

Declaration of the Second BRICS Trade Union Forum

25 March 2013

Introduction

In the spirit of international solidarity, working class unity and trade union co-operation, the BRICS trade union movement gathered in Durban, South Africa on 23rd-25th March, 2013 to reflect on the critical challenges facing the working class in today's changing global political economy and how it impacts on workers' rights, human dignity and sustainable development for all.

Gathered under the auspices of the BRICS Trade Union Forum, we sought to build on the foundations laid by the Moscow Declaration, which was adopted at the 1st BRICS Trade union Forum in Russia in December 2012. This declaration correctly located the cooperation resulting in the emergence of BRICS in the context of the historic prevailing global power relations which favors the interests of developed countries to the exclusion of the developing countries.

We wish to express our profound solidarity and support to all workers involved in struggles in defense of their rights, dignity, health and safety, against poverty, inequalities, unemployment, environmental degradation and for a world based on peace, justice and gender equality.

We affirm the right of all the peoples of the world to determine their own economic policies free from current imposition by the Bretton Woods institutions

Amongst others, we discussed the global capitalist crisis, which is increasing inequalities and underdevelopment in several parts of the developing world. Given the location of this year's Summit, we paid special attention to the conditions facing the working people of Africa, who suffered colonial dehumanization and still suffer extreme conditions of exploitation. This is a consequence of the persisting structures of neo-colonial patterns of accumulation, unfair trade and exclusion in global governance systems.

The significance and concrete meaning of BRICS to workers under the current global conditions should be positioned as an alternative model of inclusive development that serves the interests of the majority in society.

In this regard, we emphasize in one voice the need for the effective and full participation of the working class in all institutions of BRICS. Only in that way will BRICS be different from existing multilateral institutions.

We identified and dealt with four thematic areas relating to the fast-paced developments in the BRICS bloc of countries and the importance of workers' views on its meaning to the struggle for social justice and development for all.

1. On BRICS trade patterns and what they mean for working class solidarity today? Towards a just and fair world trade system

We note that trade within the BRICS countries is centered mainly on commodities and very little on value-added goods. We believe that trade policies within the BRICS countries should aim at supporting industrialization. The key objective should be the realization of mutually beneficial trade amongst BRICS countries and amongst all countries of the world to address the imbalances between the north and the south. In addition, BRICS countries should work with other developing countries towards the transformation of the world trade system.

2. On the development of alternative sources of Development Finance - Our perspective on the BRICS Development Bank

We acknowledge that we are in an era marked by the rise of the financialization of the economy, which has resulted in the domination of finance capital in many developing countries and the rest of the world.

We cautiously welcome the proposal of a BRICS development bank. We strongly believe that this bank should take a different form from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It should primarily be developmental in character.

We envisage the BRICS development Bank solely owned by BRICS, publicly funded, taking all decisions on consensus, promoting trade based on own currencies of its member countries, with a core focus on infrastructure and development in consultation and approval by all stakeholders, inclusive of the community and trade unions.

BRICS trade unions should be represented on the BRICS bank's highest decision-making body and its various task teams.

3. Building working class power for workers' rights and an end to inequalities, unemployment and poverty for decent work and inclusive development

We recognize that without a coordinated approach within the trade unions, workers' interests may not be taken forward.

In defending and advancing workers rights, we commit to ensuring that all multinational companies comply with core labor standards, and do not exploit unequal conditions between countries, driving down wages and eroding workers rights by playing workers against one another.

In addition, we recognize the importance of national and global tripartite dialogue structures, and pledge to defend these as a key site for advancing the decent work agenda and ensuring the protection of workers' rights, particularly those of vulnerable and migrant workers.

We will struggle to ensure that the BRICS agenda does not isolate regional and continental counterparts, and will work to advance the interests of the developing world in general.

4. On the position and role of BRICS trade unions in shaping the agenda in the interest of social justice and people-centered development

It is our considered view that the emergence of BRICS presents the potential to organize it into a progressive force around which various struggles can be coordinated. However, we continue to call for a further decisive shift in the current political and economic outlook of BRICS.

In order to enhance our co-operation, we will establish a coordinating mechanism consisting of representatives from all trade union federations based in each of the BRICS countries. The immediate task is to implement this and previous declarations, including preparations for the next Trade Union Forum in Brazil in 2014.