

DOSSIER

**Study seminar dedicated to South Africa's BRICS 2023 presidency
sponsored by Eurispes, Embassy of South Africa and SIOI
Rome (Italy) 15 May 2023**

(Report, Notes, Documents edited by Marco Ricceri and Gianluca Tornini)

1-REPORT ON THE STUDY SEMINAR

A study seminar dedicated to the BRICS Presidency of South Africa in 2023 was held in Rome at the SIOI headquarters on 15 May 2023. The initiative was promoted by the *Embassy of South Africa in Italy*, the *EURISPES institute* and the *Italian Society for the International Organization–SIOI*. Seminar was attended by the Representatives of the Embassies of the BRICS States, experts, students of the Master of preparation for the diplomatic career organized by SIOI; numerous participants also via video link.

The works were introduced by the president of SIOI, **ambassador Riccardo Sessa**, and by the lawyer. **Angelo Caliendo**, member of the Board of Directors of Eurispes, on behalf of the president of the Institute, **prof. Gian Maria Fara**.

The main speaker was the **Minister Plenipotentiary of the Embassy of South Africa in Rome, Ms. Mmathari Mashao**, who presented a report on the topic: *The Objectives, Strategies and Proposals of the Republic of South Africa on the Occasion of the BRICS 2023 Presidency*.

Two sessions followed: one reserved for discussion and commentary by the experts and one dedicated to questions and answers. The experts who gave their reflection contribution were the following:

Sergio Arzeni (President, INSME), **Elisabetta Basile** (Sapienza University of Rome), **Domitilla Catalano Gonzaga** (CESI-Desk Africa), **Giuseppe Davicino** (Agenda Domani press agency), **Salvatore Mancuso** (University of Palermo), **Marco Massoni** (LUISS University), **Enrico Molinaro** (Segr.Gen. Italian Network for Euro Mediterranean Dialogue-RIDE), **Paolo Motta** (ICOMOS – SDG WG), **Roberto Ridolfi** (President, NGO LINK 2007 Network), **Carminé Soprano** (Advisor, World Bank)

A –Introduction

Ambassador Riccardo Sessa, president of SIOI, opened the proceedings with a warm welcome addressed to the representatives of the embassies, the experts and all the participants. After greeting and introducing Plenipotentiary Minister *Mmathari Mashao*, Amb. Sessa reiterated the importance of the meeting, emphasizing the great commitment of SIOI, the Embassy of South Africa and EURISPES, through its BRICS Laboratory, to favor a constructive dialogue to face together the crises of our time in a perspective of collaboration and multilateralism. According to the amb. Sessa, South Africa's entry into the BRIC coordination in 2010 (subsequently BRICS) has certainly also had a great impact on the political situation of the African country and its allies. And this year's BRICS Presidency 2023 is a testing ground for building new projects and dialogue formats useful for dealing concretely and positively with the main crisis situations and to try to overcome the greatest difficulties encountered so far in global development. The study seminar was promoted precisely to discuss this topic, to encourage the development of new ideas and the identification of prospects for success.

The lawyer **Angelo Caliendo**, member of the Board of Directors of Eurispes Institute, brought greetings and illustrated the contribution by the **President Gian Maria Fara**. According to the President of Eurispes, the launch of initiatives, even limited and punctual, of discussion and collaboration between Italy and the BRICS coordination would give a very important signal, a great contribution to dialogue and to possible wider-ranging initiatives, also in the Mediterranean area; it would also be a stimulus to induce the European Union itself to strengthen diplomatic channels on the major open questions of this difficult historical phase. For example, the ambitious goals that the BRICS countries set to reduce inequalities, internally and between states, are also expressed in UN documents and the broader international platforms such as the G20: so why not work with a spirit of frank cooperation to promote more intense discussions and dialogue initiatives aimed at this end? Eurispes is committed to spreading a positive political culture aimed at finding a plausible answer to this important question.

(See Annex n.2, full written text)

*By introducing the main speaker, the **amb. Riccardo Sessa** underlined that completely reforming the world order is an even more ambitious goal, above all because this is a period of uncertainty and not of order. The position of the BRICS, however, cannot coincide with that of the West on many issues: for example, it is clear that one of the pillars of the BRICS, Russia, has unleashed a war against Ukraine and a point of contact on this issue it is not achievable, even if South Africa's commitment to a peace plan is greatly appreciated.*

B-The Keynote speech

The Plenipotentiary Minister of the Embassy of South Africa, **Ms. Mmathari Mashao** starts the presentation of her report by thanking both SIOI and Eurispes for the initiative and brings the greetings of **H.E. the Ambassador Nopisho Nausca-Jean Jezile**.

South Africa, she recalls, joined the BRICS only in 2010, and has always worked to create a new world architecture that is inclusive and representative of the current needs of the whole world. The goal of sustainable development, which is common to all UN countries, is the first issue that can really promote inclusive multilateralism, discussion tables and framework agreements. Beyond that, she says, there are very specific priorities on which South Africa intends to focus on in the context of the BRICS 2023 Presidency: a) developing sustainable growth guided by the principles of equality; b) promoting new education and skills improvement plans to open qualified employment opportunities to millions of young people; c) creating opportunities for economic cooperation through commercial framework agreements both within the BRICS and with other countries outside the coordination; d) strengthen resilience after the pandemic crisis, following the indications and objectives of the 2030 Agenda (therefore, again, with a view to strengthening the reference institutions and international relations); e) finally, to strengthen the peace processes in the areas with the greatest tensions on the African continent and in impactful conflicts such as that between Russia and Ukraine.

The BRICS internationalist line is evidenced by official invitations to many countries from every continent, including all members states of the African Union, Uruguay, Bangladesh, and the United Arab Emirates. Collaboration is to be sought in three major pillars: that of politics and security, to intervene in the stabilization of crisis areas; the social one through the empowerment of the most disadvantaged groups, usually women and children; and that of economy and finance to promote concrete growth. The recent interest shown by some countries in joining the BRICS finds an explanation, according to the Minister, in the great commitment of the coordination to these issues and the search for a direction toward a more equitable world.

(See Annex n.1, full written text)

C-Contributions, Comments by the Experts

The session is coordinated by the Secretary General of Eurispes, **Marco Ricceri**.

Sergio ARZENI

President, International Network of SMEs – INSME, Rome

The G20 will be chaired by South Africa in 2025, after India and Brazil. The first G20 was held in 2009, the very same year as the birth of the BRICS: the five countries are members of the G20 but at the same time they expressed the need for their own coordination network to reflect their economic, demographic and trade power, which in particular for India, Brazil and South Africa was not adequately represented in the governance system of the United Nations. To give substance to their association they created the "*New Development Bank*," which other BRICS network candidate countries such as Egypt have also joined. The BRICS do not have a common vision of the new world order, but they are united in a "common aversion" to Western hegemony: about 130 countries, for instance,

oppose sanctions against Russia and are not aligned with the West. Many of these have also asked to join the BRICS because they consider Westerners to be hypocrites since, for example, in one year they allocated \$170 billion in aid for Ukraine only in the first year of the war, equal to 90 percent of what they shelled out for all the world's poor countries in 2021.

Arzeni, finally, says he is surprised that the priorities of the BRICS Summit Presidency in South Africa did not include entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which are the drivers of employment creation, a major problem especially among South African youth. Investing in such activities is basic, he argues.

Prof. Elisabetta BASILE

Former Professor of Development Economics at Sapienza University of Rome

Expert member, Eurispes BRICS Lab

Basile is quite critical of the concrete results achieved by the BRICS in recent years, which she considers "unsatisfactory". There are ideas and such ideas are even good, she underlines, but the coordination is unable to make corresponding concrete decisions. The plurality of interests that characterizes the BRICS reality, often in conflict with each other, hinders an effective decision-making process. The differences are many, and have been accentuated by the COVID pandemic and the war between Russia and Ukraine. These events have had a strong impact on political and economic interests by influencing the political alliances that individual BRICS members maintain with countries outside the coalition.

To analyze the different aspirations and conflicts of interest, Prof. Basile proposes to apply an *institutionalist approach* in the analyzes which makes it possible to explain the existence of differences between the existing capitalist systems within the BRICS coalition by bringing them back to the institutional conditionings that affect the individual and social behaviours in individual countries. Furthermore, she suggests the variety of capitalisms among the BRICS countries as a topic of reflection for the South Africa's presidency with the aim of exploring the different visions of growth, the different economic cultures, the different interests expressed by the BRICS members. In conclusion, she underlines that the real game for the future of coordination is played on the possibility of finding a meeting point between very different development models and often conflicting interests.

(See Annex n.3, full written text)

Domitilla CATALANO GONZAGA

Analyst, Desk Africa, Centro Studi Internazionali – CeSI, Rome

Catalano Gonzaga addresses the following topic: *Challenges and opportunities of the South Africa's role as the 2023 BRICS chair in the AfCFTA implementation*

Taking into account the current economic situation of different African countries, which are experiencing more and more the consequences of the external shocks of the global pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the rise of inflation, it is important to give special attention to the *African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA)*, on the huge potential of its effective implementation and how the BRICS could be a fundamental player in achieving this objective.

The AfCFTA establishes Africa as the world's largest free trade area in terms of participating countries, bringing together 54 countries with a combined GDP of \$3.5 trillion and a market of 1.4 billion consumers. It aims to boost intra-African trade, raise Africa's trading position on the global market, and accelerate economic growth, industrialization, production, and job creation. To date, it is estimated that AfCFTA has the potential to both increase intra-African trade by 52.3% (via the removal of import duties) and double trade (by reducing non-tariff barriers). Moreover, facilitating and exploiting the commercial potential of the Continent, the AfCFTA will allow to create new jobs and consequently an increase in income and an improvement in the lives of Africans.

On 16th-19th April 2023, Cape Town hosted the first *Business Forum of the African continental Free Trade Area*. This event represented the first time in which strategic investors, the African private sector, financial institutions, investment promotion agencies, chambers of commerce, entrepreneurs, Heads of State and Government and AfCFTA partners, met all together. During the discussions the private sector emerged as the "economic engine" of African trade. In fact, the discussions highlighted how the full involvement of the private sector is central and critical to the implementation of the AfCFTA. The agreement allows the creation of a market of 1.3 billion people and the private sector must be prepared to make it work effectively. This involves not only the expansion of African businesses but also innovation and job creation.

However, several challenges need to be addressed: including the lack of access to finance, outdated or insufficient infrastructures, and the high cost of "doing business". Investments in infrastructure, energy and transport are therefore

needed to reduce business costs. Despite the mentioned difficulties, the creation of an efficient intra-African trade is essential to addressing internal economic crises.

To this extent, investments by BRICS countries in Africa can provide further incentive towards making the free trade area operational and South Africa can use its position as the 2023 chair of BRICS to advance the interests of African countries. Since 2007, African countries have shown a change with the increase in proportion of local currency debt, which currently represents about 55% of total regional public debt. Those numbers demonstrate the positive impact of the international donors who supported the development of local markets. It is for this reason that foreign countries must continue to support African countries and it is here where BRICS can be relevant. The pressures that African countries are currently facing - from rising global interest rates and inflation to local protests - could be reduced considerably with BRICS intervention, allowing them the opportunity to move from a state of crisis to a more comfortable state of long-term economic planning, which in turn would also permit them the opportunity to foster further sustainable development.

Giuseppe DAVICINO,

Founder and director of “Agenda Domani” press agency, Rome

Expert member, Eurispes BRICS Lab.

Davicino underlines the importance of the growing attention that the media are paying to the BRICS reality, after years in which the majority of public opinion did not even know of its existence. Davicino illustrates in detail the articles and information recently published in the main Italian newspapers, a very positive sign for the role of coordination. For example, when the attention was put on the new "Mattei Plan" proposed by the Italian government on energy in the Mediterranean, or on the initiatives linked to the "Belt and Road Initiative" Chinese project, or even on the presidential elections in Brazil, primary daily papers such as *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Il Sole 24 Ore* and *L'Osservatore Romano*, official organ of the Holy See, have not underestimated the importance these events may have for the evolution of the BRICS project.

(See Annex n.4, full written text)

Prof. Salvatore MANCUSO

University of Palermo, Dept. of Political Sciences and International Relations DEMS

Expert member, Eurispes BRICS Lab.

Mancuso, an expert on the African reality, provides some elements of reflection and suggestions to Minister *Mmathari Mashao*, reflecting on the fundamental role that South Africa has within the BRICS, in line with its tradition of being the needle of the balance in a mediation perspective between very different realities and situations. In this regard, the constant invitation that South Africa has made to other African countries to participate in the numerous BRICS meetings deserves attention from the point of view of strengthening cooperation policies. Thirteen countries have already declared their intention to join the BRICS which, it is important to underline, are not a stable and officially recognized international institution from a legal point of view, but rather a flexible, informal organization of states.

And here a problem arises, according to the scholar: managing more than five countries could be complicated without a well-defined organization that has the tools to guarantee the promotion of common needs. It is difficult to negotiate when countries have very different legal systems, and this already happens within the African continent: we therefore need to think about the creation of a supranational entity that could have a voice, for example, in trade agreements between states.

Another important element to consider concerns the possible ways to achieve the goal of "unblocking education", also mentioned by the Minister. This should also be done with the organization of a specific legal forum (Legal Forum): up to now, the current legal forum that exists among the BRICS, has been mainly limited to the participation of law experts, professors and jurists; but if one of the most important issues is that of education, a BRICS legal forum extended to further categories of people could offer a great opportunity to achieve the set goal. Intercultural exchanges between students from the BRICS countries could be useful, he concluded, also to learn how the different legal systems work.

Prof. Marco MASSONI

LUISS University “Guido Carli”, Dept. Political Sciences, “African Politics and Society”, Rome

Massoni recognizes the faults of the West in the lack of development of the African continent, which until the end of the last millennium did not experience a real industrial transformation, nor basic education programs. Since China's arrival in Africa, however, the continent has experienced economic growth, albeit an unsatisfactory one. The

European Union should have a role in this sphere of activity, but "the bureaucracy of Brussels", he argues, complicates relations.

A great opportunity could be seized by Italy in the sectors of security, agriculture and health in African countries, promoting concrete and useful investments for the development of the African continent and thus favouring more intense cooperation. These issues could be at the centre of "multilateral forums" in which Italy could provide interlocutors with technical knowledge valid for the achievement of specific shared objectives.

Enrico MOLINARO

Secretary general of the "Italian Network for the Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue – RIDE"

Expert member, Eurispes BRICS Lab

From the beginning, *Amb. RiccaroSessa* described the elephant in the room. You all know what we are talking about, and I think it was very clear the way he approached the beginning of this debate.

Nevertheless, when I had the honor, together with Prof. *Marco Ricceri*, to organize in 2016 the first BRICS meeting in the history of Rome at the Embassy of India, in charge then of the BRICS' chairmanship, we had a different problem, related to the well-known Italian soldiers- the Maròs - involved in the Kerala (India) incident. As a consequence, many invited people did not even want to participate because they were still angry at the Indian government for what they considered its responsibility for this event.

Therefore, our proposal was - and still is - to invest on another dimension: the civil society. This is why the role of the "Italian Network for the Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue-RIDE" (Rete Italiana per il Dialogo Euro-mediterraneo RIDE) could become relevant. *Amb. Niu Dun* (who was then - and still is - the Ambassador of China at the FAO Organization), representing the BRICS point of view asked our organization of civil society network to support and facilitate the communication between the BRICS and the European Union, especially about the Mediterranean area, which is the focus of our work: this is what we want to do. We want to keep open a bridge of communication in this complicated, chaotic political situation nowadays.

