



Outcome of 8th BRICS Summit and BIMSTEC Outreach in Goa : South Africa's Outlook and the Africa Agenda

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South African President Jacob Zuma along with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Brazilian President Michel Temer, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Chinese President Xi Jinping attended the eighth BRICS summit that took place from 15-16 October 2016 in Goa, under the theme of "Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions". The Summit concluded with the adoption of the Goa Declaration and Action Plan, which covered a number of issues concerning all the countries. The Summit also gave an opportunity to South Africa to reach out to BIMSTEC countries. It is important in this context to understand South Africa's perspectives on various issues at the BRICS Summit, its standpoint on BRICS- BIMSTEC convergence and the Africa Agenda, which South Africa emphasizes upon within BRICS.

BRICS Common Agenda and Initiatives

National Development Bank

In this regard, President Jacob Zuma along with other BRICS Leaders noted with satisfaction the operationalisation of the New Development Bank (NDB) and of the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), which contributes greatly to the global economy and the strengthening of the international financial architecture. He welcomed the report presented by NDB President on the work of the Bank during the first year of its operations and progress made in operationalising the Africa Regional Centre (ARC) of the NDB.

Highlighting the importance of NDB to Africa's development Agenda, President Zuma in his speech in the plenary session said that South Africa considers its participation in BRICS to be interlinked with the development objectives of Africa as reflected in Agenda 2063, which is the Continent's blueprint for economic and technological transformation. He underlined that there

are significant opportunities present on the Continent, however, its full potential will remain unfulfilled unless the challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, small and fragmented markets, under-developed production structures and inadequate economic diversification are addressed. In this regard, he welcomed the establishment of the New Development Bank Africa Regional Centre in South Africa as timely since it will pay particular attention to Africa's needs in respect of industrialisation and infrastructure as well as sustainable development.

UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Regarding the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, South Africa along with other BRICS members welcomed adoption of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, particularly its people-centred and holistic approach to sustainable development and its emphasis on equality, equity and quality-life to all. They reaffirmed the guiding principles for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including the Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDRs).

South Africa together with others urged developed countries to honour their commitment to earmark 0.7% of gross national income for official development assistance to developing countries, as those commitments would play a crucial role in the implementation of the SDGs. Along with other members, South Africa also welcomed the establishment of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism within the UN with a mandate to facilitate technology for the implementation of the SDGs. Besides this it welcomed the G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda adopted during the Hangzhou Summit and committed itself to its implementation and pledged to enhance consultations and co-ordination on the G20 agenda, especially regarding issues of mutual interest to their countries. President Zuma, acknowledged the historic contributions of the developed world, and stated that there is a need for enhanced partnerships to mobilise all available resources to achieve Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Terrorism

South Africa along with others strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, particularly attacks against its members and said there was no justification for acts of terror. South Africa agreed to strengthen co-operation with other member countries in combating international terrorism at the bilateral and international levels. During the bilateral meeting with PM Modi, both leaders discussed strengthening cooperation between India and South Africa in the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) forum dealing with terrorism (the 1267 committee).

Climate Change

South Africa welcomed the Paris Agreement and urged countries to implement it by providing financial resources, technology and capacity building assistance to support developing countries in mitigation. President Zuma and the other leaders emphasised that the comprehensive, balanced and ambitious nature of the Paris Agreement reaffirmed the principles of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, including the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances. Voicing Africa's concern, President Zuma noted that coastal communities in Africa

faced the dire consequences of climate change and required urgent funding to adapt to the various problems. He said it was important that developing countries became partners in this process and that the related global value chains included the owners of natural resources to also be the beneficiaries.

Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership

South Africa and other members appreciated the progress in the implementation of the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership and emphasised the importance of the BRICS Roadmap for Trade, Economic and Investment Cooperation until 2020. South Africa welcomed India's initiative to host the first BRICS Trade Fair in New Delhi, which is considered as an important step towards the implementation of Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership.

In respect of implementation of Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership President Zuma, in his address to the BRICS Business council spelt out various projects for cooperation with BRICS partners in the areas of Insurance and Re-insurance Cooperation; the BRICS Seed Bank; Infrastructure including Electricity Generation and Transmission, the BRICS Cable Project, the African Union (AU) North-South Development Corridor, the Ocean's Economy, Cooperation in Aviation as well as Manufacturing. Furthermore, he stated that the NDB African Regional Centre which is being established in South Africa will pay particular attention to project preparation, funding and the implementation of Continental projects.

South Africa together with other BRICS countries further welcomed the possibility of setting up an independent BRICS Rating Agency based on market-oriented principles, in order to further strengthen the global governance architecture.

The Africa Agenda

When South Africa hosted the Summit in 2013, it emphasised that BRICS needed to be relevant to Africa's development priorities. The ambitious intentions stated in the BRICS Summit Declarations and Action Plans need to translate into actions that deliver tangible outcomes. Therefore, it is important to note here that in this year's BRICS Summit the African Agenda had a substantial focus. Four paragraphs in the declaration were devoted to the issue of Africa's development and security.

