

# **VIII BRICS Trade Union Forum Declaration. (Brasilia. September 18-20,2019)**

## **Final Declaration**

### **VIII BRICS Trade Union Forum: The Future of Labor, Social Rights, Multilateralism and the Importance of the BRICS in the Global Context**

From September 18 to 20, 2019, the trade union confederations of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of South Africa met to discuss the main challenges facing the countries that make up the BRICS especially issues related to the world of work, the promotion of democracy and the rights and interests of workers.

The creation of the BRICS symbolized an advance in the transition from a unipolar world to a more equitable world, thus contributing to the strengthening of multilateralism that is essential in promoting fairer and more democratic societies. However, today multilateralism has been under attack and BRICS leaders have recognized at the last Summit that global trade faces serious challenges and reinforced the important role of international organizations such as the United Nations - UN and the World Trade Organization by innovations, which should respect the developing country status of the BRICS countries. It is necessary to firmly uphold the international system with the UN at its core, maintain an international order based on international law and promote the construction of a community of shared human destiny.

The significance of promoting multilateralism, particularly in dealing with the challenges of the world of work, clearly indicates that the ILO must take an important role in the multilateral system. It should do so by reinforcing its cooperation and developing institutional arrangements with other organizations to promote policy coherence in pursuit of its human-centered approach to the future of work, recognizing the strong, complex and crucial links between social, trade, financial, economic and environmental policies.

The current scenario is marked by deep inequalities and the social dimension is clearly declining. Over the last decade workers' wages have risen by only 2% per year. And according to the ILO, only 45% of the world's population is covered by, at least, one area of social protection and only 29% has access to full protection.

The ILO also indicated that by 2018 the majority of the 3 billion employed workers did not enjoy sufficient economic security, material well-being and equal opportunities. Even worse, the advance in reducing global unemployment does not reflect an improvement in job quality. We highlight also that in some BRICS countries, unemployment levels are very high and rising.

Persistent poverty, inequalities and injustices, conflict, disasters and other humanitarian emergencies in many parts of the world constitute a threat to securing shared prosperity and decent work for all.

The predominance of informal employment in most of the BRICS countries remains one of the biggest challenges. According to the ILO, today about 60% of the world's active population is in the informal sector and most are women. An important factor is the persistent gender pay gap and the lack of gender equality in the labor markets. Another worrying aspect is the issue of young people, since according to the ILO one out of five young people (under 25) do not work and do not study, which means that their job prospects are compromised. These elements must be considered as priorities to achieve the elimination of inequalities and the promotion of social justice.

All workers should enjoy adequate protection in accordance with the Decent Work Agenda, taking into account: (i) respect for their fundamental rights; (ii) an adequate minimum wage, statutory or negotiated; (iii) maximum limits on working time; and (iv) safety and health at work.

The intense processes of technological innovations generate individualized and precarious work modalities with even more extinction of jobs. The trend in labor markets, in general, continues with a perverse precariousness, with a decline in formal employment and a strong growth of self-employed, part time and digital platforms workers, mostly without rights and/or social protection. Still about job losses, according to the World Bank, about 20% of jobs will disappear altogether. Another study by the McKinsey Global Institute predicts that by 2030, about 60 percent of occupations could be automated in one-third of their core business.

Profound changes in labor markets are already underway, especially in developing countries as the impacts on these countries are greatest, as it is the developed countries that hold most of the technological advances. That is, these advances may generate even more inequality between those who have access to technology and also the ability to use them and those who do not. In addition to impacting the world of work, it occurs at a time when democracy, rights and social dialogue are under attack.

Thus, we live at a time of transformative change in the world of work, driven by technological innovations, demographic shifts, environmental and climate change, and globalization, as well as at a time of persistent inequalities, which have profound impacts on the nature and future of work, and on the place and dignity of people in it.

ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work points to the need to appropriate of the full potential of technological progress and productivity through social dialogue to achieve decent work and development for all. Importantly, it is the states that will have to make the

necessary adjustments to the regulatory, fiscal, educational and social protection systems to advocate lifelong learning and improve the workers' skills and to include those excluded from the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” and to generate employment policies aimed at the generation and promotion of decent work. But what happens in some BRICS countries are perverse reforms that attack rights and decent work, increasingly strengthening modalities of precarious work.

The BRICS may be a reference space, but more than that, it may be a space for producing alternatives in the face of the impacts of the so-called “Fourth Industrial Revolution”. But we cannot discuss the impacts on jobs and our societies without social actors being able to participate and contribute in the debates and in the policy making. Nor can we move forward on a social and democratic agenda when we have countries in this body that violate international labor conventions or that attack democracy itself and the rights of workers.

It is obvious that there exists a need to address all fundamental principles and rights at work, at all levels, through strong, influential and inclusive mechanisms of social dialogue, in the conviction that such a dialogue contributes to the overall cohesion of societies and is a matter of public interest, and is crucial for a well functioning and productive economy. Promoting workers' rights is a key element for the attainment of inclusive and sustainable growth, with a focus on freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining as enabling rights. Considering the above scenario, the BRICS trade union confederations:

1. Require the need for formal recognition of the BRICS Trade Union Forum and for it to be included in the official calendar.
2. Reaffirm the need for the consolidation of BRICS as a multilateral space aimed at contributing to the reduction of socio-economic inequalities; we require equal opportunities, equal participation and equal treatment, including equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value;
3. Emphasize the importance of strengthening and consolidating multilateralism as a model for ensuring a more egalitarian, just and peaceful world. In addition to the commitment made by the BRICS countries at the last summit to fully implement the Paris Agreement, it is essential to promote technology and knowledge transfer, as well as financial support when necessary, to efforts to implement an effective and just transition;
4. Affirm the need to also incorporate social actors and the International Labor Organization (ILO) in the work related to the world of work and policies seeking social justice that are being discussed in the various institutional spaces of the BRICS;

5. Welcome the initiative to create the Partnership on the New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR) and demand the participation of social actors in this consultative space to discuss policies aimed at maximizing opportunities and dealing with the impacts of the “4th Industrial Revolution”, as clearly jobs have been affected;

6. Welcome the creation of the New Development Bank (NDB). Since the bank's objective is to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects in its member countries, we demand social participation in this space, as well as the inclusion of financing for the development of advanced technologies. Social participation would strengthen this body by promoting social dialogue by allowing funded projects to be monitored to ensure decent work and respect for ILO international conventions;

7. Demand that decisions taken in the Employment Working Group are implemented, especially the 3-year plan (2019 - 2021) which includes measures to coordinate cooperation between the social partners and the development of social dialogue and collective bargaining, including:

7.1. Strengthening tripartite dialogue to promote the development of the world of labor;

7.2. Development of the technical capacities of the social partners;

7.3. Recognition of safety and health at work as a fundamental principle and right at work;

7.4. Improvement of labor legislation in the BRICS countries;

7.5. Strengthening labor inspections and protection systems.

8. Consider essential that reforms, technological and scientific advances and economic development are effectively at the service of humanity, having as objective the guarantee of dignity and the integral development of the human being.

9. In line with the ILO Centenary Report, we recommend the establishment in BRICS member States of a Universal Labour Guarantee that includes: (a) fundamental workers' rights: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining and freedom from forced labour, child labour and discrimination; and (b) a set of basic working conditions: (i) adequate living wage; (ii) limits on hours of work; and (iii) safe and healthy workplaces.

Brasilia, September 18, 2019.