



Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Labour and Employment

9th of October 2020

Russian Federation

Introduction

1. We, the Ministers of Labour and Employment from 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 in Moscow on 9th of October 2020 for the sixth BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting to discuss recent global labour market issues and share experiences in order to move forward BRICS Member States cooperation in labour and employment.
2. Globally, economies and labour markets in 2020 have experienced unprecedented challenge due to the outbreak of COVID-19. We remain deeply saddened by the human cost and economic devastation caused by the spread of the pandemic and re-emphasize the need to work in a collaborative and coherent manner to respond to this common challenge.
3. During the pandemic, the issue of preserving jobs and the level of income, which guarantees not only survival, but also the restoration of the working capacity of both workers and their families, has become especially acute. We emphasize the need for a constructive and constant social dialogue with employers 'and workers' organizations in order to combine efforts to overcome influence and consequences of COVID-19 pandemic, and to recover and further develop national economies.
4. We acknowledge the need to continue our efforts in meeting global labour market and public health challenges and their effects on workers and employers. We welcome the progress made by BRICS Member States in ensuring stability and inclusiveness of labour markets during this crisis and in implementing commitments made during our previous meetings to ensure the creation of high quality formal employment and to promote the

transition from the informal to the formal economy through employment generation programs that encourage innovation and entrepreneurship; development of comprehensive social protection systems that are effective, equitable and economically sustainable; and activities aimed at unlocking workers' potential.

5. We further seek to strive, both collectively and nationally, for inclusive and human-centered development of workers across all sectors. We will promote preventative safety and health at work culture, alleviate poverty through further social and economic transformations and leverage the effective and efficient use of digital technology for decent work.

Development of a preventative safety and health at work culture

6. Preventative safety and health at work culture is an essential element of strong, sustainable, and inclusive growth. Work-related accidents and diseases result in lost workdays, diminished productivity, poor employer-employee relations, and other consequences that affect individuals, families, enterprises, communities, and national economies. The importance of a preventative safety and health at work culture became even more prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic and it proved to be essential for protection of workers, especially frontline workers, who had to keep working during lockdown and for a safe return to work.
7. BRICS Member States are committed to improving a preventative safety and health at work culture in which the right to a safe, healthy and decent working environment is respected at all levels.
8. We will continue to focus on preventive and protective measures, risk management, hazard identification, including the use of the hierarchy of controls and management, raising public awareness and development of national occupational safety and health bodies and professionally registered individuals.
9. We will encourage businesses to take primary responsibility and improve the working conditions, with better risk assessment and adequate management of new materials, new technologies and emerging industries.
10. We emphasize the need to promote a preventative safety and health at work culture among workers in situation of vulnerability and in high-risk sectors, especially among women, youth and older workers.

11. We agree that a preventative safety and health at work culture is a multidimensional phenomenon. In this regard we reaffirm our commitments to eradicate violence and harassment at work in accordance with national circumstances.
12. Monitoring and data collection on safety and health at work as per national circumstances remains essential for development and implementation of appropriate strategies, policies and regulations for preventative safety and health at work culture.
13. We will enhance training on safety and health at work for all stakeholders including trainings for supervisors.
14. We will continue to promote workplace safety and health compliance through strategic approaches combining incentives and enforcement.
15. We will continue to work closely with social partners to improve safety and health at work culture.
16. We agree to continue consultations and information sharing on ways to promote a preventative safety and health at work culture, including in relation to SMMEs and the informal economy, using the existing BRICS resources.