The BRICS members welcomed the African Union's (AU) vision, aspirations, goals and priorities for Africa's development enshrined in Agenda 2063, which is complementary with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Leaders reaffirmed their support for Africa's implementation of its various programmes in pursuit of its continental agenda for peace, socio-economic development, sustainable development and regional integration. They welcomed recent elections that have been held in the continent and the peaceful manner in which they were conducted. They supported the AU's efforts to resolving conflicts through its peace and security architecture, in collaboration with the United Nations and the continent's regional organisations, and to contributing towards lasting and sustainable peace and security in Africa.

MoUs

South Africa welcomed the signing of the various Memoranda of Understanding which attest to the deepening of wide-ranging cooperation as part of BRICS institution-building agenda. The MoUs were (i) Establishment of BRICS Agriculture Research Platform, (ii) MoU on Mutual Cooperation between Diplomatic Academies and (iii) Regulations on Customs Cooperation Committee.

South Africa's Outreach

During the two-day Summit, President Zuma held bilateral meetings with all other four BRICS leaders, namely, President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China; President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation; Prime Minister Narendra Modi of the Republic of India, and President Michel Temer of Brazil. The leaders discussed bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual concern aimed at achieving development, economic growth and prosperity, as well as peace and security. South Africa also welcomed India's outreach initiative to the BIMSTEC countries, and support to regional development and integration initiatives of BRICS members.

India and South Africa Bilateral talks

On the sidelines of BRICS Summit Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Jacob Zuma held separate bilateral talks. Issues relating to terrorism, trade, NSG and IBSA were discussed during their meeting

PM Modi thanked President Zuma for the statement he had issued after the terrorist attack in Uri, and greatly appreciated the solidarity that South Africa had shown. PM Modi said that terrorism is a global phenomenon which needs global action. In this context, he called for strengthening cooperation between India and South Africa in the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) forum in dealing with terrorism. He also called for working on the early adoption of the comprehensive conviction on international terrorism, which was proposed by India way back in 1996.

With regard to trade relations both leaders acknowledged that the current volume of trade between the two countries was low and much more could be done to increase it. In this context Prime Minister Modi said that the sectors such as Minerals, Energy, Hydro-carbons were very promising areas. In particular he said that South Africa's expertise in deep mining was something that India could utilize very profitably.

President Zuma added that both sides need to expand cooperation in areas of renewable energy and higher education. He also called for simplification of the visa regime between the two countries. He also alluded to two important milestones which were coming up. One was the 20th anniversary of the signing of Red Fort Declaration; this was signed when President Mandela had

come on a state visit to India. He also alluded to South Africa India Joint Ministerial Commission which is scheduled to take place in New Delhi in 2017.

PM Modi thanked President Zuma on South Africa's support to India on the Nuclear Suppliers' Group and hoped that it would continue its support.

Both leaders acknowledged the relevance of IBSA (India, Brazil South Africa grouping), which are three major democracy and three major continents, saying they must have more frequent meetings. However, nothing was specified about next IBSA Summit.

South Africa's Standpoint on BRICS- BIMSTEC

President Zuma stated that BIMSTEC members are all friends of South Africa enjoying strong and cordial relations. It shares many of the objectives of the BIMSTEC Group which include creating an enabling environment for rapid economic development, accelerating economic growth and social progress and in supporting one another in the form of training and research facilities.

In the bilateral context, he said that growing trade and investment between the nations of BRICS and BIMSTEC will provide the means of creating further employment opportunities. But he stressed that there is a need to identify what barriers to trade currently exist between them, as well as consider a reduction in tariffs and the expansion of infrastructure links. South Africa informed about the progress made in infrastructure development in Africa, particularly in improving transport links across the Continent, which had a positive impact on intra-Africa trade. President Zuma underlined that South Africa provides an excellent link to the region which the member states of BRICS and BIMSTEC can utilise. The expansion of sea links and the development of the Blue Economy in particular, also provide opportunities to consolidate commercial relations between the BRICS and BIMSTEC countries. He informed the BIMSTEC members about South Africa's programme termed Operation Phakisa, which is aimed at fast tracking development in the oceans economy including areas such as ship building, aqua-culture and fisheries. In this regard South Africa welcomed the sharing of information, experience and programmes related to the oceans economy.

According to South Africa another important area which links BRICS and the BIMSTEC countries relates to environment and climate change challenges in particular. All the member states presently face the threat of either rising sea levels or of extreme climatic conditions such as floods and droughts and other natural disasters. They have the opportunity of pooling together their respective best practices in order to address the challenges we face.

President Zuma also outlined that BRICS-BIMSTEC partnership can thrive also through strengthening cooperation in the areas of training, scholarships and research facilities, specifically in the educational, professional and scientific fields, as each of the countries has niche areas of expertise and enjoy comparative advantages within specific fields. Cross fertilisation, the exchange of ideas, joint projects and skills training can go far in promoting economic development and social progress in the BRICS and BIMSTEC countries.

South Africa also emphasized upon the cooperation between BRICS and BIMSTEC in endeavours to reform the existing global order and the global system of governance. As the established world paradigm was outdated, undemocratic and unfair when seen against the background of contemporary realities, together they can cooperate and enhance work towards the reform of the United Nations organisation and the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Conclusion

As far as South Africa is concerned the outcome of the BRICS Summit holds promise for contributing to finding innovative approaches and solutions to its identified triple challenges - poverty, unemployment and inequality, as well as the development objectives and infrastructure agenda of the Continent as outlined in the African Union's Agenda 2063. It looked forward to developing new BRICS initiatives in a wider range of areas in the years to come.

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