music

education when, thanks to her eisteddfod success, she was accepted into the University of Cape Town for a diploma in opera studies in 2003.

Here, very much in brush strokes, I have tried to map the importance of *amakwaya* as an informal conservatoire for Black South African opera singers. Through sheer resilience and some good fortune, opera singers like Yende, Pumeza Matshikiza, Vuvu Mpofu, Musa Ngqungwana and Cecilia Masabane Rangwanasha made strides towards international stardom. None of them knew, as they joined a junior school choir, that they would become opera stars.

The global stage

Amakwaya (choirs) are known for teaching discipline. It is discipline and fortitude that led Yende to graduate cum laude from the University of Cape Town. She would embark on a remarkable spree of winning just about any competition she participated in. In 2016, in the prestigious international Belvedere Singing Competition, she won a prize for each category and was named overall winner.

Her global career began with bel canto roles in the Italian opera style. Her scintillating voice led her to all the major

opera houses around the globe. She has performed with great artists such as Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli and performed many leading roles. She has won national orders in her home county, Italy, France and elsewhere. She has shattered all imaginable glass ceilings. And this at only 38 years old.

In 2022, Yende was invited to sing at the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's 75th anniversary celebrations at Windsor Castle. Her inimitable style must have mesmerised King Charles, because he reportedly extended a personal invitation to perform at his coronation.

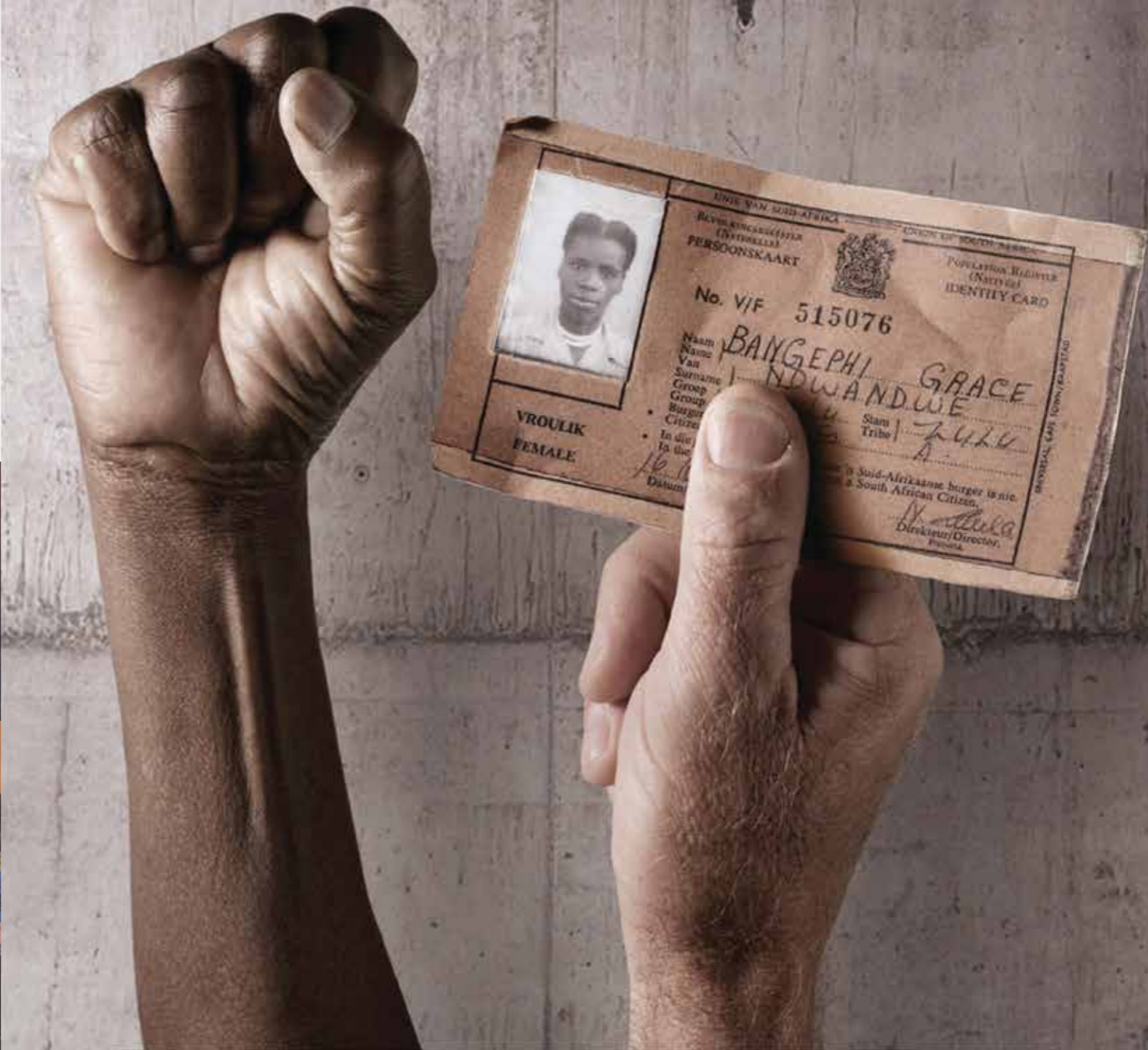
Yende sang *Sacred Fire* by environmentally conscious British composer Sarah Class. The creative forces of two award-winning female musicians was formidable. But Yende's path is particularly singular.

