

**Keynote Address by  
HE Ms L N Sisulu  
Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, South Africa  
at the Mid-Term Meeting of the BRICS Business Council  
4 April 2019, Johannesburg**

Council members of the respective chapters of the BRICS Business Councils,  
Captains of industry,  
Honourable delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen.

I must preface my address by congratulating the newly appointed South African BRICS Business Council. I am very pleased with its composition, made up of people with extensive business experience and acumen with a depth of knowledge that is certain to guarantee us success both as South Africa and as BRICS partners. The South African Business Council consists of Busi Mabuzza, Dr Ayanda Ntsaluba, Dr Stavros Nicolaou, Bridget Radebe and Elias Monage, each with impressive credentials. I am certain that in their hands the council will be reinvigorated.

Each one of them has impressive credentials that will boost our reputation. Since their appointment on 5 March 2019, there has been a significant increase in the activities of the council, which bodes well for the future.

We want to congratulate our Brazilian partners on the successful elections of a new government and president. 2019 is Brazil's year of hosting the rotational Chairship of BRICS and I want to thank them for allowing South Africa, a year after its own BRICS Chairship, to host this meeting. We welcome the assurance from Brazil that the new Government is committed to BRICS and to continue with us. As you would know, this is a very important partnership for all of us. We have been inundated with requests from other countries to join BRICS, which should indicate the important role we play. You meet at a time of great expectations and great possibilities.

I am delighted to deliver the closing remarks at this meeting, particularly in view of South Africa's recent hosting of a number of international events, including the successful hosting of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the New Development Bank (NDB) from 1 to 3 April 2019 in Cape Town.

It is recalled that, among others, at this meeting, which took place under the theme "Partnership for Sustainable Development", a loan agreement was concluded between Eskom and the NDB for a project aimed at supporting the development of the national grid connection infrastructure as well as renewable energy to reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuels. It is excellent news for South Africa as it will go a long way towards strengthening the country's economic development prospects.

You might also be aware that South Africa will chair the African Union (AU) in 2020 to usher in the Africa Continental Free Trade Area. A vibrant and energetic council is a very necessary partner for this. I want to assure the Business Council that you have our full support as you navigate your way around the African continent. Yesterday, we reached the 22nd country to sign the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, which means we have met the

minimum threshold for the agreement to come into effect. It bodes well for Africa, it bodes well for our country and it bodes well for the Business Council as it opens up Africa for new business opportunities.

I hope that the final report emanating from this meeting will also indicate what precisely business needs from government and specifically my department, so that we can find ways of assisting you as you make use of these new business opportunities.

We meet at a time when some of the southern African nations are reeling from the devastation of Cyclone Idai, This cyclone has left untold misery in its wake and its humanitarian challenges are immense. The outbreak of cholera as an aftermath of the cyclone has complicated the lives of the inhabitants of these countries. The reality of global warming is a factor that we must embrace and come to terms with. I wish to extend a work of appreciation to all those NGOs and businesspeople who have come to the aid of the devastated communities in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

We also meet against the backdrop of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Solidarity Conference with the People of Western Sahara. We are pleased to have been asked by SADC to host this two-day conference that was an outstanding success. We reaffirm our principled position to stand side by side with those countries that still face oppression and domination. Our struggle has taught us such a vital lesson to give solidarity and fellowship to those in need.

As you may be aware, South Africa hosted the 10th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg last year under the theme: “BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution”. The main outcomes of the 10th BRICS Summit were informed by South Africa’s Chairship priorities, notably the theme that espoused the cultivation of “inclusive growth and shared prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution”.

The BRICS leaders endorsed the establishment of a BRICS Working Group on the Fourth Industrial Revolution through the BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR) and its Advisory Group, consisting of respective representatives of BRICS Ministries of Industry. The objective of this initiative is to maximise the opportunities and address the challenges arising from the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In addition to this initiative, the establishment of the BRICS Networks of Science Parks, Technology Business Incubators and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises was also endorsed. A meeting of experts in the field of the Fourth Industrial Revolution was convened in South Africa in December 2018 to take this issue forward.