One word I would like to say about the strategy of the BRICS multidisciplinary Laboratory at Eurispes. While some experts claimed that the BRICS group is a temporary organization, the conclusions of our debate at the BRICS Laboratory is that there is a common strategic interest in the identity model of the BRICS group: what we call the *Westphalian model* of the State frontier as a symbol of the limit of the collective identity. This model is opposed to a contrary specular *Glocalist, transnational* model. From this point of view if we analyse through a scientific research the language, terminology, and semantics of the BRICS documents, we notice the keywords of the Westphalian model.

My master thesis' supervisor, Prof. *Luigi Ferrari Bravo* - vicepresident of the SIOI at that time - wrote an analogous cyclical Westphalian/Glocalist analysis related to the history of the international law system in our University's manual.

This is what keeps together the five BRICS countries in the different economic, financial, cultural, academic facets you all mentioned today, and we have to acknowledge it.

It is time for Italy to play a role starting from the inputs of the civil society, trying to understand the reality of the BRICS countries, their impact not only on the African continent in general, but specifically on the Mediterranean region, which is so relevant for us: we are ready with the Eurispes BRICS Laboratory, co-ordinated by prof. *Ricceri* - possibly also with the help and contribution of the SIOI - to work in this direction.

Paolo MOTTA

ICOMOS Sustainability Working Group, Naples

Expert member, Eurispes BRICS Lab.

Motta points out how the Eurispes Institute has been working on these issues and the evolution of the BRICS "system" for years. Already thirteen countries are applying to join the coordination, and in the future there may be more and more countries: such process deserves special attention, especially since they will soon represent 50 percent of the population and 30 percent of the world's GDP. They will have no small insignificant power on the world stage, Motta argues. However, while many dwell on the economic and financial aspects, few take into consideration their role in urbanization processes, which are increasingly intense in the world, including the reality of the five states of coordination.

In this specific sphere of activity, the BRICS could find more suitable solutions for territorial rebalancing as emerged in their first documents, integrated with policies for the enhancement of connection infrastructures, technological and commercial services. By linking the two interventions, in the territorial rebalancing and in the

service infrastructures, the BRICS could define original and ambitious development models, to be affirmed at an international level. South Africa, due to the role it plays both within coordination and on the African continent, could take the opportunity of the 2023 presidency to promote innovative initiatives in this area of intervention.

(See Annex n.5, full written text)

Roberto RIDOLFI

President, NGO Network "Link2007";

Expert member, Eurispes BRICS Lab.

Ridolfi takes up the theme of the diversities existing among the BRICS states. As a "lover of Africa" he recounts his experiences on the continent made with FAO and the European Commission. He identifies five key points on which to discuss carefully.

The first is *war*, which has never ended in Africa, and which brings misery, poverty, destroys trade: in the face of this event, for example, the commitment of the African Union is fundamental.

The second is *demography*: we often fail to grasp the importance of this element, but from this point of view Africa and Europe are absolutely complementary, they balance each other perfectly.

The third "leading factor" is *poverty*: Africa is experiencing one crisis after another, inequalities are increasing, and the most spontaneous question is the following: "what is being done in the BRICS sphere?"

The fourth point is *climate change*, which will cause millions of displaced people in the coming years: we need to invest to safeguard local communities that will suffer the greatest effects from the environmental crisis or it will also be a social disaster.

The fifth point is *migrations*. Everyone should be free to migrate, Ridolfi argues, especially in the presence of very precarious economic conditions: "creating jobs in Addis Ababa by paying people a dollar an hour is not creating work, it is creating poverty".

The expert's advice to South Africa is to invest in sustainable development: if done well, it could solve many of these problems.

Prof. Carmine SOPRANO,

Economist, SIOI lecturer, advisor to the World Bank and the UN

Soprano explores the topic of trade and economic integration from which an important fact emerges: the total value of trade between South Africa and the other BRICS countries and between South Africa and the EU is about the same (\$45 billion in 2021). But the total volume of trade between South Africa and China (which accounts for 70 percent of South Africa-BRICS trade) is basically about exporting minerals and raw materials and importing manufactured goods from China, which does not help promote the domestic industrialization agenda pursued by the South African government.

In contrast, trade with the EU is more diversified and therefore more helpful in supporting the industrialization path. 70 percent of foreign direct investment (FDIs) in South Africa, then, comes from Belgium, the Netherlands, the UK and Germany, while China contributes only 3.7 percent. However, the upcoming August Summit could be an opportunity to make South Africa a strategic point for the passage of goods to the entire African continent, as well as for the attraction of foreign direct investments by the other BRICS countries, which could decide to manufacture in South Africa and then trade from there with other African countries, benefiting from the advantages of the AfCFTA.

All this surely requires, in addition to the initiation of close cooperation in the economic field, also a well-defined strategy to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the processes of *re-shoring*, *near-shoring* and *friend-shoring* of global value chains in increasingly tense contexts such as the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Chinese frictions with Taiwan and the semi-conductor war. In such a situation South Africa could try to position itself strategically as a point of attraction for international companies and investments both from China, currently subject to greater scrutiny in the U.S., and more generally from other realities in the West, with this promoting in some cases the search for new markets.

Another important point of reflection suggested by prof. Soprano is the following: under the South African Presidency 2023, a frank debate on the enlargement of the BRICS should be started. It is in the interest of the BRICS to continue to pursue a policy of enlarging its economic sphere of influence, including also investments to be made through the *New Development Bank (NDB)*, but always taking care of the environmental and social impact of these investments in the beneficiary countries.

On the attempt to "de-dollarise" the international financial architecture pursued by the BRICS through numerous instruments, including the *New Development Bank (NDB)*, the economist believes that it is first necessary to remove

some obstacles: it would seem unrealistic, from his personal and independent point of view, aspire to an authentic de-dollarization of the international financial system if first all controls on the free circulation of capital in all the BRICS countries are not removed (whose national currencies, according to the information available to date, should enter a basket on which in turn a new international currency BRICS should be based).

Councillor Yanyu ZHANG

Embassy, People Republic of China, Rome

Counsellor Y. Zhang highlights the commitment of the BRICS, and particularly China, to fighting terrorism, drugs, and seeking a peace design in Ukraine. Peace is the precondition for talking about development, including trade, with the rest of the world.

In this regard, he believes it is necessary to underline how the great project of the "*Belt and Road Initiative*" launched by China and to which Italy has joined (at least in the first instance) is a "*public good for the international community*", and not a political means of domination, a geopolitical tool. The major project aims to promote widespread economic development and operates on the basis of a "win-to-win" logic, to create clearly identifiable advantages for all those involved. Cooperation and well-being will pave the way for a more just world.

Ha espresso i suoi sentiti ringraziamenti a tutti

Conclusion

The **Plenipotentiary Minister Ms. Mmathari Mashao** expressed her heartfelt thanks to everyone for the reflection elements provided, and stressed one concept: "*South Africa believes in dialogue.*" She said she was very enthusiastic about the great participation and all the constructive interventions. Then, together with the President of SIOI, **amb. Riccardo Sessa** and the Secretary general of Eurispes, **Marco Ricceri**, they reiterated the commitment to maintain a collaboration between the Embassy of South Africa, SIOI and Eurispes on these issues.

WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS, NOTES, DOCUMENTS

ANNEX n.1

Keynote Speech

Goals, strategies, policies, proposals of the Republic of South Africa
on the occasion of the BRICS 2023 Presidency

by Ms Mmathari Mashao
Minister Plenipotentiary at the South African Embassy in Rome

1. South Africa as Chair of BRICS in 2023:

Let me start off by reminding us that South Africa joined BRICS at the end of 2010 and attended the first Summit in Sanya, China, in 2011. It is now 12 years since South Africa became a member of BRICS. Two years later South Africa hosted the first BRICS Summit on the African continent as a member.

Secondly, let me underscore a response that was given by Ambassador Professor Sooklal to a false claim – he explained that **BRICS was not created as a counterweight or a bloc in competition with anyone. BRICS was about the five countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, advancing the collective interests of the Global South in partnership with the Global North in crafting a new global architecture that is inclusive, that is fair and that is representative of the current realities of the world.**

On 31 August 2022, Cabinet approved the theme and priorities for South Africa as Chair of BRICS in 2023.

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

2. The theme informs the Chair's five priorities for 2023.

Developing a partnership towards an **equitable Just Transition**: Climate change forces significant transformational changes to our economies, particularly the energy sector. This should not stand in the way of improving the lives of our people.

Transforming education and skills development for the future: We must unlock opportunities for education and continuous skills development as they are the long-term solutions towards sustainable development and escaping poverty.

Unlocking opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Area: Build a partnership between BRICS and Africa for mutually beneficial opportunities towards increased trade, investment and infrastructure development under the AfCFTA.

Strengthening post-pandemic socio-economic recovery and the attainment of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development: We must act on our plans and strategies so that our economies drive global economic recovery. We need to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Strengthening multilateralism, including working toward **real reform of global governance institutions and strengthening the meaningful participation of women in peace processes**: We need to focus on achievable global governance reforms that BRICS can deliver on through its influence. **We must address the marginalisation of women in peace processes.**

South Africa will work towards finalising any outstanding issues that remain from previous years, such as the signing of the Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters (CMAA) and discussions on membership expansion.

3. 15th BRICS Summit preparatory steps

Around 200 events are on the BRICS Calendar of Events for 2023 across all three pillars of **political and security, economic and financial, and social and people-to-people cooperation**, building up to the 15th BRICS Summit in August 2023. BRICS Leaders were invited to the Summit in January 2023 already.

Some of the notable events that have been held to date include BRICS Sherpa and Sous Sherpa meetings that started to be held from February 2023 onwards. Those were followed by a number of Working Groups' meetings at which some of the handover reports were deliberated upon, in preparation for the XV BRICS Summit.

Global geopolitical contestation provides a complex background to South Africa's Chairpersonship of BRICS in 2023.

The South African government is aware of its international and domestic legal obligations as well as the diplomatic implications that arise from these developments at the ICC and has been consulting on the legal implications.

South Africa does not intend to let global developments distract from the focus of the 15th BRICS Summit on strengthening the BRICS partnership, including with Africa, towards mutually accelerated growth, sustainable development and inclusive multilateralism that brings tangible benefits to all our people.

President *Ramaphosa* has invited ALL member states of the African Union to the XV BRICS Summit Dialogues, except those suspended by the African Union. He has also invited the new BRICS New Development Bank members (Bangladesh, Egypt, Uruguay and the United Arab Emirates).

The rest of the invitees are largely Leaders of countries of the global South who chair groupings or organisations, including Cuba, Dominica, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia. An invitation will be extended to the UN Secretary General as well as the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

This XV BRICS Summit will additionally focus on practical ways BRICS can support both the concrete plans of the African Union, for its development and strengthening the voice of the global South in driving global reform.

4. Internal BRICS discussions on membership expansion

In paragraph 73 of the Beijing Declaration of 23 June 2022, BRICS Leaders instructed BRICS Sherpas to begin discussions on the need to clarify the guiding principles, standards, criteria and procedures for this expansion process on the basis of full consultation and consensus.

Since the Summit, there has been a lot of interest in membership of BRICS. South Africa has received formal requests, informal requests and seen similar requests made to other BRICS members in the media.

South Africa, as Chair in 2023, has taken forward internal BRICS discussions on expansion. The ongoing discussions seek to clarify the guiding principles, the standards, criteria and procedures for this expansion process with the aim to find common ground in this regard, on the basis of full consultation and consensus.

The significant interest in joining BRICS is a clear sign that BRICS has remained true to its values of championing the global South, strengthening multilateralism and driving reform as well as boosting global economic growth and stability.

As the first beneficiary of BRICS expansion, South Africa sees the value that new members can contribute to the partnership. All expressions of interest in joining BRICS are responded to with appreciation for the interest in joining an expanded BRICS.

Countries are informed that the ongoing internal discussions will provide clarity on a procedure for submitting a request to join BRICS. South Africa will consider all candidates at that time in line with South Africa's foreign policy, and in line with the outcomes of the internal BRICS discussions on the guiding principles, standards, criteria and procedure for the BRICS expansion process.

In total about 13 countries have formally written to the BRICS leaders requesting membership while several others have informally expressed an interest in membership, according to South Africa's BRICS Sherpa Ambassador Anil Sooklal. South Africa is aware of expressions of interest in joining BRICS from countries in the ASEAN region, including Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand. The other countries which had indicated an interest in joining BRICS include Afghanistan, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Senegal, Turkey, and Venezuela. But it is the sudden surge of interest by other countries in joining BRICS itself that is attracting global attention. It is noted that over the years since South Africa joined BRICS in 2011, only two or three countries had previously expressed an interest in joining.

The South African SHERPA on BRICS indicated that 20 countries had also applied to join the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) in addition to Egypt, UAE and Bangladesh, which joined in 2021. Uruguay has also been accepted but has not yet formally joined. BRICS had whittled down the list of 20 applicants to the NDB to about 12, including some African countries, which were currently being considered by the NDB board of governors. The number of applicants had been reduced to make the accession process more manageable. Also, there had to be a consensus among existing members to accept new members. Hence admission of the new members namely Bangladesh, Egypt, Uruguay and the United Arab Emirates.

In conclusion South Africa wishes to emphasise that it is a sovereign state, that has a clear foreign policy on how it interacts with other countries. South Africa respects other countries and expects reciprocity in all its bilateral relations. I thank you.

BRICS and the opportunities of dialogue and collaboration
Welcome speech by Gian Maria FARA
President of Eurispes, Rome

Dear President, *Ambassador Sessa*,

This important seminar is the result of positive collaboration among the SIOI, EURISPES and the South African Embassy, which holds the presidency of the BRICS international coordination in this year 2023.

On behalf of EURISPES I thank you, President Sessa and your collaborators, I thank Ms *Mmathari Mashao*, Plenipotentiary Minister of the Embassy of South Africa, the diplomatic representatives of the BRICS states who joined the initiative and decided to bring their contribution of reflection and knowledge.

I also take this opportunity to thank publicly the Italian and foreign experts who, since 2015, have been collaborating with the BRICS Laboratory of Eurispes in the analysis and evaluation of the activities of this new international subject, helping us to understand the great opportunities it offers for a better common progress.

We are honored to be here at SIOI, one of the most prestigious and ancient Italian institutes of high education for diplomats and experts in international relations: certainly the best place, by tradition and competence, where to carry out an adequate reflection on the BRICS reality.

In this regard, I want to underline an element that I consider fundamental: we are gathered here with a positive and constructive spirit, that is to understand if and how it is possible to organize forms of collaboration between Italy and the reality of the BRICS.

This is our main goal: to create the conditions for identify and organize possible common collaboration platforms between Italy and the BRICS coordination and try, together, to extend such platforms also at European level. Is it an ambitious goal? Of course: it's an ambitious goal.

But I add that it is a possible and also very useful goal for all because such collaboration' between Italy and BRICS would give an important positive signal at international level, would help to give a better order to the current processes of global development and to multiply the opportunities of common growth.

The reading the official BRICS documents, in all the summits that have taken place in the years since 2011, confirms a fundamental fact: that the BRICS express the clear will to contribute to the reform of the existing global order, to create an order capable of ensure a more balanced widespread development. There is no will to destroy an order, but to reform it for the better.

It is on this basic fact that we would like to promote more intense discussions, dialogue initiatives aimed at a better mutual understanding and the development of agreed positive actions useful for all, in a spirit of frank cooperation. It is a need that we also find expressed in the main international institutions, starting with the UN and the platform shared by all states to achieve the objectives of sustainable development. The same happens in the main informal coordinations, primarily the G20, where the BRICS and Italy participate in the common commitment for a more stable, widespread, valid for all economic development; a commitment that leaves the possibility open to the broadest competition but at the same time also to a growing collaboration.