Her performance marked a historical moment. Born into the oppressive legacy of colonialism and apartheid, she has adopted a Eurocentric art form and mastered it with skills honed by communal African tutelage. The result is a unique and resilient force. As she ascends the stage, may her ancestors guide her to even greater heights.

Makube chosi, kube hele. (Everything that is said, let it manifest. 🙏)

This article was first published on *The Conversation*.

THE DAY THAT ROCK BEAT PAPER



On the 9th of August 1956, twenty thousand women of all races marched on the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest the proposed amendments to the Urban Areas Act, commonly known as the Pass Laws of 1950. The women stood together, arms raised

in the air in the clenched fist of the Congress Salute and sang 'You strike a woman, you strike a rock'. It is remembered as one of the major milestones in the struggle against the apartheid regime and the date is now commemorated as Women's Day.

Visit www.apartheidmuseum.org and learn more about our history.

APARTHEIDMUSEUM



South Africa's hidden jazz history is being restored album by album

As-Shams has a 60-year history as South Africa's first black-owned record label, founded by music producer Rashid Vally out of a corner of his father's Koh-i-Noor general store in central Johannesburg.

By Gwen Ansell
Associate of the Gordon Institute for Business Science, University of Pretoria

It was fitting that Johannesburg was among 12 cities featured in the 2023 UNESCO International Jazz Day, themed *Jazz Journey around the World*. The day, established in 2011 to celebrate the role of jazz in "uniting peoples across the globe", is now marked annually on 30 April in close to 200 nations. It would have been hosted by Cape Town in 2020 had COVID-19 not intervened.

Even so, many jazz lovers elsewhere may be aware of the long history and uniqueness of South Africa's jazz legacy through only a few names – Miriam Makeba, Abdullah Ibrahim and Hugh Masekela – who were driven out by apartheid to find world stages. Uncovering, documenting and showcasing more of the creativity that fought to flower inside the country remains a work in progress.

For writer and filmmaker Calum MacNaughton of Cape Town-based Sharp-Flat Music, it is vital work. He is the archivist and curator of the historic As-Shams record label archive. MacNaughton told me, in an

interview as part of my ongoing research into South African jazz histories, that he wanted access to the archive not only for musicology researchers but "enthusiasts and budding musicians in frivolous conversation late into the night".

