

2018 BRICS Trade Union Forum (BTUF)

DECLARATION



Inclusive BRICS for Decent Work and Sustainable Development:
African Agenda which places people at the centre of industrialisation,
investment and development

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Durban- South Africa

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Introduction

We, the 7th BRICS Trade Unions Forum (BTUF)¹ gathered in South Africa, 27- 29th July 2018, in a climate of major global economic crisis that impact negatively on workers, society and the future of humanity as a whole. It is in this context that we critically reflect on the state of the world economy in relation to; the crisis of under-development, extreme inequalities, the lack of fundamentals required for our people to progress, unemployment and conditions of work, the future of human development and dignity, as well as the necessity for peace and justice in the world.

These are the imperatives that help us determine the most appropriate steps to be taken towards a new, just and inclusive labour market and developmental system.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), "it is estimated that more than 61 million jobs have been lost since the start of the global economic crisis in 2008". Further estimates indicate that about 500 million new jobs will need to be created by 2020 to provide opportunities to those currently unemployed and to the young people who are projected to join the workforce over the next few years.

In view of the above, it is our fervent belief that BRICS is a product of a particular period in the historical development of the global economy and world affairs. A period marked by increasing uncertainty, deepening inequalities and unemployment levels, accelerated environmental destruction and conflicts, as well as heightened uni-polarity in most spheres of world affairs.

In that regard, the trade union movement from the BRICS countries constituted BTUF as a force for social justice and the desire to build an inclusive society, equitable development and human dignity for all. It is a profound social force for a just future modelled on Inclusive and Sustainable Development, both within BRICS itself and in the whole world.

Since its emergence, it has boldly asserted itself on many issues affecting workers, communities, developing countries, peace and security, food production, unemployment, international labour standards and workers' rights, role and regulation of Multinational Companies in a highly globalised world, the changing role

¹ The BRICS Trade union forum is an alliance of trade union federations from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

of the state and the need to strengthen multilateralism and affirm human dignity in all spheres of life.

According to analysts, the World Economic Forum's (WEF) theme on the 4th Industrial revolution was a clear signal that the global economy is entering a new mega trend phase. Managing successive waves of economic crisis: stabilising the financial system; countering concerns of regional disintegration; and increasing urgency about unemployment, unfulfilled social contracts and inequality. From year to year, the tide of technology has been rising, bringing with it promise and peril for the global economy.

Goals for the 2018 BRICS Trade Union Forum:

The following are our strategic goals that will guide all our interventions and activities for the 2018 BRICS Trade Union Forum Presidency.

Goal One: Investment in people, social & economic infrastructure and environmental responsibility for sustainable development.

The principal mission of BTUF is to ensure that states and societies prioritise investment in human development, social and economic infrastructure, with the primary emphasis of environmental responsibility for future generations and sustainability.

It is for that reason that we call for more investment in the productive sectors of the economy and building their industrial and manufacturing capacity in order to create jobs and promote sustainable development

We further call for the deliberate development of agricultural production, agro-processing and Small to Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) involved in farming to achieve food security and meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with particular focus on the needs of workers, their families and communities. This requires effective land distribution, ownership, control and use patterns that empower peoples' ability to meet their developmental and social needs.

It is our objective to defend the environment, promote international commitments to climate change and safeguard the future heritage and natural resources bequeathed upon us by mother earth and have a profound sense of duty to use and manage it effectively as our most precious inheritance.

We unequivocally affirm the importance of Universal Health Coverage and guaranteed access for all workers and poor communities in order to improve the quality and conditions of life for the majority.

Goal TWO: Building workers skills, innovation and developmental ICT tools

Most trends and key indicators point to a future of work largely based on digital and artificial intelligence, whose most pronounced impact include the displacement of workers in traditional industries and the creation of new industries at the same time. This development can be posed as necessitated by the need for more efficient, effective and convenient means to do work, but the losses of jobs and income, shall result in dire consequences for workers, their families and whole communities and even countries.

In this regard, the heart of the question is, what does this future mean for work and society, for lives and incomes, as well as for social justice and equitable development for all? The effects even get worse when we compare regions and different parts of the world and the disproportionate devastations they may unevenly have.

It is for this reason that our struggle must be about placing the needs of human development, environmental justice and social progress at the centre of the 4th Industrial revolution and all technological innovations, with the main aim being to advance social and economic justice, enhance more skills for workers, promote solidarity and integration of people and cultures, as well as respond to the pressing needs facing societies.

BRICS must work collectively to harness the massive capacity and resources within its command, towards sharpening common innovations, sharing experiences and building locally stimulated innovation solutions in research and knowledge production spheres. This must also include wider access and democratic control of the internet and IT tools for mass accessibility of information and knowledge in our communities and across regions and social groups, particularly the most vulnerable in society, with special emphasis on women, youth, workers with disabilities, farm workers, domestic workers, migrants and informal economy workers.

