



Addressing the Summit Theme

"BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialisation"

Plenary Session Statement by the Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa

Durban, South Africa, March 27, 2013

Your Excellency, President Rouseff,
Your Excellency President Putin,
Your Excellency, President Xi Jinping,
Your Excellency Prime Minister Singh,
Honourable Ministers representing the BRICS countries,
Your Excellencies Ambassadors from BRICS countries,
Ladies and gentlemen

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you all to the warm African shores.

We meet here for the first BRICS Summit on African soil. Our fifth anniversary in the cradle of humankind completes the first cycle of BRICS Summits.

It is appropriate that we celebrate BRICS achievements, including our contributions to the further strengthening of the global agenda to ensure a more equitable and prosperous world for all.

The BRICS forum offers member states the opportunity of an amplified voice for political, financial, economic and social interests around a common growth and development agenda based on our shared values.

We have firmly established BRICS as a credible and constructive grouping in our quest to forge a new paradigm of global relations and cooperation.

BRICS countries continue to power, stabilise and support the global economy. We, however, remain vigilant to underlying weaknesses and risk in the global economy.

We have discussed the various pertinent conflict situations in the world and will coordinate closely notably also through the meetings of our International Relations/Foreign Ministers and National Security Advisors.

We remain committed to ensuring peace and security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Our shared vision of intensifying development, integration and industrialisation remains at the core of our BRICS partnership, as well as our dialogue with other Emerging Markets and Developing Countries and thus informed our Summit theme and discussions.

In terms of our earlier deliberations, we have decided to enter formal negotiations to establish a BRICS-led new development Bank based on our own considerable infrastructure needs, which amounts to around USD 4,5 trillion over the next five years, but also to cooperate with other Emerging Markets and Developing Countries in future.

Our resolve extends further to also establish a BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement.

We are working towards related initiatives in our economic deliberations to further strengthen our intra-BRICS cooperation.

In this regard, we have launched the BRICS Business Council this morning. That session brought together the BRICS Leaders and our Captains of Industry to ensure synergy in our respective endeavours.

We have also during this Summit, launched the BRICS Think Tanks Council to assist us with innovation.

We also acknowledge the successful hosting of the Fifth BRICS Academic Forum, and appreciate the role of our academics in fostering dialogue between the BRICS countries.

The knowledge economy needs to be a learning economy as we and other emerging Markets and Developing Countries shift from primary to industrial production, notably to enjoy the fruits of our own resource endowments through beneficiation, to the supply of modern services.

In this regard, each of our countries faces unique challenges.

In South Africa, we need to upgrade the skills of at least 3.2 million youths who are neither in employment, education nor training, so as to ensure that they are employable and can be absorbed into productive labour market economy.

We are working on overhauling our post-school education and training system, as well as the skills development environment in order to address this challenge.

Our government has classified education as an apex priority and, thus, naturally has a bigger share of our national budget. We are keen to learn from the experiences of other BRICS countries on how they are dealing with similar challenges.

Today, global media and information technology is perhaps one of the pre-eminent carriers of the relations between nations of the modern world given its immediacy and extent and BRICS has certainly grasped its fair share of global attention.

In as far as BRICS objectives are concerned, this does not extend only to technical capability and shared opportunities in the field of communication, but principally to the manner in which the BRICS story and messages are told in the global context, as well as in the domestic markets of the BRICS member countries.

We look forward to further cooperation in this field.

The exponential growth and cooperation potential of the BRICS-Africa partnership will be further discussed together with the African leadership at a Retreat which I will host later today, to focus on the continents infrastructure development agenda.

Sub-Saharan Africa achieved strong growth of over 5% in 2012 which will continue in 2013 notwithstanding the fairly weak, but improving growth prospects in the rest of the world.

African countries are fully committed to maintaining the momentum on reforms, to induce higher growth supportive of poverty reduction.

We must, therefore, work together to support the unyielding efforts of our people to strive towards a better life, including and especially in Sub Saharan Africa so rich, albeit complex, in opportunities. The BRICS- Africa cooperation in this 5th Summit is therefore a significant development.

As we enter our next cycle it is imperative that we consolidate the gains of our coming together and provide impetus to global debates in the various fora and spheres of human endeavour.

I am convinced that when we celebrate our tenth anniversary, this resolve will be justified.

We are truly pleased with the progress made at this session.

I Thank you.