Poverty alleviation through social and economic transformations

17. Poverty alleviation remains one of the most important challenges all over the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the incomes of our citizens. In our policy responses we have undertaken measures that seek to protect income and provide adequate support for all workers in need, regardless of their employment status, age or gender. We will continue our efforts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic by supporting the creation of more decent jobs, including those provided by micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, removing barriers faced by vulnerable groups who would like to enter the labour market and ensuring basic social protection for all are essential for combating all forms of poverty.
18. In accordance with our national circumstances, we will formulate and implement relevant policies to alleviate poverty through the promotion of productive employment and decent jobs.
19. We will continue our efforts to meet the objectives set in the BRICS Action Plan for Poverty Alleviation and Reduction through Skills (2017). We will

- enhance investments to upgrade the employability of workers through lifelong vocational education, training, upskilling, re-skilling and actively support labour market transitions through employment services.
20. We will pay special attention to the most vulnerable groups and workers most at risk with targeted employment and social protection measures.
 21. We commit to fostering women's empowerment and increasing their employment opportunities by encouraging women to participate in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).
 22. We also commit to investing in the care economy, which provides paid care work and opens career pathways for both women and men, including care workers and those out of the labor force because of family responsibilities.
 23. We will encourage employers to create opportunities for young workers and to retain older workers who would like to continue working while ensuring pension provision to those who want to retire.
 24. We will further strengthen our social protection systems, especially through nationally defined social protection floors taking into account the ILO social protection floor recommendation, 2012 N 202—and progressively ensure universal access to comprehensive and adequate social protection to strengthen solidarity and social cohesion.
 25. We will continue, in accordance with national circumstances to provide a wide range of social protection benefits through universal schemes, social insurance and social assistance to those in need. We will further increase the efficiency of our social protection systems by improving the links between the provision of cash transfers and access to employment, healthcare, education and other services.
 26. We will continue to follow up the progress achieved in poverty reduction especially in the context of recovery from the crisis of COVID-19. In this regard we ask the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes with the support of international organizations (the BRICS Social Security Cooperation Framework Virtual Liaison Office) to conduct research on "Support of employment and income in the context of the COVID-19 crisis".
 27. We take note of the proposal of the Russian Federation of an "Agreement between the BRICS States on Cooperation in the Field of Social Security" and welcome further discussions for bilateral BRICS social security agreements as a tool to facilitate eradication of poverty.

Future of work in the digital economy

28. Technological development and digitalization will continue transforming BRICS economies, creating new jobs while requiring transitions for the workers who lose their job, changing the way people are working and shaping the future of work. The COVID 19 pandemic has not only brought into focus the existing challenges we face such as the ongoing digital divide, but also become a catalyst for change. The shift to remote teleworking options, for example, allowed many businesses to stay operational and retain workers. It has also created new opportunities for the development of services, at a time when manufacturing supply chains are likely to be redefined.
29. We reaffirm our commitment to striving for providing training to match the skill needs of new business models and new working arrangements in the digital economy.
30. We will promote entrepreneurship, especially for the youth to start their own businesses with the use of digital technology which may ensure decent work opportunities.
31. We recognize the need to bridge the digital divide. We will continue to improve digital literacy particularly for vulnerable groups as per national circumstances and enhance information and communication infrastructure to support and strengthen digitalization of public services.
32. We will strive to equip and upgrade our public employment services, labour inspectorates and social protection institutions with advanced digital technologies to increase their efficiency and effectiveness, including reaching out to workers in the informal economy.
33. We will take into account the broader goals of employment security, decent wages, social protection and social dialogue in pursuit of new digital working arrangements.
34. We welcome the participation of social partners in the development of occupational standards and provision of training, in the area of digital economy.
35. We acknowledge the positive impact of digitalization in creating new telework opportunities especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teleworking allowed many businesses to stay operational and retain workers.

36. We agree to broaden knowledge sharing on the digitalization of social security and employment services and we will strive to ensure adequate protection of data privacy for such services by implementing measures aimed at securing and protecting private individual information.

Way Forward

37. We will present this Declaration for the BRICS Leaders' consideration, reaffirming our commitment to human-centered development and inclusive labour markets and social protection systems.

38. We acknowledge the valuable contribution of social partners in the development of inclusive labour and social protection policies. We will continue to strengthen social dialogue to advance labour market development.

39. We appreciate the expertise provided by the ILO, the ISSA and other international organizations and will continue our cooperation with them.

40. We thank Russia's Presidency for its leadership in organization of the sixth meeting of the BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers and the meetings of the Employment Working Group and look forward to our next meeting under the Presidency of the Republic of India.