Goal THREE: Decent work, effective Bargaining and Social Protection

Our struggle for decent work is at the same time a struggle for decent incomes and Comprehensive Social Protection for all. In this regard, effective participation, collective bargaining and social dialogue are an important part of this equation and necessary for the advancement of dignified working and living conditions for workers and their families.

The formalisation of the informal economy, including the enhancement of their entrepreneurial capacity and sustainability are important ingredients for the goal of decent work and social protection of the most vulnerable in society. State support for the informal sector is important to help it from the burden of vested powerful and competing monopoly interests who control the value chain of production.

Towards that end, child labour, sexual exploitation and human trafficking must be eliminated totally to end slave-based conditions and subjugation in the workplace, in society and universally. These backward practices commodify and viciously exploit the most vulnerable, denying them of much needed incomes and dignity, hence weakening their social dignity, bargaining rights, and lowering the quality of life for whole societies.

Goal FOUR: Full Employment and job creation

Full employment is an essential condition for the effective, inclusive and sustainable development of the whole society. Access to sustainable jobs and incomes ensures the productive and meaningful inclusion and participation of all people in the economic and social life of nations, fair and shared growth for the effective redistribution of wealth and opportunities.

According to the World Employment and Social Outlooks 2016 Report, “Working poverty rates among youth in Sub-Saharan Africa is nearly 70 per cent in 2016, translating to 64.4 million working youth in that region living in extreme or moderate poverty (less than \$3.10 per day). The region continues to report the highest youth working poverty rates globally. The number of poor working youth has increased by as much as 80 per cent for the past 25 years. This is coupled with the fact that young workers in the region have one of the highest probabilities of living in poverty in comparison to adults”.

At the centre of employment creation is youth employment and its employability through the provision of relevant skills and capacity for full participation in the labour market and economic life as a whole. Such measures as industrial learnerships, apprenticeships and workplace exposure are critical to the experience required to empower and integrate young people into the labour market and active economic life.

It is very important that we deliberately and decisively improve women’s access to employment and guarantee equal pay for work of equal value, in order to dismantle all forms of discrimination in the workplace and in society generally.

In the same vein and with the same vigour, we must actively promote the employment and rights of vulnerable groups and people with disabilities. This means, removing all obstacles to their full employment, their career development and their productive participation in socio-economic development as a whole.

Goal FIVE: Trade union participation and representation of all social partners for effective Social Dialogue

We reaffirm the centrality of inclusivity in BRICS for sustainable and meaningful results to the majority of its people and the developing world in general. In this regard, important voices within the BRICS community, particularly, social partners, central to which is the trade union movement, must be officially and fully integrated into the mainstream process of decision making.

This will also strengthen the broad developmental and democratic paradigm of the whole system and offer an effective alternative to the dominant global institutions and related processes that exclude major voices in their decision-making designs and power structures. Particularly, the international financial and economic structures, such as the IMF and the World Bank, which are modelled on exclusive, monopoly and disempowering model of dis-engagement on matters affecting whole societies.

We intend to further enhance the role of trade unions within BRICS and strengthen social dialogue through establishing constructive cooperation with BRICS Business Council in the sphere of promoting Decent Work principles in BRICS countries including through the projects involving investments by the New Development Bank.

Goal SIX: Democratic, ethical and responsive governance (both public and private) towards a new, transparent, accountable and inclusive international multilateral system)

The biggest crisis humanity is facing in our era, amongst others, is the scandalous revelations almost on a daily basis of; company tax evasions, profit-shifting, corruption and fraud, corporate collusion, illicit financial flows, workers retirement fund lootings and complicit audit frauds by major private and public companies, that deny countries and communities of the much needed billions to provide services and needs for the people and development.

BRICS must be much more vigorous in combating unethical social and corporate behaviour by all institutions and work towards more transparency and accountability in order to promote good and responsible leadership values in society.

Conclusion

Having underlined all the above issues as our common focus we pledge to remain an effective and united alliance of trade unions, working with other organisations and unions, particularly in the global south in order to promote mutual relations amongst ourselves and strengthen our collective power.

We are also proud to take stock of the more than 7 years of our existence as a formative organ, but whose presence has generated so much interest and added value to the whole BRICS establishment and beyond. We seek to strengthen a very critical evaluation of our role and impact in more substantive terms, in order to position ourselves as more effective role players in advancing the interests of workers and society in general.

Finally, we commit ourselves to this and previous declarations upon which we shall base our joint action plan as a basic guide to the most immediate and practical activities we seek to undertake collectively. To this end, we shall develop appropriate mechanisms, instruments and means for the realisation of our goals. This includes a

BRICS Multinationals Enterprise Mechanism and facility for Peer Review and tracking of the forms of investment and how they comply with international labour standards and worker expectations in our various countries and beyond, particularly in developing countries.