It deals with common experiences and commitments, marked by this binomial competition-cooperation, that Italy shares with the main countries of the world, including the BRICS states. It is for this reason that our Eurispes institute is committed to spreading a positive political culture that stimulates everyone, public authorities and private operators, to better experience the challenges of our time, strengthening the "bridges" of international collaborations: the hope of building a positive relationship between Italy and the BRICS is part of this general plan.

I therefore renew my most sincere thanks to all those who, on this occasion, have shown a sincere orientation towards working in a constructive spirit.

The Importance of Institutionalism for Assessing the Performance of the BRICS Coalition

by Elisabetta BASILE
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Expert member, Eurispes BRICS Lab

The recent performance of the BRICS appears to be unsatisfactory. The coalition has progressively lost its innovative strength while the available literature does not provide a convincing explanation of the reasons for this outcome. This is due to a failure to both understand the impact on decisions of the diversity among the BRICS economies and to assess the role played by conflicting interests. I argue here that it is possible to overcome this failure by means of an institutionalist analysis. Providing the conceptual categories to explore the impact of institutions on individual and social behaviour, Institutionalism has many advantages. An institutionalist approach allows for the assessment of the determinants of growth and change and helps discovering the roots of socio-economic conflicts and their impact.

Recent socio-economic and political processes have heavily affected BRICS members. The COVID pandemic, the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the Brazilian political elections have induced a major change both on BRICS countries and on inter-BRICS relations. The impact of the pandemic has been very hard on all member countries – specially on India and Brazil – while the strengthening of new regional aggregations has impacted on political alliances (the case of QUAD is particularly significant). Very likely, adaptation to internal and international changes will continue in the coming years, with a variable impact on the coalition and, consequently, also on the relations between member countries.

Adaptation to changes in the existing socio-political environment is strictly interrelated to the interests pursued by individual countries. The diversity of interests has been a feature of the BRICS coalition since its foundation and has constrained its success. In the first decade, the consequences of this diversity have been under control and the coalition has played a significant and innovative role in international relations. Recently, this diversity has turned into a manifest conflict of interest in several economic and political areas. This has led to substantial immobility of the coalition. Therefore, a thorough analysis is required to account for the factors that generate the diversity of interests among member countries and for the reasons leading to immobility in the decision process.

The BRICS coalition includes a *variety* of capitalist economies. Capitalism is the dominant mode of production in all BRICS members: market is the mechanism of allocation, while the economy is based on monetary transactions. Exchange, production, and distribution take place mainly through market; labour market regulates labour transactions; investments are allocated through financial markets; raw materials, semi-finished products, and finished products are traded on commodity markets. The increasing diversification of interests within the coalition, which largely depends on resource endowment, has been progressively increased by socio-economic change. Moreover, while retaining the identifying traits of the capitalist mode of production, the BRICS countries have developed specific organizational forms and social relations that reflect their culture and history. While, on the one hand, resource endowment and culture account for the variety of BRICS economies, on the other hand, they also account for the strengthening of conflicting interests within the coalition.

The variety of BRICS economies and the conflict of interests within the coalition raises major questions about the future: how the variety of interests will influence change and development for the coalition? Will variety prevent further developments? In other words, will member countries be able to overcome the situation finding (again) common aims?

For its focus on the impact of institutions on growth and change, Institutionalism provides suitable categories to explore the variety of capitalisms in the BRICS coalition (as well as in the real world).

Institutions are formal and informal rules that shape individual behaviour and social interaction. They are rooted in history and culture, while the institutional infrastructure produced by the institutions is country-specific. Socio-economic change is rooted in institutions: institutions define power relations that support vested interests. Moreover, institutions are the vehicle for transmitting ideologies that legitimize the pursuit of power.

The focus on institutions allows to explain the variety of capitalism. Institutions are the product of culture and of the relationships that human beings establish with environment and society for survival. Under the influence of institutions, individuals form and adapt their preferences, and their interaction with the external environment modifies the institutional infrastructure of society. This double interaction reveals the *institutional embeddedness of change*.

The concept of institutional embeddedness of change stresses the importance of history and culture for economy and society and accounts for the diversity of institutional structures and development trajectories.

Institutions influence human beings. They might be subjective ideas – in the minds of agents – and objective structures – external to agents. In the first case, they are ideologies that define behavioural patterns by means of social conventions, norms and prescriptions. In the second case, they are formal organizations – such as banks, state agencies, businesses, trade unions, and political parties – that require a set of rules of operation to regulate participation and distribution of tasks within them. Both ideologies and formal institutions are an outcome of culture. Jointly they shape human behaviour and social relations.

We might explore the two-fold impact of institutions and ideologies on individual and social behaviour focusing on religion. Religion is a powerful ideology and, jointly with religion-based institutions, shapes individual and social behaviour worldwide. As a major component of culture, religion sheds light on the variety of capitalism. It is a widespread and growing phenomenon that involves a high and growing share of the world population (up to 80% of world population according to recent estimates). In contrast with the literature on modernization, religious feelings and religion-based social aggregations persist and consolidate in emerging and developing countries.

A major example of the deep influence of religion and religion-based institutions on economy and society is provided by the differences between the two major BRICS countries – China and India – as far as their economic structures and social organizations are concerned. In both countries, culture and religion exert a major influence on individual and social behaviour impacting on development patterns. China's culture is deeply embedded in Confucian values which prescribe the achievement of a *moderately prosperous society*. This aim is pursued by means of a socio-economic system which relies on *democracy* at the bottom, *experimentation* in the middle, and *meritocracy* at the top. By contrast, India's culture is widely embedded in Hindu religion. Accordingly, India's society is crossed by several modes of inequality—caste but also gender – while social stratification supports a development pattern in which capital systematically prevails over labour. This pattern of development deeply relies on *informal labour arrangements*, in which workers are exploited and technical change is confined to few areas and few sectors.

While a wide assessment is required, the comparison of China and India only shows the nature and working of institutional embeddedness of capitalist development, accounting for the variety of capitalism we observe in the two BRICS members, providing at the same time major evidence on the ideological influences on socio-economic structure. This comparison also provides major evidence on the utility of an analytical approach – like Institutionalism – that emphasises the conditioning of institutions and ideologies on socio-economic change.

The BRICS in the Italian press
by Giuseppe DAVICINO,
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Expert member, Eurispes BRICS Lab

As a journalist who has been involved in the activities of the Eurispes BRICS-Lab from the outset, I was asked to express an opinion on how the Italian press treats the BRICS issue. In short, I'm going to try to highlight what I think are the main features.

The acronym BRIC, and then since 2010 with the entry of South Africa, BRICS, was already in use in the economic-financial field, before the establishment of the coordination since, as known, it was coined in 2001 by the English economist *Jim O'Neill*. The five member countries are nations well known and loved, for many different aspects, by the Italian people and therefore it can be said that the establishment of the BRICS coordination has done nothing but increase the interest of the Italian media in these countries. At the same time, however, this has not always seemed to correspond to adequate and specific attention to the BRICS initiative, considered as a whole, to their internal and external cooperation, which are of objective global interest.

The Italian press seems to show constant attention and at the same time seems a little taken by surprise by the BRICS initiative.

In the past decade there has been much discussion about the transitory or structural nature of the BRICS. The tone of various comments was that of citing arguments which argued in favor of a fragility of this agreement, which suggested a slowdown in the growth cycle of the five BRICS economies, which highlighted elements of diversity among these countries not as a force but as a factor of possible differences.

The BRICS Laboratory of Eurispes, for its part, has always bet on the non-transitory nature of cooperation between the BRICS countries. A concept that Prof. *Marco Ricceri* reiterated, at the international conference on "*The growth of Asia*" last February 2023, (Sorbonne University and Le Havre, France), in the following terms: "*It is a fact that – contrary to some negative assessments that have emerged in recent times on the resilience and effectiveness of the coordination – the process of internal cooperation of the BRICS has consolidated in recent years, considerably widening the area of interventions and progressively assuming a well-oriented and structured set-up*".

The BRICS initiative has gone ahead in recent years despite everything, and despite the arrival of two major emergencies such as the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Paradoxically, these difficulties seem to have accelerated the changes taking place in the world rather than hindering them.

Currently, the Italian press talks about the BRICS especially in relation to economic (financial, monetary, commercial) and energy issues (especially in relation to Africa and the Italian project called "*Piano Mattei*"), and in relation to the membership applications of new countries to the BRICS coordination. And to a lesser extent, the role of the BRICS, as a group, in helping to define a more balanced and shared model of development and global governance than the current one. Newspapers and TV dedicate space to updated dossiers on what the BRICS are and what they do. Even the newspaper of the Holy See, the "*Osservatore Romano*", on 5 May 2023 included an extensive article on the upcoming BRICS summit in South Africa, in a dossier on "*the economy of the future*".

An aspect closely followed by the Italian press is that of the enlargement of the BRICS to new countries. This is due both to the objective importance of this process on a global level, and because three of these applications for membership come from Mediterranean countries, African countries close to Italy, such as Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia.

In the comments, the idea is slowly advancing that global economic processes must be managed with everyone's contribution and that this will bring benefits to all humanity. This is the recognition of the universal value of the open, inclusive, and win-win spirit which is the foundation of relations between the BRICS countries.

Recently (9 May, 2023) in the most important Italian newspaper, "*Il Corriere della Sera*", the deputy director *Federico Fubini* spoke of "*overestimation by us Westerners of our ability to control trade and other strategic aspects of the global economy*". Precisely in view of relations based on collaboration and justice, in particular with Africa, the Italian press has returned to talk a lot about *Enrico Mattei*, the founder of the ENI group (Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi), who already in the 1950s had understood the need for a better and more participatory model of development. The newspapers highlight how the current "*Mattei Plan*" to intensify relations between Italy and some African countries intends to continue along that line, seeking collaboration with the various development projects present in those countries. And there is also talk of how the BRICS can intercept and consolidate around their initiative the demands of the "*Global South*", a large range of developing countries, especially African ones.

In the economic pages of Italian newspapers and in economic and financial newspapers such as "*Il Sole 24 Ore*"

there is talk about BRICS especially with regard to those projects that can create a new monetary system. As a common currency for bilateral exchanges, between BRICS countries and with states outside the coordination; agreements for the use of national currencies in bilateral trade, which favors de-dollarization. The news of the appointment of the new president of the BRICS bank, the New Development Bank-NDB, also had a good impact, both for the importance of the financial institution and for the candidate, the former president of Brazil, *Dilma Rousseff*.

Italian newspapers talk about the BRICS countries also as a tourist destination and as a pool of potential new tourists to Italy.

For example, the newspaper "*Il Fatto Quotidiano*" also analyzed the phenomenon of new Italian emigration for the purpose of employment, to the BRICS countries. In particular, a different trend from that towards the Americas emerges in the new Italian immigration to South Africa. There is no tendency to recreate *Little Italies*, communities between emigrants, but rather to integrate with the local social fabric and with expats of other nationalities.

Last but not least, the Italian press is talking a lot about the issue of Italian participation in the "*Belt and Road Initiative*". There are different opinions on this issue. It seems reasonable to expect that in the end Italian politics and institutions will make the best synthesis in the country's interest, in line with their alliances and consolidating their international relations.

In conclusion, in fact, Italian society, companies, the world of culture and research, and the Italian political institutions themselves think and operate in a multilateral logic, appropriate to the characteristics of today's world. The media are trying to keep up with these changes, to tell and interpret them in a very timely way.

For this reason, perhaps, it can be adapted to our press, to describe how it follows and comments on the growing role of the BRICS, the quote recently used by two of the most influential women in Italian politics, *Elly Schlein* and *Giorgia Meloni*, commenting of their political successes, respectively at the head of the main opposition party, and at the head of the Italian government: "*they didn't see us coming*". In a certain way, as in the parable of American feminism of the 90s, narrated by *Lisa Levenstein* in her essay of the same name (*They didn't see us coming*), the growing role of the BRICS also needs to be followed, covered journalistically, to avoid the risk that one could say of the media about the BRICS that one did not see them arrive.

The role of the BRICS in urbanization processes: an open challenge

By Paolo MOTTA

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The deep changes resulting from the globalization, the Covid-19 pandemic and above all from the accelerated use of new technologies in all fields, are putting in discussion the principles that have guided urban development for centuries. Since the end of the 20th century urbanization has been growing without any real opposition and the dogma that human beings will be mostly urbanized has become inevitable, and accepted by all international agencies such as UN-HABITAT whose forecasts a decade ago, indicated an urbanized population rate of 70% in 2050: recent estimates show a rate already arrived at 85%.

But global population, according to most forecasts, is destined to stabilize after 2050, so it is perhaps possible to start mitigating the urbanization flows of the last decades motivated by the inevitable need for proximity to residence, work and services. In fact, the new technologies and changes in the global economic structure allow, or even oblige, the search for alternative and more balanced models of urban settlement on the territories. Furthermore, the forecasts relating to the agricultural use of the territories for the production of food indicate that the greater productivity of the production processes makes it possible to reduce such use of the territories: this represents a further factor which allows a correct planning for the overall land-use.

The SDGs, tasks and guidelines expressed by the *UN-Habitat* and the *New Urban* with reference to the 2030 Agenda go in this direction, and have been approved and shared by all the UN member countries with the aim of a sustainable and balanced global development.

However, in recent years, a contradictory picture has emerged. Under the banner of sustainability, proposals for smart cities, compact cities, etc. have been promoted. which underlined highly positive elements such as: reduced mobility, less land occupation, concentrated energy networks and so on. However these proposals have underestimated the negative urban concentration impacts as; pollution, healthy islands, use of water and non renewable energy resources, flows of commuter traffic, marginal neighborhood, slums etc...

Despite a greater awareness and attention to the impacts from excessive urbanization expressed in the documents of the major international institutions, in last years there has been a proliferation of initiatives and projects for new *megacities* rising from nothing, especially in those emerging countries of Asia and Africa, where the urban problems are more serious. Such initiatives are promoted carried out by public bodies, private companies; some are already in the development phase, designed by the most famous star architects, believing that it is possible to modify the concept and progressive constitutive process of the cities. All projects promoted with the excuse of having the objective of more livable and environmentally friendly urban agglomerations; instead are mostly driven by the sole economic and profit issues. Among them a significant example is the NEOM initiative that regards several projects and, being part of the *Saudi Vision 2030* program, has therefore guaranteed the huge necessary financial resources; many others are implemented with public resources. All in total contradiction with the Agenda 2030 principles.

The BRICS have always recognized, both in their *Long Term Strategy Document* of 2015 and in the subsequent declarations of the various summits, the relevant role of the urbanization processes in achieving a general sustainable development, through adequate urban and territorial planning. The overall goal is to reduce the imbalances between urban and rural areas, in order to mitigate the growing migration flows towards the metropolises and big cities. Urban development issues have been among the main topics BRICS countries have addressed, for the first time urbanization was brought to the attention of BRICS countries at the *4th BRICS Summit 2012 -New Delhi*; on this occasion it was also agreed that the sub-theme of sustainable urbanization should be included in the BRICS agenda. The subsequent *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development* in Rio de Janeiro 2012, provided a solid foundation for the focus areas, as the resolutions of the Conference on "*Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements*". At the beginning specific urban forums were implemented, starting from the first *Urban Forum held in Delhi in 2012*, and had wide resonance and visibility with specific declarations on urban development and urban-rural relations, as in the *2nd Urban Forum 2013 in South Africa* and on the urban transition in the BRICS in the *3rd Forum 2016 in India*.

But, after this initial intense activity, in recent years the attention has been decreasing. In fact, reading the events and meetings held every year and the following declarations of the yearly BRICS Summits, emerges that the urban development theme is reported with just some generic sentences among the last points. In fact, despite the many declarations and recommendations, to date the interest on urban development progressively decreased and is not taken

in the necessary attention, just limited to some aspects related to smart cities, mobility, etc. Point-by-point mentions of subsequent annual declarations, such as the *Johannesburg declaration of 2018* have faded and fallen down the interest rankings.