As-Shams has a 60-year history as South Africa's first black-owned record label, founded by music producer Rashid Vally out of a corner of his father's Koh-i-Noor general store in central Johannesburg. As-Shams was responsible for an eclectic array of releases from the teenage township pop of the Beaters (who became Harari) to the iconic, implicitly subversive *Mannenber* (*Is Where it's Happening*) of Abdullah Ibrahim (then Dollar Brand).

As part of opening access, As-Shams recently released the first volume of a planned series of archival compilations covering the

label's history. *As-Shams Archive Vol. 1: South African Jazz, Funk & Soul 1975-1982* contains 10 tracks, 10 original compositions and 10 ensembles. More than 90 minutes of music spans eight deeply repressive apartheid years. Yet, in those years, artists of the calibre of pianists Lionel Pillay, Tete Mbambisa and Pat Matshikiza, saxophonists Kippie Moeketsi, Basil "Manenberg" Coetzee and Mike Makhalemele, and vocalist Sathima Bea Benjamin were making original, innovative music.

The album

The compilation unites tracks from various albums As-Shams has already re-mastered and reissued, predominantly since 2020. But curating its contents, says MacNaughton, provided the opportunity for a fresh approach to

shape new sequences reflecting professional networks and shared thematic concerns.

For example: On the vinyl edition, Side A is dedicated to the remarkable connection between Moeketsi and Matshikiza. Dick Khoza (as leader is heard), on the heels of his performance with Mbambisa's big band, Black Disco's *Night Express* and Pillay's *Deeper in Black* are thematically linked. And the compilation closes with Benjamin's music, which ties everything together with a spiritual thread.

There's also what he calls an "11th hidden track": artwork on the vinyl from South African painter and graphicist Hargreaves Ntukwana, often the label's cover artist of choice.

This restructuring works: tracks have a wholly new impact when heard in fresh company rather than embedded in their original albums. By avoiding the "obvious" choices – often the title tracks – the collection conveys the collective music-making of a community and an era rather than fondly remembered jazz hits.

Restoring the archive

Yet, the process of recovering what MacNaughton counts as "some of South Africa's most important cultural artefacts of the 20th century" wasn't without problems. Despite fears about degradation, the tapes had not been damaged by constant moving.

Rather, the problem was getting the history right, revealing the meticulous detective work that restoring South Africa's hidden musical history demands. Though most tapes had been carefully annotated, recording engineers sometimes did not name all players, and occasionally, the paper record of names was absent. Just one example from the compilation was MacNaughton being presented the challenge of identifying which of the three bassists and two drummers who share the album credit appear on the specific track. I reached out to bassist Lionel Beukes, who spent a weekend listening to the track and concluded that he couldn't say for certain.

In other cases, artists remained unidentified because of contractual commitments to other labels, or the imprint faced restrictions because of conflicting licensing and distribution deals.

Perhaps the most complex detection trail surrounded another As-Shams re-release: Pillay's *Shrimp Boats*. That first appeared in 1987 when As-Shams resurrected its Mandla imprint to issue out-of-print titles. Multiple tracks were brought together to round out the length of an album; not all the performer credits travelled with them, and the cover artwork omitted Pillay in favour of Coetzee.

By pure happenstance, this writer played the resulting album to the late Robbie Jansen in Botswana in the late 1980s. "Hey," the saxophonist said, "that's me playing saxophone on Birdland! I always wondered

what happened to that session ..." Yet, Jansen was not named on the sleeve. When I communicated this to MacNaughton after the 2022 re-release, he contacted everybody still living he could find who might have memories to confirm the attribution. Having confirmed it, the label put new information online.

MacNaughton is extremely sensitive about the responsibilities of any reissue – not only to artists but also to music historians and the truth.

Why this matters

MacNaughton is still digging through the archives. A second compilation in preparation features, among others, guitarist Themba Mokoena, 70s fusion group Spirits Rejoice and saxophonist Winston "Mankunku" Ngozi. Full releases are planned for forgotten sessions by Mbambisa and Moeketsi.