In relation to the establishment of the physical BRICS Vaccine Research Centre in South Africa, with a view to addressing the common challenges in health, through strengthening coordination and cooperation, the BioVaC Institute in Cape Town, under the stewardship of both the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and the Animal Research Centre, was identified as the site of Centre. The Science, Technology and Innovation Working Group Meeting of November 2018 in South Africa deferred further discussions around the establishment of the centre to the meeting in Brazil during the course of this year.

The establishment of a BRICS Women’s Forum was identified as critical to the promotion of inclusive growth and the development of BRICS societies. A BRICS Senior Officials on

Women's Meeting was held in December 2018 to further deliberate on the Concept Note. I would like you to establish a relationship with the BRICS Women's Forum, because they are a source of great energy and innovation.

The possibility of creating a Working Group on Peacekeeping was discussed and adopted, borne from the recognition by BRICS leaders of the importance of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping for the maintenance of international peace and security and the contribution of BRICS countries to UN Peacekeeping. They acknowledged the need to increase BRICS cooperation on this matter and recognised the South African initiative to create a BRICS Working Group on Peacekeeping. This comes at a time when the majority of BRICS countries are members of the UN Security Council, whose job it is to ensure peace and security in the world and this initiative is a very important addition in supporting our work and initiatives. This was a South African initiative, borne out of the fact that we carry a heavy burden in providing peacekeeping on the African continent.

South Africa is a beautiful country, rating possibly right at the top. It is at the forefront of our investment drive and we therefore supported the establishment of the BRICS Working Group on Tourism. The BRICS leaders noted that tourism had great potential to contribute to sustainable economic and social development, including fostering greater people-to-people relations. The first official meeting at senior officials level was convened in November 2018.

The BRICS leaders noted the fruitful discussions among the respective BRICS foreign affairs spokespersons that took place on 23 and 24 July and, in this regard, they acknowledged the initiative to establish a BRICS Foreign Affairs Spokespersons Platform. A second meeting of the BRICS Foreign Affairs Spokespersons to further deliberate the modalities around the establishment of a platform of this nature needs to be convened. No doubt, a great deal of language skills will be required here.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It will also be recalled that three agreements/memoranda of understanding (MoU) were signed during the summit aimed at further enhancing sectoral cooperation among the BRICS members, namely:

- The MoU on Regional Aviation. Our condolences go to the families and friends of the people who died in the recent air disaster of an Ethiopian flight. The plane transported a number of personnel employed by the UN and passengers from 35 nations.
- The MoU on Environment. We have to recognise the devastating disaster that cyclone Idai caused in southern Africa. It would be a good gesture if this council responds to the request by the Secretary-General of the UN for support for the affected countries. We are a premier organisation and we should be among the first to respond to a call from the UN.
- The Host Country Agreement between Brazil and the NDB on the matter of Brazil's hosting of the NDB's Regional Office for the Americas

BRICS leaders continue to value and appreciate the efforts of the BRICS Business Council members towards the development of the broader BRICS Business Community, as encapsulated in Paragraph 84 of the Johannesburg Declaration, which reads:

“We acknowledge the contributions of the BRICS Business Council and its 5th Annual Report, as well as of the BRICS Business Forum, to enhancing trade and business cooperation in infrastructure, manufacturing, energy, agribusiness, financial services, regional aviation, alignment of technical standards and skills development. We welcome the establishment of the Digital Economy Working Group within the framework of BRICS Business Council.”

The first meeting of BRICS Sherpas/Sous-Sherpas under the auspices of Brazil’s Chairship of BRICS was hosted from 13 to 15 March 2019 in Curitiba, Brazil. I believe it was a very successful meeting that also emphasised the critical role that the BRICS Business Council will continue to play within the BRICS architecture. I am informed that during discussions at this meeting, it was evident that, as it relates to economic development and growth, there is great convergence between Brazil’s Chairship priorities in 2019 and those of South Africa in 2018, thus further cementing Brazil’s commitment to continuity for BRICS. This has been very good news for us and we would like to congratulate you on your achievements. It is greatly appreciated and supported by all our governments.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you fruitful deliberations and hope that you will enjoy your stay in our beautiful country.

I thank you.

**ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

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<http://www.dirco.gov.za/docs/speeches/2019/sisu0404.htm>