It is to underline that all the BRICS countries have signed the 2030 Agenda and are committed to reach the SDGs but have applied them in different ways and times through individual national sustainability plans, as addressed in their VNR documents; national plans which have not applied a common scheme, being elaborated with different methods, each reporting their own priorities on some sectors and objectives, missing any coordination among them as could have been expected from their initial commitments.

To confirm a reduced interest in urban/rural issues by the BRICS we can recall that few among the 96 projects financed so far starting from 2016 by the *New Development Bank – NDB* regard these issues. Most of the projects financed concern infrastructural interventions in the sectors of roads, energy, water and communication networks. More recently, following the pandemic, some more attention has been noted and a dozen projects relate to interventions on the urban sector, eco sustainability and territorial rebalancing, two of which concern the tourism sector. All the financed projects are located in the BRICS member countries, despite the fact that in the constitutive declarations of the NDB mission, it could also operate in other emerging countries: it is therefore probable that such initiatives will be financed in the future. In the other 13 or more countries that have applied for membership to the BRICS PLUS, in the near future, also the NDB would also assume a much more relevant role in facilitating urban/rural territorial development projects.

The rural exodus and urbanization processes continue and cities becoming hubs of concentration of people, buildings, vehicles, goods, gadgets, but also slums, traffic, waste, pollution. The urban growth of rising number of metropolises, mostly Asian and African, show a similar trend: more people, more buildings, more cars, more commercial center, more energy and land consumption. This actual urban settlement model endangers the future sustainability, because it would need more and more natural resources. Is time for a new urban development approach.. The ongoing challenges are involving heavily the emerging economies as those of the envisaged BRICS Plus, so is from them that can easier surge a new approach for a sustainable urban development model.

Therefore is now the opportunity for BRICS to promote a review of the urban settlement model that, in addition to the impacts due to pandemic, faces rising economic and social problems at global level due to the ongoing war, the energy and alimentary shortages, the rising production and logistics bottlenecks and o related factors. Actually are ongoing strategic connectivity corridors, that are interesting every BRICS member and surrounding countries; the infrastructures can become the backbone of a integrated network of mobility, communication, energy, logistics, data flows. It deals with the so-called " *smart corridors*" that can upgrade a sustainable development of wide rural areas and territories, keeping or attracting settled population. BRICS countries can be the drivers of such a new vision and develop programs for urban/rural development of "smart territories" with an holistic and integrated approach, that takes in account not only technologies, but also the social and environmental aspects for restore the global equilibrium between mankind and nature, the urban areas and rural environment.

Note

Brics: the use of local currencies and the new "basket of currencies"**By Paolo Raimondi****Economist, columnist for the newspaper "ItaliaOggi"****Expert member, Eurispes BRICS Lab****Introduction**

For years, the BRICS countries (the five largest countries of emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) have been experimenting the use of their national currencies in trade and agreements within the group and also with other emerging countries. A process of progressive de-dollarization of their trade and economies is underway.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that BRICS coordination came into being in connection with and as a response to the Great Global Crisis of 2008, caused by the collapse of the U.S. and international banking and financial system. The effects were devastating with respect to the production of goods and world trade. The hardest hit were precisely the poor and developing countries. That is, those who did not bear the responsibility for economic and monetary mismanagement and financial speculation, but who paid hard for the consequences.

1. Multilateralism and the challenge of a new international financial order

Multilateralism is today the only means of peacefully addressing and resolving the many global challenges, political, economic, monetary, and even those concerning security. It is a concept recognized in Europe as well. Among others, *François Villeroy de Galhau*, the governor of the Banque de France argued this during the May 2022 Emerging Market Forum in Paris in a speech on "*Multipolarity and the role of the euro in the International Financial System*."

He stated that "*while Bretton Woods disappeared when the convertibility of the dollar into gold failed, the international monetary system remained based on the U.S. dollar. The idea of a global currency has not thrived in academic debates, much less in policy discussions.*" Even as early as the 1960s, *Henry Fowler*, the Treasury secretary under President Lyndon Johnson, warned that "*providing reserves and trade to the whole world is too much for one country and one currency to bear.*"

The idea of change had been taken up in 2010 by *Michel Camdessus*, longtime managing director of the IMF, who had launched an initiative to highlight the shortcomings of the international financial system, particularly its global governance and over-reliance on a single currency.

The point made by the French governor is clear. It must be acknowledged that a fragmented financial system poses a serious danger. We must avoid moving from a dollar-dominated system to a conflictual non-system between the dollar world and, for example, the Chinese renminbi world. This would generate instability, with the risk of competitive currency devaluations. It could lead to the development of separate payment systems with limited interoperability and weaken the global financial safety net.

In particular, *Villeroy de Galhau* noted that to avoid the mistakes of the past, we would need a collective momentum toward a stable, market-oriented multipolar financial system.

The use of local currencies, therefore, should be seen as an objective, self-defense issue, not an ideological one. The Bretton Woods system, as it was conceived in 1944, played a positive role in postwar reconstruction and global economic revival, but for decades the world has changed and new players have entered the economic and political scene.

There have been some important steps in the activities of the BRICS coordination that have promoted and facilitated the use of various local currencies since its inception.

2. BRICS and the use of local currencies

Ufa Summit, 2015. During the 2015 Seventh Summit in Ufa, Russia, it was announced that the BRICS *New Development Bank (NDB)* (with \$100 billion in capital) and the *Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)*, which is a \$100 billion reserve fund against possible monetary and balance of payments destabilization in member states, would come into effect. The NDB pledged to cooperate with other financial institutions with the same mission, particularly with the *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (Aiib)* promoted by China, which also has positive European participation. Aiib, with India as its second shareholder, involves more than 90 countries and is in fact the financial

institution that disburses credits, particularly denominated in renminbi, for investment and development projects envisaged in the *Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)*, the so-called "New Silk Road."

"*The strategy for Brics economic partnership*" in Ufa included advancement in cooperation in all key areas of economy and society, especially in South-South relations. The NDB was also committed to promoting major infrastructure and sustainable development projects in other emerging and developing countries. On the monetary and financial front, the development banks of the individual BRICS countries were giving rise to a "*Financial Forum*," to establish new agreements concerning the payments system and an "*interbank cooperation mechanism*," which included the use of swap lines, i.e., liquidity transfers to also cope with "*the negative impact of monetary policies carried out by countries that issue currencies also held in reserve*". That is, the U.S. and the EU, then the dollar and the euro. The stated intent was the use of national currencies in commercial transactions, up to 50 percent of the total.

Johannesburg Summit, 2018. During the tenth summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2018, the BRICS countries had pointedly identified major challenges in "*growing trade conflicts, geopolitical risks, volatile commodity prices, high private and public debt, and uneven and insufficiently inclusive growth*". An important step was the entry into force of the *Local Currency Bond Fund*, the fund to issue bonds in the local currencies of BRICS, aimed at promoting investment in infrastructure and modernization of their economies and also those of other emerging countries.

Brasilia Summit, 2019. The 11th Brasilia Summit in 2019, had put the New Development Bank (NDB) at the center of the work. In Brazil, it funded the construction of logistics hubs to improve physical connectivity with remote areas. During the summit, funding had been signed for the "*North Region Transportation Infrastructure Improvement Project*" to improve the capacity to transport raw materials from mines to Brazilian ports. In Russia, in addition to infrastructure, projects were funded for accessibility to the country's historical and cultural centers. In India, investments were in water management and rural-market linkages. China used bank financing for environmental improvements, while South Africa focused on energy and water projects.

NDB management confirmed its central commitment to lending in local currencies, such that 40 percent of its portfolio in South Africa is in rand. Demand for renminbi loans for Chinese projects had also grown significantly. The bank's organizational expansion also continued. After offices in Johannesburg, Shanghai, and São Paulo, offices in Moscow and New Delhi would be opened. The inclusion of additional partners from emerging countries was announced to reach a capital base of \$90 billion by 2027. The major lending institution announced plans to develop innovative, non-speculative, capital- and investment-backed financial instruments. For example, with the support of China's central bank, NDB had already raised 6 billion renminbi through the issuance of bonds in the Shanghai market.

Pechino Summit, 2022. At the 14th summit, held in Beijing in late June 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that member countries were preparing to create an international reserve currency. Speaking from remote at the *BRICS Business Forum*, he said, "*The Russian financial messaging system is open for connection with banks, thus projecting the need for a Brics reserve currency. The Russian Mir payment system is expanding its presence. We are exploring the possibility of creating an international reserve currency based on the BRICS basket of currencies*".

After the sanctions imposed by the West against Russia following the war in Ukraine, it was an expected move. Among other sanctions measures, Russian banks were excluded from the *Swift system* of international payments. There are, however, other bilateral or multilateral global settlement systems for cross-border financial services, such as the Chinese *Cips system*. By 2021, Cips had processed about 80 trillion renminbi (\$11.91 trillion), an increase of more than 75 percent year-on-year. According to Swift data, as of April 2022, the renminbi maintained its position as the fifth most active currency for global payments, with a 2.14 percent share of the total.

In Beijing's final declaration more emphasis was placed on the importance of the *Payments Task Force*, the platform for cooperation in payments among central banks; the implementation of the *Trade in Services Network*, the use of innovative financial instruments in trade; and the strengthening of the mechanism known as the *Contingent Reserve Arrangement*, i.e., the *BRICS Global Financial and Monetary Security Network*. These are all initiatives aimed at improving the use of local currencies and indicate a willingness to move toward the creation of a system based on an alternative "basket of currencies."

3. China and the renminbi

China is clearly at the forefront of using its currency, the renminbi, in its international trade and investment. The most resounding agreement was the one signed in 2018 in renminbi and rubles for the supply of Russian gas to China for the equivalent of about \$400 billion. It should be kept in mind that it imports \$250 billion worth of oil and another \$150 billion worth of commodities such as steel, copper, coal, and soybeans from the rest of the world every year. All

these commodities are today valued and traded internationally in dollars. Therefore, China also has to pay for them in U.S. currency. The use of the renminbi, therefore, has become a strategic priority for Beijing.

China and Saudi Arabia, for example, in addition to oil agreements, recently signed a memorandum to coordinate the economic initiatives of the *Belt and Road Initiative* with the Saudi "Vision 2030" program of industrial and manufacturing development. The agreements include cooperation in space, nuclear, missile, new energy such as hydrogen, and major infrastructure including the construction of "Neom," a \$500 billion super modern city. Among the contracts signed is one with Huawei, the telecommunications giant, which, despite U.S. opposition, already has 5G network agreements with almost all Gulf countries. The prospect, of course, is to bring BRI with all its infrastructure, technology and industrial projects to these regions and the Mediterranean. It is, therefore, natural that China has proposed to use the renminbi in payments for energy supplies and more generally for trade.

Another example is Egypt, which applied to join the BRICS coordination in 2022, and is reportedly considering issuing renminbi-denominated bonds for the Chinese market.

Beijing has already signed currency swaps agreements with more than 30 countries, including Japan and Russia, allowing the renminbi to be used for certain trades. Many cooperation projects between Brazil and China are already financed and settled in the Chinese currency and in the real. In 2019, Russia and China signed an agreement to use ruble and renminbi financial instruments to cover 50 percent of all their bilateral trade in the coming years. The very implementation of the *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI) and the financing role of the *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank* will serve to internationalize the renminbi. Many infrastructure projects with the Asian countries involved are already contracted in the Chinese currency.

More surprising is the renminbi deal between China's oil company, *China National Offshore Oil Company*, with France's *Total Energies* on 65,000 tons of liquefied natural gas imported from the United Arab Emirates. The deal is being handled through the *Shanghai Petroleum and Natural Gas Exchange*, the exchange also created to facilitate renminbi payments.

4. India and the rupee

Also India has been preparing its currency, the rupee, to play an important role in international markets for quite some time. According to Indian policy experts, "*sanctions have created a new world of countries seeking to trade using their own currencies instead of the U.S. dollar.*"

They also claim that sanctions have harmed third countries, such as India, which are only responsible for having trade relations with those who, for a variety of reasons, have been subject to sanctions. For example, Venezuela and Iran are rich in oil and have been India's main suppliers in the past. Trade was effectively stopped because of U.S. sanctions. Myanmar has also been subjected to several sanctions, tightened after the recent coup. Indian trade has also paid the price.

India argues that the Western sanctions policy will remain for a long time and that other countries may be targeted in the future. This fear is prompting it to prepare alternative payment systems. The goal is to create parallel systems that can enable trade, rather than "replace" the dollar.

The Indian reflection starts with energy. It states that the global energy scenario has changed over the past two decades. After the growing role of the Chinese renminbi, which has emerged as an alternative to the dollar, New Delhi wonders whether the rupee can be a third player with a petro-rupee.

As is well known, India is the world's third largest consumer and second largest importer of energy. Indians complain that world oil and gas trade is conducted almost entirely in dollars on Western exchanges and with prices that do not represent real demand. India argues that the 2008 crisis challenged the dollar's role as the single global currency and that its instability would double U.S. debt, prompting Washington to retreat from globalization processes. It is noted that unilateral and geopolitically motivated sanctions would have aroused strong resentments toward U.S. power.

Hence the move to internationalize the rupee through the creation of a hub for a new international oil and gas market, possibly linked to the Mumbai exchanges. In this way, the Indian government could bring its influence to bear on energy price formation.

The *Reserve Bank of India* has already authorized some Indian banks to operate in rupees in 60 commercial contracts involving 18 states, including Britain and Germany. Today, *India's United Payment Interface*, a real-time payment system developed by the *National Payments Corporation* to facilitate interbank transactions and regulated by the *Reserve Bank of India*, allows account holders to make rupee payments in several countries - Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Mauritius, Nepal and Bhutan. India actively encourages bilateral trade with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka using the rupee. The state-owned bank, *UCI Bank*, which has facilitated trade with Iran in the past, plans to expand its activities in the entire Asian region.

5. Use of local currencies grows

Many other countries and regional organizations are following the example of BRICS, as evidenced by the summit of heads of state of the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)* countries held on September 16, 2022 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. SCO was created in 2001 with the aim of coordinating the activities of member countries in counterterrorism, security and especially economic, technological and infrastructure cooperation. Today it has nine members, including China, India and Russia. Together they account for 40 percent of the population and 25 percent of the world's GDP.

SCO stated that *"the world is going through global changes. These processes are accompanied by increased multipolarity. The current system of international challenges and threats is becoming more complex, the situation in the world has deteriorated dangerously, local conflicts and crises are intensifying, and new ones are emerging."* About the economy, he said that *"the growing technological and digital divide, continued turbulence in global financial markets, reduced investment flows, instability in supply chains, increased protectionist measures and other obstacles to international trade add to the volatility and uncertainty in the global economy."*

The Final Declaration claimed that SCO members, with the exception of India, *"reaffirm support for China's Bri initiative and recognize the ongoing work to implement the project and efforts to link the construction of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) with Bri."* The idea is to establish an expanded Eurasian Partnership involving, in addition to the SCO, the UEEA, ASEAN countries, other interested states and multilateral associations. It also refers to the importance of the use of national currencies in trade and monetary regulations already practiced by some member states.

This orientation brings the SCO closer to the policies of BRICS coordination. In fact, the Declaration reports the intention to create a SCO Development Bank, a Business Council, a Development Fund within a Framework Agreement for Cooperation in Trade and Services, a Program for Infrastructure Development in Transport and Energy, and an Action Plan for the Development of Trade among Member States. All of these initiatives have already been tried and tested by the BRICS.