Restoring these masterworks to the public domain can change our conversations about South African jazz. Instead of isolated stars, we hear a community at work: the rich musical conversations disrupting what has sometimes been characterised as a "silent" cultural period under apartheid. Conversing with each other, with overseas jazz and with tradition, those players made the music what it is today. ▮

This article was first published on *The Conversation*.



Conversing with each other, with overseas jazz and with tradition, those players made the music what it is today.



Celebrating 338 years of South Africa's oldest wine-producing farm

Groot Constantia is on a mission to preserve and promote the legacy of South Africa's wine industry. As a Provincial Heritage Site and a living museum, this historical estate is under the care of the Groot Constantia Trust.

By Brent Lindeque
www.goodthingsguy.com

Groot Constantia, South Africa's oldest wine-producing farm, celebrates its 338th birthday this year.

From 13 July to the end of August 2023, it is offering a Vintage Vault Experience on the estate, offering wine enthusiasts a unique tasting experience and the chance to purchase rare and collectable wines dating back centuries.

It is an opportunity to step back in time and be part of something truly extraordinary.

The farm is an important part of World Wine Heritage and a world-class international tourism destination.

So much so, that it captures the rich and diverse heritage of South Africa. The farm delivers a unique cultural, social and historical experience to locals and tourists alike. It delivers world-class, quality wines, sensory encounters and special experiences.

It is an iconic example of the preservation of South African culture and heritage.

Since 1685, Groot Constantia has been producing legendary wines without interruption, making it a true icon in the world of South African heritage.

On 13 July 1685, Simon van der Stel, the Governor of the Cape at the time, founded Groot Constantia.

Back then, Bordeaux's famous wine production area, the Medoc, had not even been developed, and the renowned Cabernet Sauvignon wine varietal did not exist.

Today, Groot Constantia stands tall as one of South Africa's most beloved wine farms, consistently earning accolades, awards and international recognition.

Every day, during the Vintage Vault Experience, a fresh selection of wines will be opened, ensuring that each tasting is a unique experience.

These tastings take place in the enchanting arched spaces beneath the Groot Constantia Manor House, which dates back to 1778.

The Vintage Vault has an alluring, cool and mystical atmosphere, making it the perfect place to store these vinicultural wonders.

It is fascinating to discover that Groot Constantia has stored a portion of every vintage produced over the years. The Vintage Vault is filled with the finest treasures and testament to Groot Constantia's enduring legacy.

Among the rare wines stored here, is the iconic Grand Constance wine produced in 1821, the oldest bottle in the vault.

There's also JP Cloete's Pontac wine, which gained acclaim at the International Exhibition in Paris in 1855, and a few bottles originally crafted for the Duke of Northumberland.

Groot Constantia's wines have a history of impressing distinguished figures throughout the centuries. From Louis Philippe, the King of the French, to Frederick the Great of Prussia, and even Napoleon himself, these wines have left a lasting impression.

Not to mention their appearances in literary works by Charles Dickens and Jane Austen, where they were celebrated as the cure for a broken heart or compared to a lover's lips. The accolades continue to pour in, with Groot Constantia's wines consistently winning awards worldwide.

The Groot Constantia Chardonnay 2013 was crowned the best in the world at

Chardonnay de Mond and the Sauvignon Blanc 2019 took home the International Sauvignon Blanc trophy at the International Wine Challenge.

But it is not only about the wine.

Groot Constantia is on a mission to preserve and promote the legacy of South Africa's wine industry.

