

President Cyril Ramaphosa's remarks at the BRICS Business Forum at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, 25 July 2018

Programme Director

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
Chairperson of the BRICS Business Council,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the BRICS Business Forum, which has become a vital platform for the development of economic cooperation between the BRICS member countries.

We welcome you to our shores just a week after the world marked the centenary of the birth of the father of our nation and a global icon, President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

We invoke his name here because the work we are here to do requires of us to build on the foundations Madiba laid for the advancement of democracy, world peace, human solidarity, international cooperation and mutual respect.

This year also marks a decade of BRICS collaboration, during which we have successfully shaped an ambitious agenda for development that recognises the great potential our countries possess for collective action.

Intra-BRICS cooperation has been gaining momentum in areas such as finance, agriculture, trade, combating transnational crime, science and technology, health, education, security and academic dialogue.

One of the most important achievements of the first decade of BRICS was the establishment of the New Development Bank, which fills a critical gap in project funding.

Since its formation, the bank has disbursed loans totalling \$5.1 billion, with approvals amounting to \$1.7 billion this year alone.

As we enter the second decade of BRICS cooperation, we are determined to expand the Bank's role in economic and social development.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are meeting here at a time when the multilateral trading system is facing unprecedented challenges.

We are concerned by the rise in unilateral measures that are incompatible with World Trade Organisation rules and are worried about the impact of these measures, especially on developing countries.

These developments call for thorough discussion on the role of trade in promoting sustainable development and inclusive growth.

The BRICS countries are increasingly recognised as an influential formation in reinforcing the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and compatibility within the multilateral trading system.

There is also much scope to expand the value of trade between BRICS countries.

As a country that is primarily an exporter of commodities to its BRICS partners, South Africa supports a shift towards complementary and value-added trade.

Linked to the trade agenda, we need to increase investment between BRICS countries, particularly in the productive sectors of our economy.

We also require a strategic roadmap regarding the opportunities presented by the fourth industrial revolution and the measures required to mitigate its disruptive effect on industry.

I am pleased that these are some of the areas under discussion in this Business Forum.

I look forward to the concrete proposals made by yourselves for the consideration of the Summit.

Equally important are your deliberations on BRICS-Africa cooperation.

As South Africa, we are determined that our engagements within BRICS and other multilateral platforms should advance the integration and development of the African continent.

There is great potential for investment in Africa.

In the past decade Africa has grown at a rate of 2 to 3 percentage points faster than the global GDP, with regional growth predicted to remain stable above 5 percent in 2018.

This growth will be supported by increasing foreign direct investment flows, public investment in infrastructure and higher agricultural production.

In addition to this, Africa's working age population is expected to double to 1 billion in the next 25 years.

More opportunities are presented by the agreement to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area, which provides access to a market of over 1 billion people and a combined GDP of over \$3 trillion.

The value of this free trade area will only be fully realised through massive investment in infrastructure and skills development.

This presents opportunities for BRICS countries, some of whom have extensive experience in infrastructure development and are world leaders in education and skills development.

Distinguished Guests,

This Business Forum provides a platform to harness the benefits of globalisation and to also confront the challenges it presents, all within an ever-changing global political economy.

As South Africa, we have acknowledged that to effectively deal with poverty, unemployment and inequality, we need to significantly increase the level of investment in our economy to lift growth and create jobs.

We have embarked on an investment drive that has taken us to meet with investors in various parts of the world and which will culminate in an Investment Conference later in the year.

We are seeking to reinforce the strong bonds that we developed with our BRICS partners by expanding investment into the country.

We are building on the vast investment potential that South Africa possesses.

Our partners in BRICS are familiar with our world class transport and telecommunication infrastructure, a supportive operating environment and a sophisticated banking system.

We have been steadily improving the ease of doing business in the country, providing dedicated support to investors through Invest SA and developing an attractive package of incentives.

We are working to diversify our economy.

A wide range of investment opportunities are available in areas such as renewable energy, recycling, biofuels, water infrastructure, energy, mining and minerals beneficiation, agriculture and agro-processing, aquaculture, tourism, shipbuilding and repairs, business process outsourcing, advanced manufacturing, fuel cell production, aerospace and defence.

South Africa is determined to derive greater value from its abundant natural resources and to steadily advance up the value chain into knowledge-based sectors.

We are embracing new technologies and approaches that are merging the physical, digital and biological worlds.

We are committed to walking this path together with our BRICS partners.

It is imperative that we collectively navigate the risks and leverage the opportunities that arise from the new digital age.

There is much we can do together to develop appropriate regulatory frameworks, infrastructure and skills to support and enable the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our task is to give practical expression to an economic partnership that will catapult the industrialisation of our respective economies beyond the digital age.

While trade among the BRICS partners has expanded exponentially over the last 10 years, we need to advance to a new level of industrial cooperation.

Addressing the demands of both the present and the future requires the same unity of purpose that brought BRICS into existence and which has sustained it over the last decade.

We look to you, our distinguished business community, to be at the centre of our collective efforts to forge a new economic path.

We look to you to be ready to realise the vast potential that exists for investment and trade, and to be our partners in building inclusive economies that create shared prosperity.

I wish you every success in your deliberations.

I thank you.

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