Finance ministers and central bank governors of ASEAN, the association involving ten Southeast Asian nations, meeting April 1, 2023, in Bali, Indonesia, also proposed using local currencies in their trade and reducing dependence on major international currencies. Indonesia's President *Joko Widodo* argued for the need to protect against *"possible geopolitical repercussions."* Most recently, Malaysia's Prime Minister *Anwar Ibrahim*, after his recent visit to China, is advancing the creation of an Asian Monetary Fund to reduce dependence on the dollar and increase the use of domestic currencies in trade.

The *African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)*, the English acronym) created in Kigali, Rwanda, in 2018 and made operational at the Niamey, Niger, conference in 2019, involving all African countries, also created the *Pan-African Payments and Settlements System (PAPSS)*, which allows companies operating in Africa to pay their invoices in local currencies.

Finally, of great importance was the separate session of the *"BRICS Plus"* group at the last Beijing 2022 summit, which included Algeria, Argentina, Cambodia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Malaysia, Thailand and Uzbekistan representing emerging and developing countries. Some of these countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Algeria and Argentina have already applied to formally join Brics. Another dozen countries would be interested in joining.

As for the *New Development Bank (NDB)* in 2021 there was membership from the United Arab Emirates, Bangladesh and Uruguay. Egypt is expected to be the next partner. After the use of local currencies, the BRICS coordination is studying the project of creating a *"basket of currencies,"* initially involving the currencies of member countries. This is not an easy process but neither is it technically impossible. The most significant difficulties to overcome internally are political, and geopolitical at a global level.

It is my opinion that the next feasible and necessary step should be the creation of a new *"currency of account"* to facilitate trade, payments and monetary settlements among the BRICS and also with other countries. This would be the major step forward, going beyond the use of individual local currencies. The experience of the Ecu in Europe, before the issuance of the euro, remains the most useful and valid model.

6. European Union and BRICS

This objective and in the future inevitable process mainly calls into play the European Union and its member states, primarily Italy. Europe continues to underestimate the economic and political role of BRICS coordination, to ignore it as a potential coordinated system and instead consider the member countries only individually. Thinking of

it as a group of countries with an uncertain and precarious future reflects a short-sighted and unrealistic view. BRICS, on the other hand, accounts for 18 percent of merchandise trade and 25 percent of foreign investment globally. Despite the impact of the pandemic, the total volume of goods trade of BRICS coordinating countries reached nearly \$8.5 trillion in 2021, an increase of 33.4 percent year-on-year.

An autonomous and independent role for Europe and the euro, politically, economically and monetarily, could also actively engage the United States and the dollar and provide the impetus needed to concretely formulate the much-needed global monetary reform with the creation of an "international basket of currencies."

To move to a more resilient global system, the euro should play a greater international role. It is a currency that relies on more than 20 years of stability, as French Governor *François Villeroy de Galhau* mentioned. After the dollar, it has become the second most widely used currency globally and accounts for as much as 20 percent of currency holdings in central banks and about 20 percent of global debt and lending. According to Swift data, nearly 40 percent of transactions are conducted in euros.

Conclusion: the BRICS Presidency of South Africa and the opportunity for the African Continent

In this context, 2023 could be a very important year to help find new global balances. South Africa's presidency could make BRICS coordination play an even more positive role if it can bring the world's attention to the development of the entire African continent. Particularly if South Africa, together with the African Union (AU) organization, helped the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, the AfCFTA, to be fully realized. Africa is the youngest continent, it is the continent of the future, whose development and strategic role could overcome the old obsessions of geopolitics.

NOTE

Outlook on Africa's latest developments and trendsby **Prof. FABRIZIO ZUCCA****Permanent member, EURISPES - Scientific Committee****CERTeT – Bocconi University, Milan (Italy)****Accademic Fellow, Bocconi Business School****President, Strategia&Sviluppo Consultants**

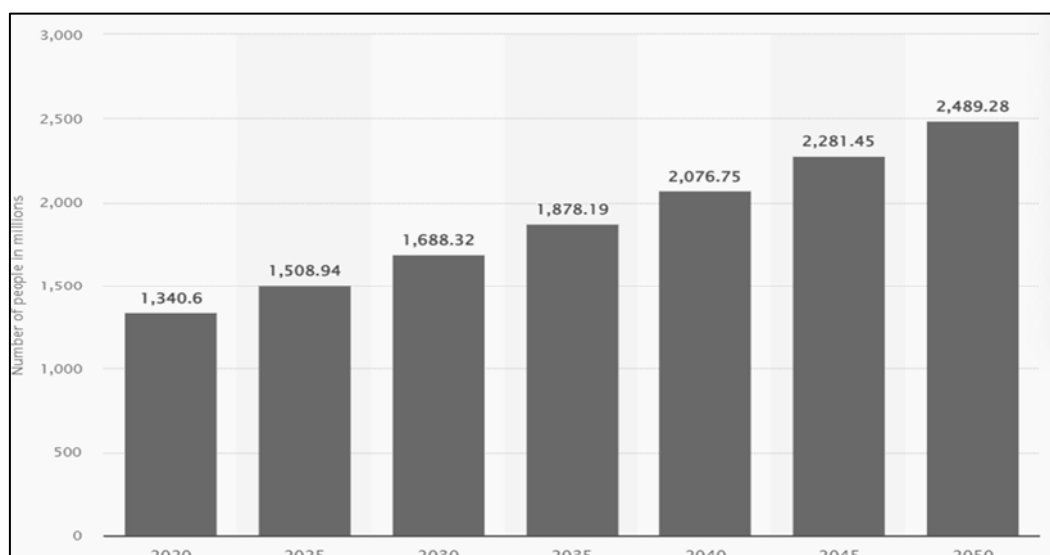
Contribution to the Seminar on the South African BRICS Chairmanship 2023
Promoted by the Embassy of South Africa in Roma, SIOI, Eurispes BRICS-LAB

Outlook on Africa's latest developments and trends

Generally, in the analyses of Africa's realities two opposing dogmatic approaches prevail: chronic Afro-pessimism and complacent Afro-optimism. There is a certain tendency to understand Africa as a uniform, homogenous whole, with similar economic and socio-political dynamics, sometimes to the point of considering it as a country and not a continent. There is also this catastrophic vision of Africa as it is just hunger, war, and death. The continent has been stereotyped in the negative light by some of the tragic images and occurrences. It is necessary to move away from these paradigms towards Afro-realism which consists in explaining those realities and all the opportunities Africa must make the most of.

Africa's demographic trends

Africa is the world's youngest continent with most rapidly growing population and a net contributor to the world's population as the other continents are slowing down or shrinking in terms of population. In fact, the world is becoming more African and rapidly. Projections show that by 2050 Africa's population will almost double. Africa's current population is 1.4 billion people (257 million people in North Africa and 1.2 billion people in Sub-Saharan Africa) while it is expected to grow up to 2.5 billion people by 2050. By 2100, one in three people on Earth will be African.

Forecast of the total population of Africa from 2020 to 2050 (in millions)

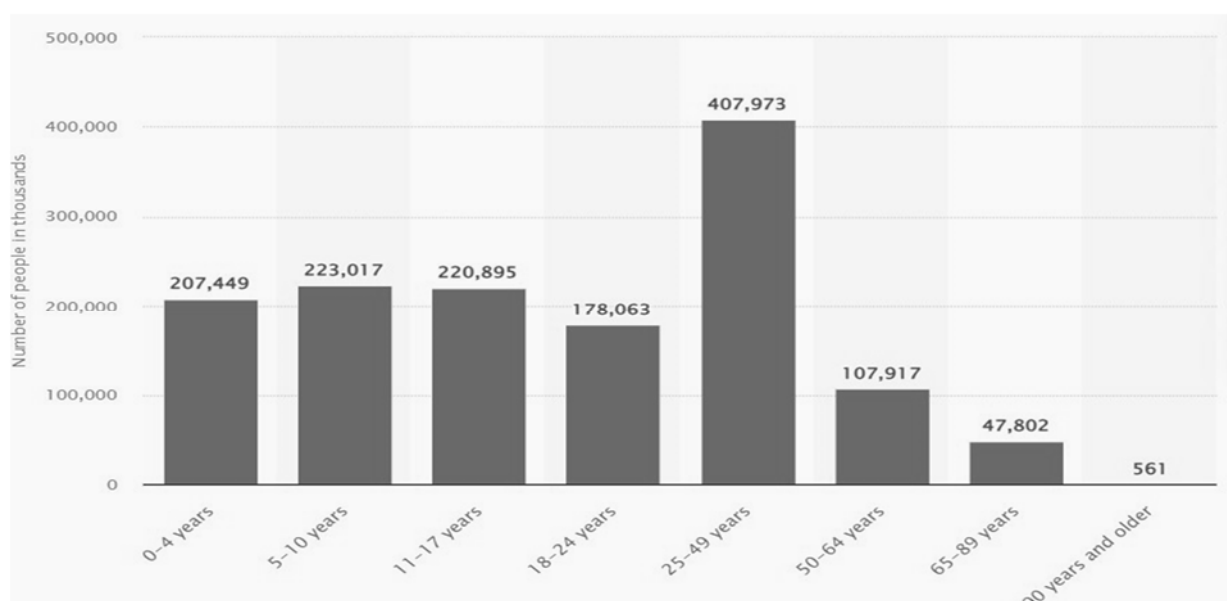
UN population projections for Africa's largest and fastest growing countries in millions

	2015	2050	2100
AFRICA	1194	2528	4468
SUB-SAHARANAFRICA	969	2168	4002

LARGEST COUNTRIES			
Nigeria	181	411	794
Ethiopia	100	191	250
Egypt	94	153	199
Dem.R.Congo	76	197	379
SouthAfrica	55	73	76
Tanzania	54	138	304
Kenya	47	95	142
Uganda	40	106	214
Algeria	40	57	63
Sudan	39	80	139
FASTEST GROWING COUNTRIES (Not Already Shown Above)			
Niger	20	68	192
Angola	28	76	173
Somalia	14	36	79
Zambia	16	41	94
Burundi	10	26	54
Mali	17	44	83
Mozambique	28	68	135
BurkinaFaso	18	43	82
Malawi	18	42	76

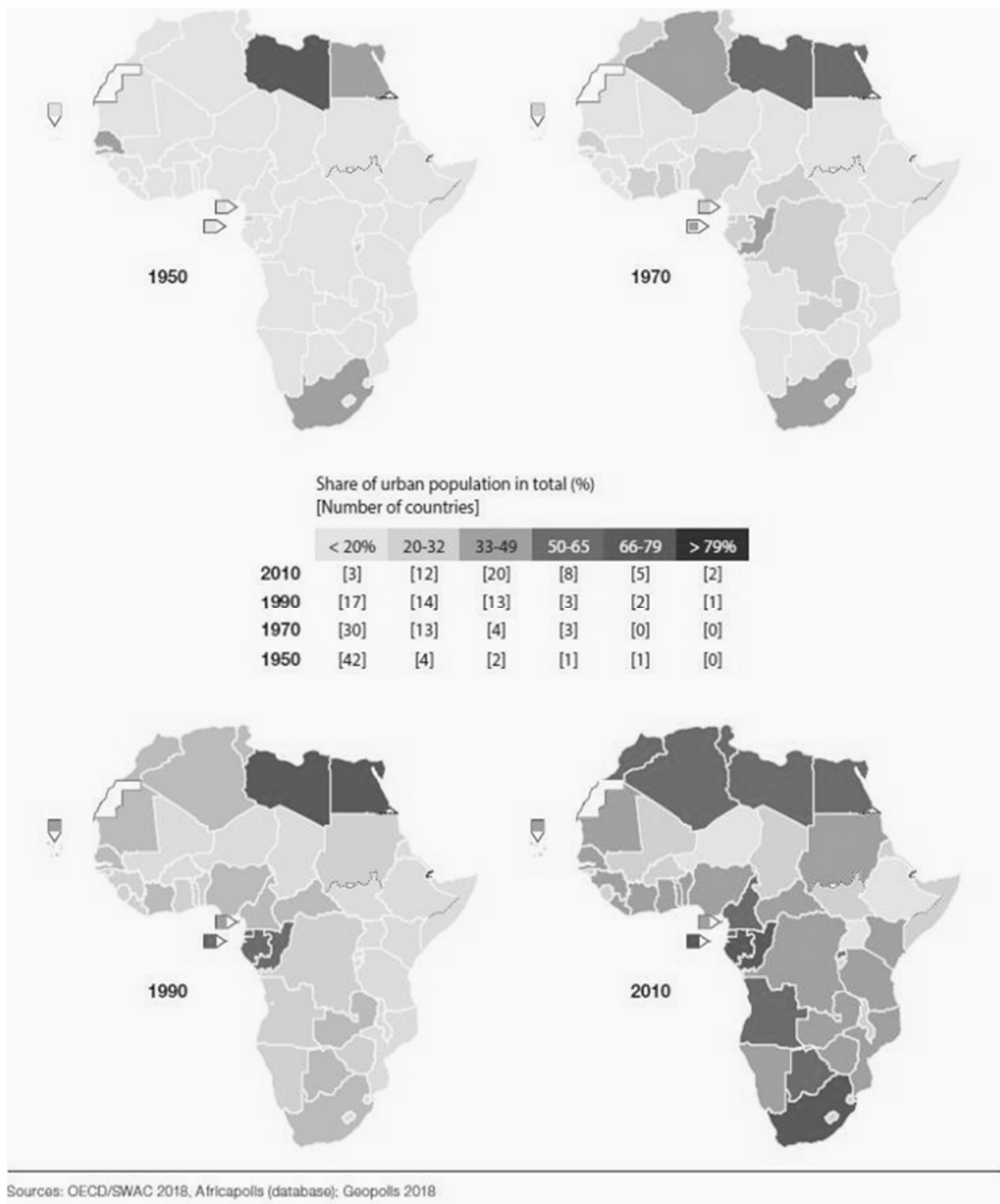
In most African countries, 70% or more of the population is under the age of 30. This means that, by the end of the century, sub-Saharan Africa will be home to almost half of the young people in the world. To give an example, in 2021, there were around 207 million children aged 0-4 years in Africa. In total, the population aged 17 years and younger amounted to approximately 650 million. In contrast, only approximately 48 million individuals were aged 65 years and older as of the same year.

Population of Africa in 2021, by age group (in 1,000s)



In addition to being the youngest continent of the world, Africa is also the most rapidly urbanizing part of the world. In fact, Africa is projected to have the fastest urban growth rate in the world: by 2050, Africa's cities will be home to an additional 950 million people welcoming two-thirds of Africa's population.