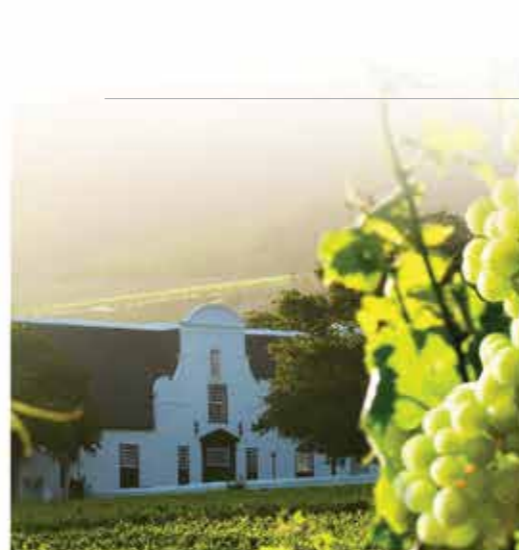
As a Provincial Heritage Site and a living museum, this historical estate is under the care of the Groot Constantia Trust.

Sustainability is at the forefront of their efforts, and they have been recognised as a World Wildlife Fund Conservation Champion.

Groot Constantia's commitment to its legacy spans more than three centuries and is poised to continue for another 338 years and beyond. ♪

Groot Constantia | www.goodthingsguy.com

The farm is an important part of World Wine Heritage and a world-class international tourism destination. It delivers a unique cultural, social and historical experience to locals and tourists alike.



FYN Restaurant named best sustainable restaurant in the world

The coveted award aims to recognise restaurants that achieve the highest environmental and social responsibility ratings, determined by its audit partner, the Sustainable Restaurant Association.

By *Eat Out*

FYN Restaurant in Cape Town has been acclaimed as the world's most sustainable restaurant after being awarded the prestigious Flor de Caña Sustainable Restaurant Award at The World's 50 Best Restaurants ceremony held in Valencia, Spain, in June 2023.

The coveted award aims to recognise restaurants that achieve the highest environmental and social responsibility ratings, determined by its audit partner, the Sustainable Restaurant Association.

FYN Restaurant, which opened in late 2018, was placed 37 on last year's World's 50 Best Restaurants list and won two stars at the Eat Out Woolworths Restaurant Awards

last year. Headed by chef Peter Tempelhoff and his partners, Ashley Moss and Jennifer Hugé, FYN has been commended for its far-reaching philosophy that holds sustainability at the helm.

Heralded as an "ethical celebration of South African ingredients" by The World's 50 Best Restaurants, FYN's cuisine is a fusion of South African ingredients and

Heralded as an "ethnic celebration of South African ingredients" by the World's 50 Best Restaurants, FYN's cuisine is a fusion of South African ingredients and Japanese cooking techniques with local sourcing at its core.

practices and range from ABALOBI, South Africa's first community-supported fishery; to the regenerative-principled Meuse Farm for vegetables; Cape Wagyu for free-range, pasture-reared cattle; and responsibly harvested dune spinach, sea lettuce and kelp.

"FYN is about balancing authenticity and innovation. Through our cuisine, we're straddling the fine line between time-honoured techniques and creating something quite new," says Tempelhoff.

"This award is huge for FYN, it's also unexpected and I feel a little unprepared for it ... but, it does lay the gauntlet down for

us to continue on our current trajectory with every fibre of the restaurant's being.

"To continue our work with the communities, the fishermen, the farmers, the foragers and of course our dedicated staff who we've grown so close to over the past few years is the real reason why we've won this fantastic award, and I dedicate this to them."

The World's 50 Best Restaurants list, sponsored by S Pellegrino and Acqua Panna, is a globally recognised programme that showcases leading trends and highlights exceptional restaurants from all corners of the Earth. ♻️

Japanese cooking techniques with local sourcing at its core.

The kaiseki-style menu, consisting of five waves of courses, pays tribute to the native ingredients found along the Western Cape and is intrinsic to the principles of sustainability employed by the renowned restaurant. All suppliers are carefully selected according to criteria of eco-friendly

The World's 50 Best Restaurants list, sponsored by S Pellegrino and Acqua Panna, is a globally recognised programme that showcases leading trends and highlights exceptional restaurants from all corners of the Earth.