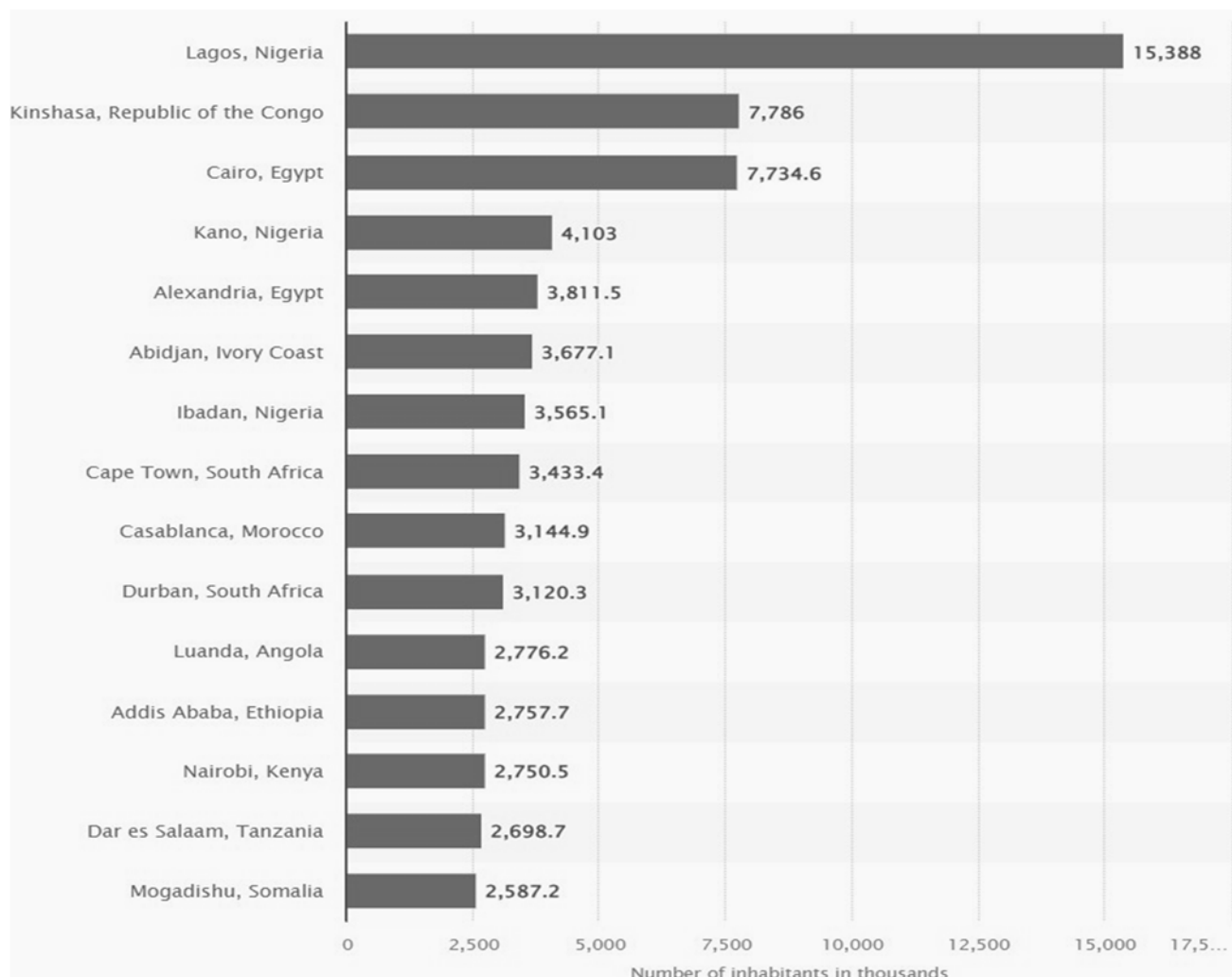
The evolution of urbanization in Africa, 1950-2010



Urbanization is one of the most profound transformations that the African continent will undergo in the 21st century. Since 1990, the number of cities in Africa has doubled — from 3 300 to 7 600 — and their cumulative population has increased by 500 million people. Urbanization presents immense economic, social, and political opportunities for Africa's cities, but it also entails very important challenges. Such an urban expansion will not only demand planning, managing and financing of infrastructure and public services, but it will also require strategies promoting employment, stimulating green technology up take and digitalization, and ensuring climate neutrality and sustainability.

Rapid urbanization has also fueled the rise of megacities. Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and its largest economy. Based on current growth rates, Nigeria's largest city, Lagos, could even emerge as the world's top megacity by the end of the century. Across the rest of Africa, there are gigantic cities that are growing very quickly, organically, and a lot of the trade is increasingly within Africa.

Largest cities in Africa as of 2022, by number of inhabitants (in 1,000s)

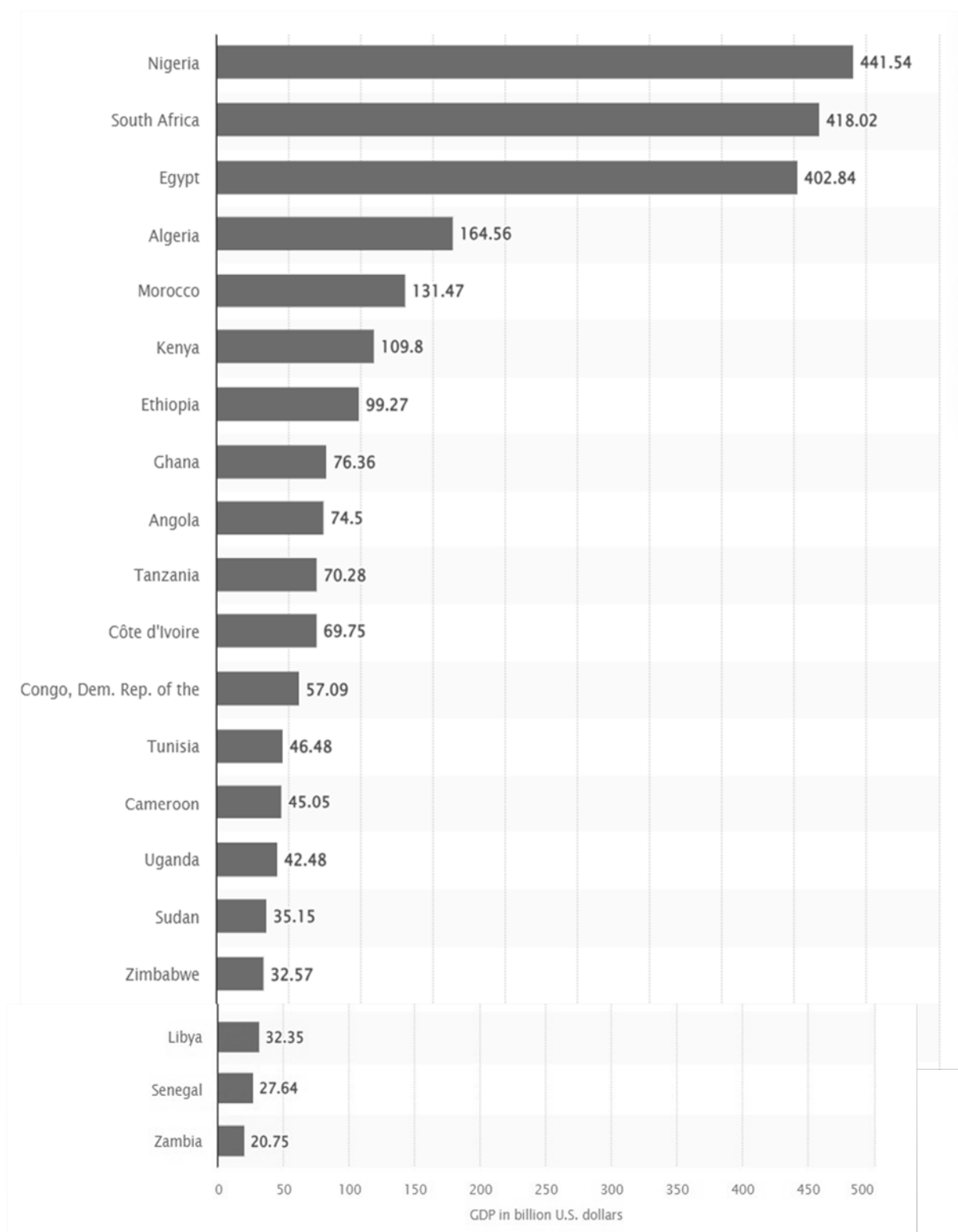


Africa's rapid urbanization process is changing the urban geography of the continent. While urbanization rates were low, African cities were located far from each other and served primarily as administration centers and gateways for resource exports to global markets. As the number of cities in Africa grows, cities are increasingly located close to each other. This has led to the development of clusters of cities.

In 2015, Africa had 31 city clusters with more than 2.5 million urban residents within 100 kilometers of each other, and six city clusters with more than 10 million urban residents within 250 kilometers. City clusters provide new opportunities for economic development like creation of an economic ecosystem of customers, suppliers, investors, and innovators that is much larger than that of any individual city. This particularly benefits small and intermediary cities that do not have the economic mass to attract major private investments.

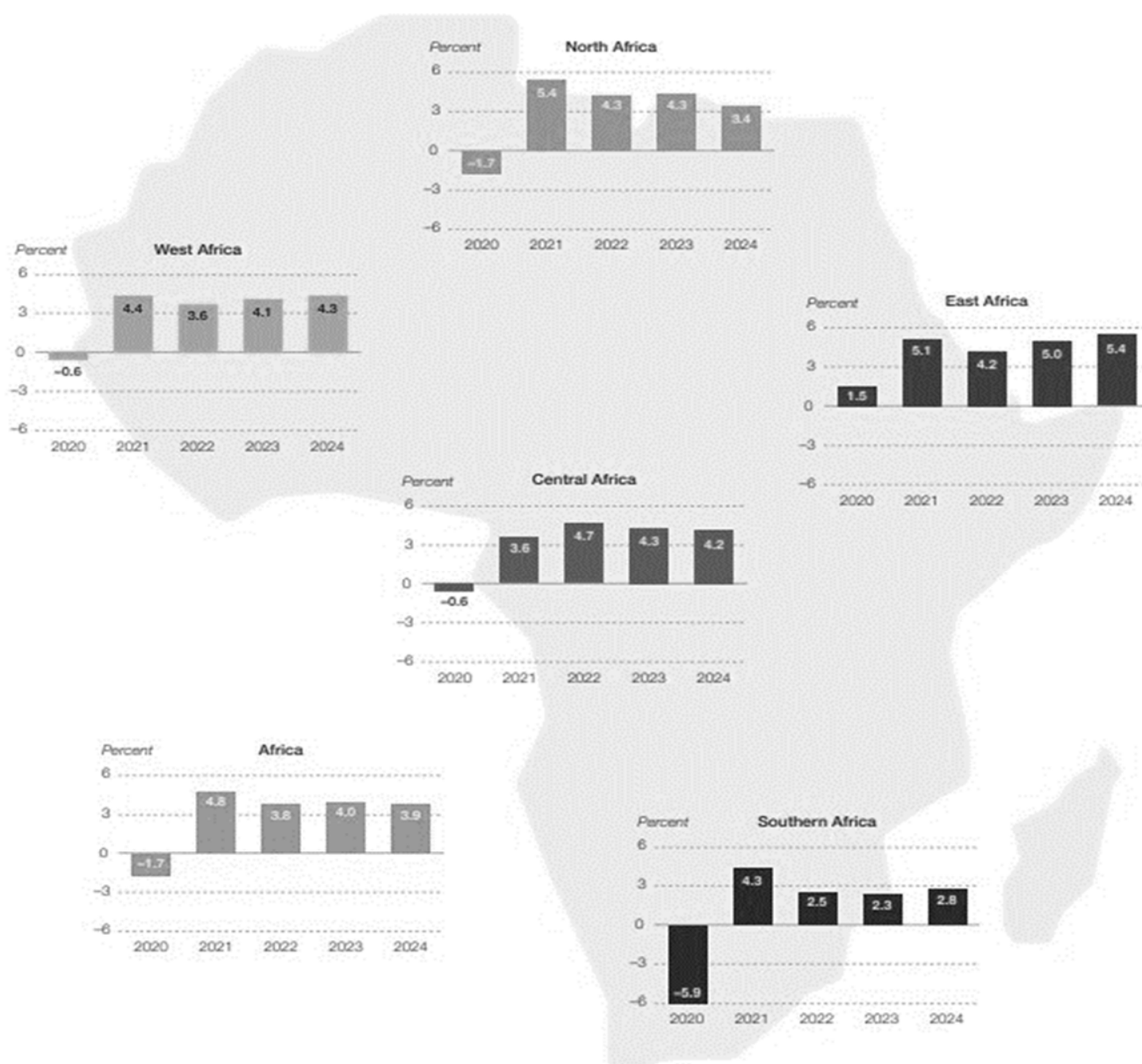
While a transformation on the scale of Africa's urbanization necessarily has its downsides, they are outweighed by the economic opportunities and by the improved living standards that cities generate. Some of the most important clusters of cities span multiple countries. These clusters stand to benefit from the reduction in trade barriers after the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). Yet even cities beyond cross-border clusters can be major beneficiaries of the AfCFTA. In particular, the reduction in intra-African trade barriers will benefit the tradable sector in cities and will reduce prices for urban consumers. However, the opportunities offered by implementation of the AfCFTA need to be matched by cross-border infrastructure investments and other measures to promote trade.

Africa's recent macroeconomic performance



Following the impressive recovery in 2021 after the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, African economies slowed amid significant headwinds in 2022, but they remain resilient with a stable outlook. The slowdown in economic growth has been due to a confluence of factors, including the growing impacts of climate change, persistent COVID-19 risks in Africa and globally, and the spillover effects of rising geopolitical tensions such as evolving flash point of conflict and insecurity on the continent and Russia-Ukraine conflict.

African countries with the highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2021



Source: African Development Bank statistics.

Most African economies were impacted by tightening financial conditions and the appreciating US dollar as these factors have increased the cost of servicing existing debt and heightened the risk of debt distress. They have also restricted access to international capital markets for new financing to meet fiscal needs and have greatly amplified instability in foreign exchange markets. The estimated average growth of real gross domestic product (GDP) slowed to 3.8 percent in 2022 from 4.8 percent in 2021—and is projected to stabilize at 4 percent over 2023 - 2024. The slowdown reflects the confluence of the domestic and external shocks highlighted above.

The stable outlook projected for 2023 - 2024 reflects continuing policy support in Africa and global efforts to mitigate the impact of external shocks and rising uncertainty. China's anticipated reopening after three years of zero COVID policy and the stable growth outlook for Asia could bolster Africa's growth in the medium term.

Africa's growth performance and outlook, by region, 2020 -2024

Despite the confluence of multiple shocks, growth across all five African regions was positive in 2022—and the outlook for 2023 - 2024 is projected to be stable. To become more resilient to global economic slowdown and considerable global uncertainty African countries need to boost regional trade and build a more vibrant regional

market in the medium to long term. That requires accelerating investments in regional hard and soft infrastructure, including regional transport and logistics. It also requires promoting the free movement of goods and services by removing trade and non trade barriers. And it requires strengthening African payment systems. With the recent disruptions in global supply chains and calls for reshoring and friend-shoring trade, the African Continental Free Trade Area presents a major opportunity for countries to internalize shocks while improving their trade balances and building economic resilience.

AfCFTA—the African Continental Free Trade Area



The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is Africa's most ambitious integration initiative and a flagship project of Agenda 2063 of the African Union — Africa's own development vision. It brings together the 55 countries of the African Union (AU) and eight (8) Regional Economic Communities (RECs). It was approved by the 18th ordinary Session of Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2012 which adopted the decision to establish a Continental Free Trade Area.

The AfCFTA aims at accelerating intra-African trade and boosting Africa's trading position in the global market by strengthening Africa's common voice and policy space in global trade negotiations. The overall mandate of the AfCFTA is to create a single continental market with a population of about 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of approximately US\$ 3.4 trillion.

The objectives of the AfCFTA are the following:

- To create a single market for goods, services, facilitated by movement of persons to deepen the economic integration of the African continent and in accordance with the Pan African Vision enshrined in Agenda 2063.
- To create liberalized market for goods and services through successive rounds of negotiations.
- To contribute to the movement of capital and natural persons and facilitate investments building on the initiatives and developments in the State Parties and RECs.
- To lay the foundation for the establishment of a Continental Customs Union at a later stage.

- To promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation of the State Parties.
- To enhance the competitiveness of the economies of State Parties within the continent and the global market.
- To promote industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development, and food security.
- To resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships.

The AfCFTA entered into force on May 30, 2019, after 24 Member States deposited their Instruments of Ratification following a series of continuous continental engagements spanning since 2012. The commencement of trading under the AfCFTA was on January 1, 2021.

The implementation of the AfCFTA comprises two phases:

Phase I:

- Trade in goods
- Trade in services
- dispute settlement mechanism Phase II:
 - investment
 - intellectual property rights
 - competition policy
 - digital trade
 - women and youth in trade

The AfCFTA will contribute to establishing regional value chains in Africa, boosting intra-Africa trade, and enabling industrialization, investment and job creation, thus enhancing the competitiveness of Africa in the medium to long term.

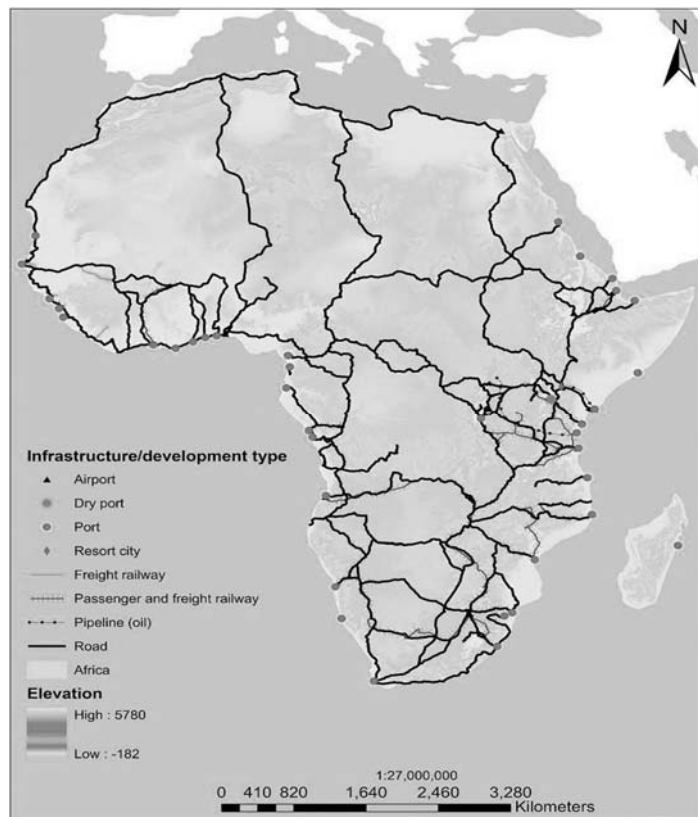
Infrastructure projects

The need for infrastructure improvements in Africa is critical. Faced with rapid urbanization and increasingly severe climate change impacts, African cities need greater access to technical and financial support. As one of the dedicated initiatives, on 2-3rd February 2023 the 2nd Dakar Financing summit for Africa's Infrastructure Development was held in Dakar, co-hosted by the African Union Development Agency and the Government of Senegal.

The 69 projects, which come from all five of Africa's regions, are being implemented by regional bodies and unions, including ECOWAS, COMESA and SADC, and should be completed by 2030.

The projects that fall under the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), a blue print for infrastructure development to increase Africa's competitiveness and economic integration, include:

- The Transborder Submarine Fiber point of presence and Regional Smart Hub Facility and Data center project, which will provide ICT connectivity to 285 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.
- The Gambia River Basin Development Organization Energy Project (OMVG Energy Project), which involves 4 countries: Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal. It focuses particularly on the rational management of the joint resources of Rivers Gambia, Kayanga-Géba and Koliba-Corubal, whose basins have power-generating potential.
- The Baynes Hydropower project, an energy project that will benefit Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, and others.



The lead financier of these projects is African Development Bank that has already provided over \$7 billion, with more than 50% of total financing secured.

One of the best-known projects the African Development Bank supports is the Abidjan-Lagos Highway project, valued at \$15.6 billion. The 1,081-kilometer Abidjan-highway will link Abidjan to Lagos, via Accra, Lomé, and Cotonou along the West African coast. The Abidjan-Lagos axis covers nearly 75% of West Africa's commercial activities.

*Maps showing the distribution of all the development corridors included in the African Development Corridors Database and their infrastructure type.

African Integrated High-Speed Railway Network

One of the most challenging infrastructure projects in Africa was presented by the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD). It has released a video capturing the conception, design, and implementation plan for the African Integrated High-Speed Railway Network. The project is seen as part of implementing “Agenda 2063” and has seen completion of the technical feasibility study and consequent unprecedented construction and procurement decisions among the economic blocs and individual national governments.

The first three objectives of the project to be achieved by 2033 are:

- Interconnecting landlocked countries, connecting regions of Africa together and establishing Trans-Africa beltways.
- Realization of pilots: the Dares Salaam-Kigali link combined with the Kampala-Kigali-Bujumbura, as well as the Walvis Bay-Windhoek-Gaborone-Pretoria.
- Identification of ten other regional pilots that will be subjected to feasibility assessment as soon as possible.

The planned network will connect the 16 landlocked countries in Africa to major seaports and neighboring countries. It will establish interoperability of railways across different regions, create East-West/North-South land bridges and interconnect African capitals. This will help the interconnection of major commercial and economic hubs to boost economic growth and intra-African free trade, as well as complement the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Africa's Space industry

The establishment of the Africa Agenda 2063 by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) in January 2015 announced Africa's entrance to the global space arena. This push to unify continental efforts in the space domain, culminated in October 2017, when the AU published a draft statute for the development of an African Space Agency (AfSA), as well as the African Space Policy and Strategy.

The main goals of the African Space Policy and Strategy are:

- To create a well-coordinated and integrated African space programme that is responsive to the social, economic, political, and environmental needs of the continent, as well as being globally competitive.
- To develop a regulatory framework that supports an African space programme and ensures that Africa is a responsible and peaceful user of outer space.

As a continuation of this course taken, the African Space Agency (AfSA) was inaugurated on January 25, 2023. The main goals of AfSA are:

- To promote and coordinate the implementation of the African Space Policy and Strategy.
- To conduct activities that exploit space technologies and applications for sustainable development and improvement of the welfare of African citizens.

The space industry in Africa is slowly gaining traction with the help of new technologies. One of such examples is SpaceX's smallsatrideshare program which provides affordable cost of access. As of December, 52 satellites had been launched by 14 African countries, with Uganda and Zimbabwe sending theirs in November. In April 2023, also Kenya launched its first ever operational earth observation satellite, becoming the latest African nation to achieve the milestone in the continent's nascent space industry.

Kenya's Taifa-1 was designed and developed by local engineers in collaboration with Bulgarian firm EnduroSat and was among the dozens of spacecrafts carried by SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket that lifted off from California. Images from the spacecraft will provide a wide array of data, including information related to climate-linked challenges, boost the government's efforts in improving food security, forestry and offer insights to land-use planners.

Conclusions

The recent unfavorable global conditions have led to rising inflation, higher debt servicing costs and increased risk of debt distress in developing countries, including Africa. It has also become difficult for African countries to access international capital markets for new financing. Despite the slow down occasioned by multiple shocks, African economies remain resilient with a stable outlook in 2023-2024. The continent remains a treasure trove for smart investors globally, but it must strive for more inclusive economies and greater resilience to external shocks. Africa could take advantage of its population to grow a robust single market that would enable it to position itself among the three largest global marketplaces.

The African continent's population is projected to reach 2.5 billion people by 2050 and will become the largest workforce globally. With its 'Agenda 2063', the African Union has established an ambitious strategy for a prosperous Africa based on inclusive and sustainable development. Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent. The start of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in 2021, a flagship project within Agenda 2063, is a huge milestone towards accelerating intra-Africa trade and boosting Africa's position in the global economy. AfCFTA promises a EUR 1 billion consumer market to African businesses and more than EUR 3.3 trillion in investment in consumer spending by 2030. Producing more goods regionally will make African economies more resilient. If implementation challenges are tackled and overcome, it could transform the African continent's economic prospects. Under Agenda 2063, African governments tasked themselves with achieving at least 7% growth per year to catch up with the rest of the world, create jobs and reduce inequalities. This is an opportunity for Africa to become an integrated, peaceful, and prosperous continent, which plays a major role in the global arena.

Reference

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DOCUMENT

**SOUTH AFRICA – BRICS 2023 PRESIDENCY
THEME AND PRIORITIES – OFFICIAL WEBSITE
www.brics2023.gov.za**

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 theme informs the Chair's five priorities for 2023:

Developing a partnership towards an equitable Just Transition:

There is no part of the world that is not feeling the dramatic changes to climate and extreme weather events. Tackling climate change requires urgent, significant and transformational changes across all sectors of the economy. Opportunities need to be explored to manage the risks associated with climate change while still improving the lives and futures of those people employed under the umbrella of targeted industries.

Transforming education and skills development for the future:

Education and continuous skills development are long-term solutions towards development and escaping poverty. Existing cooperation and initiatives towards knowledge creation and exchange must be strengthened to unlock opportunities for the future.

Unlocking opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Area:

The African Continental Free Trade Area creates a predictable environment for trade and investments in Africa, particularly in infrastructure development. BRICS members are reliable partners for cooperation, trade and development. The partnership between BRICS and Africa must focus on unlocking mutually beneficial opportunities for increased trade, investment and infrastructure development towards the operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area in line with its priorities and objectives.

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

The economic plans and strategies must be implemented with a vision of placing BRICS economies at the centre of sustainable global economic growth. Solutions need to be found for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Equity, fairness and a recognition of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities should underly the response.

Strengthening multilateralism, including working towards real reform of global governance institutions and strengthening the meaningful participation of women in peace processes:

BRICS has a common vision of a more equitable, fair, balanced, just and representative global political, economic and financial system, but faces global resistance by vested interests. Recent reform achievements serve as the foundation for continued efforts to channel the collective BRICS voice and influence where it can make a change. The marginalisation of women in peace processes needs to be addressed. Lasting peace, security and sustainable development cannot be achieved without the inclusion of women in conflict resolution as well as in post-conflict reconstruction.

BRICS partnership is more than government-to-government relations

**by Amb. Anil SOOKLAL
30 March, 2023 – SA Official BRICS website**

Dirco's deputy director-general responsible for Asia and the Middle East, Ambassador Anil Sooklal, speaks at a high-level seminar on Beijing's global development strategy, the Belt and Road Initiative, in Pretoria.

“On behalf of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation (DIRCO) as the South African BRICS Sherpa it gives me immense pleasure to deliver a message of support on this auspicious occasion.

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 women, youth, civil societies, media, ruling parties, parliaments, law societies, cultural organisations, sports federations, arts, theatre, 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 welds 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

In the words of 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, 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 had made towards the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. The world is increasingly divided and the return to Cold War mentalities and the preservation of hegemonic tendencies has 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 in the world system.

Governments cannot deliver on this alone. It requires a whole of community, whole of society approach. The importance of social and people-to-people cooperation was visible in the BRICS response to COVID-19. BRICS were at the forefront of a compassionate response to 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 benefiting 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, cultural heritage, and cultural industry.

We look forward to changing narratives in the BRICS Media Forum, empowering our media with BRICS International Journalism Training Program and the Joint Photography Exhibition.

President Ramaphosa has emphasised that the 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 in the year.

We will be welcoming BRICS Leaders to South Africa for the 15th BRICS Summit in August 2023. 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.

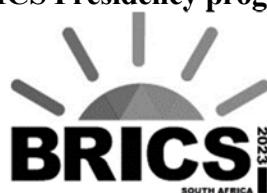
As a collective we will work together both to address challenges and explore opportunities for mutual benefit for all. We will work together to place BRICS at the forefront of shaping a new people-centred global society”.

This is an address delivered on Thursday, March 30 at the joint opening ceremony by Professor Anil Sooklal, Ambassador-at-Large for Asia and BRICS at the BRICS Seminar on Governance and BRICS Forum on People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges

ANNEX N. 9

CALENDAR

2023 SA BRICS Presidency programmed initiatives



BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS			
#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
1	First BRICS Sherpa and Sous-Sherpa meeting	Bela Bela, Limpopo South Africa	1-2 February 2023
2	1 st BRICS Finance and Central Bank Deputies meeting	Virtual	3 February 2023
3	BRICS Women's Business Alliance (WBA) Handover meeting	Virtual	6 February 2023
4	BRICS WBA Africa-Russia Inclusive Economy B2B Conference	Virtual	14-17 February 2023
5	PartNIR Handover meetings	Virtual	16 February 2023
6	1 st Employment Working Group meeting	Muldersdrift, Gauteng South Africa	21-24 February 2023
7	1 st BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group meeting	Gurugram, Haryana, India	28 February 2023
8	BRICS Finance Track Working groups: BRICS Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA); BRICS Bond Fund (BBF); BRICS Payment Task Force (BPTF); BRICS Information Security Channel (BRISC); and BRICS Sustainable Finance.		
9	1 st BRICS Sous-Sherpa meeting on Institutional Development	Virtual	7 March 2023
10	8 th BRICS Environment Working Group meeting	Cape Town, Western Cape South Africa	7-9 March 2023
11	1 st BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC) meeting	Virtual	10 March 2023

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
12	1 st BRICS Task Force on PPP and Infrastructure meeting	Virtual	13-17 March 2023
13	1 st Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues (CGETI) meeting	Virtual	14-15 March 2023
14	1 st PartNIR Advisory Group meeting	Virtual	22-23 March 2023
15	BRICS Finance Track Working groups: BRICS Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA); BRICS Bond Fund (BBF); BRICS Payment Task Force (BPTF); BRICS Information Security Channel (BRISC); and BRICS Sustainable Finance.	Virtual	March 2023 TBC
16	2022 BRICS Seminar on Governance	Hybrid	30-31 March 2023
17	2022 BRICS Forum on People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges	Hybrid	30-31 March 2023
18	BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation: 3 rd Working Group meeting	Virtual	1 st week April 2023
19	2 nd Joint Committee meeting (Space Agencies)	Virtual	April 2023 TBC
20	2 nd BRICS Finance and Central Bank Deputies meeting	Virtual	4 April 2023
21	1 st BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting	Washington, DC, USA	12 April 2023
22	BRICS Agriculture Working Group meeting 1	Virtual	13-14 April 2023
23	2 nd BRICS Task Force on PPP and Infrastructure meeting	Virtual	13-14 April 2023 TBC
24	BRICS National Statistical Offices Technical meeting	Gauteng, South Africa	17-19 April 2023
25	Workshop on Customs Enforcement	TBD	20-21 April 2023
26	2 nd BRICS Sous-Sherpa meeting on Institutional Development	Virtual	21 April 2023
27	BRICS Deputy Ministers and Special Envoys for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) meeting	Western Cape, South Africa	24-26 April 2023

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
28	TB Network Meeting/ TB Summit	KwaZulu-Natal TBC South Africa	24-26 April 2023
29	1 st BRICS Think Tanks Symposium <i>"Developing a partnership towards an equitable Just Transition"</i>	Hybrid - Venue TBD	25 April 2023
30	BRICS WBA 1 st BRICS Organic Farming Association Meeting	Virtual	April 2023 TBC
31	1 st BRICS Energy Senior Officials meeting	Virtual TBC	April 2023 TBC
32	Civil BRICS Forum Seminar <i>"Developing a partnership towards an equitable Just Transition"</i>	Virtual	April 2023 TBC
33	Civil BRICS Forum Seminar <i>"Transforming education and skills development for the future"</i>	Virtual	April 2023 TBC
34	BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation: 4 th Working Group meeting	Virtual	April/May 2023
35	2 nd BRICS Think Tanks Symposium <i>"Leveraging BRICS Strengths to transform Education and Skills Development for the Future"</i>	Hybrid - Venue TBD	6 May 2023
36	Digital manufacturing and Industrial Internet Knowledge sharing event	Hybrid - Venue TBD	9 May 2023
37	2 nd Employment Working Group meeting	Eastern Cape TBC South Africa	9-12 May 2023
38	2 nd PartNIR Advisory Group meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	10-11 May 2023
39	SMART Borders meeting	TBD	12 May 2023
40	2 nd BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC) meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	14-16 May 2023
41	BRICS Academic Forum	Hybrid - Venue TBD	14-16 May 2023
42	9 th BRICS Working Group on Security in the Use of ICTs meeting	North West Province South Africa	16-18 May 2023