SOUTH AFRICAN FASHION travels out of this world at this year's Durban July

The highly anticipated Durban July 2023, Africa's largest horse-racing event, unfolded over the first weekend in July at the picturesque Hollywoodbets Greyville Racecourse in Durban.

If South Africans lived out of this world, this year's Durban July proved our fashion might just be the talk of the galaxy.

The highly anticipated Durban July, Africa's largest horse-racing event, unfolded over the first weekend in July at the picturesque Hollywoodbets Greyville Racecourse in Durban.

Besides horse racing, most guests were eager to see the fashion. Dressed in their most stylish designer garments, guests were treated to a live fashion show where up-and-coming designers had to compete and showcase their collections under the theme: *Out of This World*.

The Young Designer Award for this year went to Lwandle Zwezwe from the PMB School of Fashion. She was awarded a study bursary, a travel package to Johannesburg for Fashion Week and more prizes.

Also taking to the fashion podium were two students from the Durban University of Technology, Thabiso Ncanana and Andile Nsele, who came second and third respectively. Both also earned bursaries for their breathtaking work.

The Raceday Fashion Awards attracted huge interest as hundreds entered the various categories hoping for raceday glory at the 2023 Hollywoodbets Durban July as all tried to interpret the *Out of This World* theme in their own unique way.

Hollywoodbets Greyville was a hive of activity for the hopefuls as they entered the Classic Raceday for Women, Classic Raceday for Men, Most Striking Couple and the Exceptional Raceday Hat or Fascinator.

The various entries took the theme in a number of exciting directions and after claiming the most Striking Couple Award for her ensemble, Brenda Waring said that there was a lot more to creating a winning number.

"It takes a lot of dedication and hard work to get a piece into an event like this and I'm just so overwhelmed that I managed to win," Waring said.

"There are a lot of sleepless nights involved but you have to be confident in what you do and after this concept came to me in a dream, I went with it and it's so satisfying to win an award like this."

It was a second win in as many years for Waring in the Most Striking Couple Category after she won in 2022 with her design alongside Pamela Shane.

Second place in the Most Striking Couple Category went to Tyler Grendon and Kayla Anne Lindsey who were modelling a number created by Sanele Mkhize.

Third place went to designer sisters Catherine and Irene Nolan for their creation that was modelled by Cyra van der Merwe and Lungelo Mathonsi.

In the Classic Racewear for Women, it was Nguni Shades who walked away with the honours for his creation that was worn by Minenhle Ngcobo and that was inspired by the 1850s as the designer picked up another raceday fashion award.

"It's great to win this award and to add it to the other awards that I've won here at the Hollywoodbets Durban July," Shaun Majola (Nguni Shades) said.

"It's not easy to keep creating new ideas and new designs but with the theme this year, it really helped me because I wanted to create something that no one else would think about.

"The fashion industry is battling in this country, and we are always trying to stay alive, so these sorts of events are important for us," he added.

Second place in the Classic Racewear for Women went to Nelly Maduna for her number that was modelled by Gugu Sithole while third went to African Fashion

International with model Lwandle Mgwanya. In the Classic Racewear for Men, first place went to Kgotsofelo Given Monyamate for his piece that was shown off by model Sphosethu Thwala. Second place in this category went to Mr Dress while this was taken home by Mr Martin.

Each of the raceday fashion competition winners took home R5 000 from Gold Circle and Schweppes and a R2 500 gift card from the Gateway Theatre of Shopping, while the second places won R3 000 from Gold Circle and Schweppes, with the third placed designers earning R2 000 from Gold Circle and Schweppes. 🇿🇦

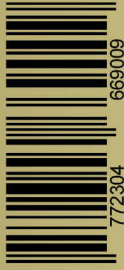
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www.hollywoodbetsdurbanjuly.co.za

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