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS			
#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
43	BRICS Agriculture Working Group meeting 2	Virtual	18-19 May 2023
44	BRICS Health Ministers meeting	Geneva (United Nations)	23 May 2023
45	2 nd BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group meeting	Rishikesh, Uttarakhand India	24 May 2023
46	2 nd Contact Group on Economic and Trade issues (CGETI) meeting	Virtual	30-31 May 2023
47	BRICS WBA Africa-Brazil Inclusive Economy B2B Conference	Virtual	May 2023 TBC
48	BRICS Friendships Cities, Local Government and Urbanisation Forum	Virtual	May 2023 TBC
49	Civil BRICS Forum Seminar <i>"Unlocking opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Area"</i>	Virtual	May 2023 TBC
50	Civil BRICS Forum Seminar <i>"Strengthening post-pandemic socio-economic recovery and the attainment of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development"</i>	Virtual	May 2023 TBC
51	Joint Training of Anti-Corruption Practitioners <i>*coordinated by UNODC</i>	TBD	May 2023 TBC
52	3 rd BRICS Sous-Sherpa meeting on Institutional Development	Western Cape, South Africa	28 May 2023
53	Second BRICS Sherpa and Sous-Sherpa meeting	Western Cape, South Africa	29-31 May 2023
54	Standalone meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations	Western Cape, South Africa	1-2 June 2023
55	2 nd Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) meeting	TBD	1-2 June 2023
56	BRICS Counter Terrorism Working Group (CTWG) and Sub-Working Group meetings	Pretoria, Gauteng South Africa	12-13 June 2023

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS			
#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
57	3 rd BRICS Think Tanks Symposium <i>"BRICS and Africa: Building Partnerships to enhance mutually beneficial growth, sustainable development and multilateralism"</i>	Hybrid - Kigali, Rwanda	14 June 2023
58	3 rd BRICS Employment Working Group meeting	Geneva (United Nations)	19 June 2023
59	BRICS Sports Senior Officials meeting	KwaZulu-Natal South Africa	21 June 2023
60	BRICS Sports Ministers meeting	KwaZulu-Natal South Africa	22 June 2023
61	9 th BRICS Environment Ministers meeting	Virtual	June 2023 TBC
62	2 nd BRICS Energy Senior Officials meeting	Virtual TBC	June 2023 TBC
63	Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Experts meeting	Gauteng, South Africa	June 2023 TBC
64	1 st BRICS Working Group meeting on Cooperation in ICTs	Virtual	June 2023 TBC
65	BRICS Space Agencies meeting	TBD	June 2023 TBC
66	BRICS Finance Track Working groups: BRICS Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA); BRICS Bond Fund (BBF); BRICS Payment Task Force (BPTF); BRICS Information Security Channel (BRISC); and BRICS Sustainable Finance.	Virtual	June 2023 TBC
67	Civil BRICS Forum Seminar <i>"Strengthening multilateralism including working toward real reform of global governance institutions and strengthening the meaningful participation of women in peace processes"</i>	Virtual	June 2023 TBC
68	BRICS Customs Experts meeting	TBD	TBD
69	BRICS Supreme Audit Institutions Seminar/ webinar <i>"Real-Time Audit"</i> organised by the Supreme Audit Institution of China	TBD	First half of 2023

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
70	BRICS WBA Joint Working Group meetings	Virtual	June/July 2023
71	3 rd BRICS Institute of Future Networks (BIFN) Council meeting	Virtual	June/July 2023
72	2 nd Digital BRICS Forum meeting	Virtual	June/July 2023
73	BRICS TVET Cooperation Alliance (TCA) Seminar	Hybrid - Venue TBD	July 2023 TBC
74	BRICS Network University (BRICS NU) Academic Seminar: <i>"BRICS: Mobilising Global Knowledge and Research Networks for Inclusive and Sustainable Development"</i>	Virtual	5 July 2023
75	BRICS Network University (BRICS NU) International Governing Board (IGB) meeting	Virtual	6 July 2023
76	BRICS Culture Senior Officials meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	6 July 2023
77	BRICS Ministers of Culture meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	7 July 2023
78	BRICS Heads of Customs Authorities meeting	TBD	10-15 July 2023
79	4 th BRICS Think Tanks Symposium <i>"The African Continental Free Trade Area: unlocking opportunities"</i>	Hybrid - Venue TBD	13 July 2023
80	BRICS Education Senior Officials meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	13 July 2023
81	10 th BRICS Ministers of Education meeting Theme: <i>"Responsive and Relevant Education and Training in the Current Global Context"</i>	In-person - Venue TBC	14 July 2023
82	2 nd BRICS Working Group meeting on Cooperation in ICTs	Mpumalanga TBC South Africa	18-19 July 2023 TBC
83	BRICS B2B/Business Dialogue on Cooperation in ICTs	Mpumalanga TBC South Africa	20 July 2023 TBC
84	9 th BRICS Ministers of Communication meeting	Mpumalanga TBC South Africa	21 July 2023 TBC

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
85	3 rd Contact Group on Economic and Trade issues (CGETI) meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	21-23 July 2023
86	3 rd PartNIR Advisory Group meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	21-24 July 2023
87	13 th BRICS National Security Advisors (NSA) meeting	Gauteng, South Africa	23-25 July 2023
88	13 th BRICS Trade Ministers meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	25 July 2023
89	7 th BRICS Ministers of Industry meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	26 July 2023
90	Climate Smart Agriculture Seminar	Limpopo, South Africa	25 July 2023
91	BRICS Agriculture Working Group meeting 3	Limpopo, South Africa	26 July 2023
92	BRICS Ministers of Agriculture field trip	Limpopo, South Africa	27 July 2023
93	Rural Development Symposium/Dialogue	Hybrid Limpopo, South Africa	28 July 2023
94	13 th BRICS Ministers of Agriculture meeting	Limpopo, South Africa	28 July 2023
95	BRICS Sous-Sherpa meeting in preparation for the 15 th BRICS Summit	Virtual	Last week of July 2023
96	5 th Joint Task Force on Disaster Management meeting	Hybrid TBC - Venue TBD	July 2023 TBC
97	3 rd BRICS Energy Senior Officials meeting	Virtual TBC	July 2023 TBC
98	BRICS Health Products Regulatory Authorities meeting	Western Cape TBC South Africa	July 2023 TBC
99	BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation: 5 th Working Group meeting	Virtual	July 2023 TBC
100	BRICS Finance Track Working groups: BRICS Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA); BRICS Bond Fund (BBF); BRICS Payment Task Force (BPTF); BRICS Information Security Channel (BRISC); and BRICS Sustainable Finance.	Virtual	July 2023 TBC

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS			
#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
101	3 rd BRICS Finance and Central Bank Deputies meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	July 2023 TBC
102	2023 Civil BRICS Forum Summit	In-person - Venue TBC	July 2023 TBC
103	Joint training of Anti-Corruption Practitioners and Ethics Officers	Virtual	July 2023 TBC
104	BRICS Film Festival	Venue TBC	TBC
105	BRICS Health Senior Officials meeting	TBD	1-2 August 2023
106	13 th BRICS Health Ministers meeting	TBD	3 August 2023
107	BRICS Sous-Sherpa Meeting in preparation for the 15 th BRICS Summit	Virtual	8-9 August 2023
108	5 th BRICS Think Tanks Symposium <i>"Post Pandemic Socio-Economic Recovery and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda – progress and pitfalls"</i>	Hybrid - Venue TBD	10 August 2023
109	BRICS WBA Africa-China Inclusive Economy B2B Conference	Virtual	August 2023 TBC
110	BRICS WBA Annual Meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	17 August 2023
111	BRICS-Africa WBA Trade Conference	In-person - Venue TBC	17-18 August 2023
112	BRICS Youth in Energy Summit	Hybrid TBC - Venue TBD	August 2023 TBC
113	BRICS Heads of Competition Authorities meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	August 2023 TBC
114	Heads of BRICS National Standardization Bodies Working meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	August 2023 TBC
115	Third BRICS Sherpa and Sous-Sherpa meeting	Gauteng, South Africa	17-21 August 2023
116	BRICS Business Council (BBC) Working Group meetings	In-person - Venue TBC	August 2023 TBC

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS			
#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
117	BRICS Business Council (BBC) AGM and 10yr Anniversary Event	In-person - Venue TBC	August 2023 TBC
118	SA Manufacturing Forum and Exhibition	In-person - Venue TBC	TBD
119	BRICS Expo	In-person - Venue TBC	TBD
120	BRICS Business Forum	Gauteng, South Africa	22 August 2023
121	15 th BRICS Summit	Gauteng, South Africa	23 August 2023
122	BRICS Outreach and BRICS Plus	Gauteng, South Africa	24 August 2023
123	BRICS Legal Forum	TBD	24-26 August 2023
124	Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) Standing Committee meeting	Virtual	August 2023 TBC
125	BRICS Tourism Senior Officials meeting on Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Recovery	Virtual	August/September 2023
126	BRICS Tourism Ministers meeting on Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism Recovery	Virtual	August/September 2023
127	3 rd Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) meeting	TBD	7-8 September 2023
128	3 rd BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group meeting.	In-person on the margins of the G20	8 September 2023
129	6 th BRICS Think Tanks Symposium <i>"Strengthening multilateralism, including working toward real reform of global governance institutions and strengthening the meaningful participation of women in peace processes"</i>	Hybrid - Venue TBD	14 September 2023
130	BRICS Meeting of Officials and Experts on Population Matters	North West Province South Africa	19-21 September 2023
131	SMART Borders meeting	TBD	20 September 2023
132	4 th Employment Working Group meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	19-20 September 2023

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
133	BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	21-22 September 2023
134	Infrastructure Investment Summit	In-person - Venue TBC	25-29 September 2023
135	BRICS Network on Public Health Emergency Operation Centres	TBD	26-28 September 2023
136	BRICS Energy Ministers meeting	Virtual TBC	September 2023 TBC
137	BRICS Ministers for Disaster Management meeting	Hybrid TBC - Venue TBD	September 2023 TBC
138	BRICS Finance Track Working groups: BRICS Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA); BRICS Bond Fund (BBF); BRICS Payment Task Force (BPTF); BRICS Information Security Channel (BRISC); and BRICS Sustainable Finance.	Virtual	September 2023 TBC
139	BRICS Heads of Intellectual Property Offices meeting	Virtual	September 2023 TBC
140	BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation: 6 th Working Group meeting	Virtual	September 2023 TBC
141	Fourth BRICS Sherpa and Sous-Sherpa meeting	New Delhi, India	September 2023 TBC
142	BRICS Leaders' Informal meeting on the margins of the G20 Summit	New Delhi, India	September 2023 TBC
143	Fifth BRICS Sherpa and Sous-Sherpa meeting TBC <i>*Incoming Chair</i>	New York (United Nations)	September 2023 TBC
144	BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations meeting on the margins of UNGA78 TBC <i>*Incoming Chair</i>	New York (United Nations)	September 2023 TBC
145	Heads of BRICS National Statistical Offices (NSOs) meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	11-13 October 2023
146	VIII BRICS International Competition Conference	New Delhi, India	11-13 October 2023
147	PartNIR Handover meetings	Hybrid - Venue TBD	13 October 2023
148	2023 BRICS Games	KwaZulu-Natal South Africa	18-21 October 2023

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
149	BRICS Future Skills challenge (BBC)	In-person - Venue TBC	October 2023 TBC
150	BRICS WBA Sustainability Summit on Just Energy Transition	Virtual	October 2023 TBC
151	Informal Meeting of BRICS Legal Advisers of Foreign Ministries	New York (United Nations)	October 2023 TBC
152	BRICS Think Tanks Seminar <i>"Multipolarity - BRICS, the G20 and the future of global governance"</i>	Hybrid - Venue TBD	21 November 2023
153	BRICS Customs Capacity Building Workshop	TBD	22-24 November 2023
154	BRICS Space Agencies Workshop	Virtual	November 2023 TBC
155	Heads of BRICS Diplomatic Academies meeting	TBD	November 2023 TBC
156	BRICS Young Diplomats Forum	TBD	November 2023 TBC
157	BRICS WBA Africa-India Inclusive Economy B2B Conference	Virtual	November 2023 TBC
158	Final BRICS Sherpa and Sous-Sherpa meeting	In-person - Venue TBC	November/December 2023
159	BRICS Foreign Policy Planning Dialogue	In-person - Venue TBC	November/December 2023
160	BRICS Think Tanks meeting	Virtual	1 December 2023
161	Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) Governing Council	Virtual	December 2023 TBC
162	BRICS Supreme Audit Institutions Seminar/ webinar <i>"Audit of Outcomes in Higher Education"</i> organised by Supreme Audit Institution of Russia	TBD	Second half of 2023
163	Digital BRICS Task Force meeting	TBD	TBD
164	Launch of the BRICS-Africa WBA Platform	TBD	TBD
165	BRICS Anti-Drug Working Group meeting	TBD	TBD

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
166	BRICS Heads of Prosecution Services meeting	TBD	TBD
167	BRICS Foreign Ministry Spokespersons Forum	TBD	TBD
168	International Thematic Groups of the BRICS NU meetings	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD
169	1 st BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre meeting	TBD	TBD
170	2 nd BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre meeting	TBD	TBD
171	9 th BRICS Parliamentary Forum	In-person - Venue TBC	TBD
172	BRICS Youth Summit	In-person - Venue TBC	TBD
173	BRICS Political Parties meeting	TBD	TBD
174	6 th BRICS Media Forum	TBD	TBD
175	3 rd International Journalism Training Program	TBD	TBD
176	BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism CEOs meeting	TBD	TBD
177	BRICS Annual Financial Forum under the BRICS Interbank Cooperation Mechanism	TBD	TBD
178	3 rd BRICS Water Forum	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
179	BRICS Conference on Technology Foresight and STI Policy	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
180	BRICS Materials Science and Nanotechnology Working Group meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
181	BRICS Working Group meeting on Ocean and Polar Science	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
182	5 th BRICS Working Group meeting on Research Infrastructures and Mega-science Projects	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
183	13 th BRICS STI Senior Officials meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by the STI Nodal Point
184	11 th BRICS STI Ministerial meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by the STI Nodal Point
185	BRICS STI Steering Committee meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by the STI Nodal Points
186	BRICS STI Funding Parties Working Group meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
187	BRICS Photonics Working Group meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
188	Steering Committee Meeting on iBRICS	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
189	BRICS Working Group meeting on Prevention and Monitoring of Natural Disasters	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
190	BRICS Technology Transfer and Innovation Cooperation Forum	Hybrid - Moscow Russian Federation	TBD by STI Working Groups
191	BRICS Startups' Forum meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
192	BRICS Innovation Launchpad as a Microsite (Knowledge Hub)	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
193	Working Group meeting on New and Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (STI Meeting)	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
194	BRICS Working Group meeting on Biotechnology and Biomedicine	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups

BRICS 2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS			
#	BRICS ACTIVITY	VENUE	DATE
195	STIEP Working Group meeting	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
196	BRICS Fusion Week	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
197	BRICS Workshop on Business Incubation	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
198	BRICS Technology Transfer Network Cooperation Conference and related activities	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
199	8 th BRICS Working Group meeting on Astronomy	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups
200	7 th BRICS Working Group meeting on HPC & ICT	Hybrid - Venue TBD	TBD by STI Working Groups

Rome (Italy) June 2023

Reference

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