

**Interview with Dr. Marina Larionova, Head of the Center for International Institutions  
Research (CIIR), Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public  
Administration (RANEPA)**

**1. What expectations do you have for this year's summit under China's chairmanship?**

I expect BRICS to consolidate its core agenda, and move from deliberation and direction-setting to decision-making. I hope the Chinese Presidency will foster cooperation on BRICS economic agenda, trade and investment issues that remain relevant for all five countries. I also believe that China could build on its 2016 G20 Presidency experience promoting the issues of ICT, innovations and new industrial revolution into the BRICS agenda.

Apart from adopting new concrete decisions, BRICS could launch mechanisms for assessing its progress on previous pledges. Some actions aimed at strengthening BRICS accountability have been already announced by our trade and labor ministers. Further steps in this direction could be agreed at the Xiamen Summit, including mechanisms for assessing progress on the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership. The Chinese Presidency can thus ensure continuity with previous summits.

Overall, the success of the 2017 BRICS summit will depend on the ability of the Presidency to find a right balance between global challenges, specific issues relevant for other BRICS states and Chinese national priorities.

**2. What are the most significant achievements of BRICS mechanism?**

I would like to mention three main achievements. In my view, the establishment of the New Development Bank and Contingent Reserve Arrangement is the major practical outcome of BRICS cooperation. The Bank has already approved financing for a number of large infrastructure projects in all BRICS countries. It is integrated into the Global Infrastructure Connectivity Alliance, participates in the Global Investment Forum and other multilateral initiatives aimed at enhancing the volume and improving the quality of infrastructure financing. Thus, the NDB becomes a major player that can bring positive outcomes not only for BRICS, but also for other emerging economies, and for the system of multilateral development banks.

Strengthened perception of BRICS as a global actor is another major achievement of the forum. These are reflected, in particular, in increasing representation and growing voices of developing countries in international financial institutions in line with the BRICS common position.

Finally, apart from intergovernmental cooperation BRICS maintains strong partnerships with different stakeholders in various formats, including Academic, Civil and Business Forums, Youth summits, etc. Starting from 2013 each summit is also attended by representatives of regional partners of the host country, improving BRICS outreach and strengthening its legitimacy.

**3. What challenges are facing BRICS mechanism?**

As I have just mentioned, BRICS cooperation is carried out through a large number of different mechanisms and in various formats. This provides a basis for a civilizational dialogue between the five countries, but at the same time can make the agenda too broad. As a result, one of the major challenges for the BRICS mechanism is finding a balance between further expansion of the agenda and launch of new cooperation formats, and concentration on the traditional core agenda of the forum, including primarily economic and trade issues. Implementation of the BRICS leaders' commitments is vital for enhancing BRICS effectiveness for its members and international community. Proper accountability mechanisms are needed to enhance compliance.

Besides, dialogue on social issues relevant for all BRICS countries, including health and education, should be more actively elevated to the leaders' level, and declarations of the summits should become more practically-oriented. BRICS compliance assessments show that countries

demonstrate the highest compliance in areas where the work of relevant ministers is accompanied by political impetus at the leaders' level. As an example for the Goa decisions, all five countries [have succeeded in overcoming digital divides, whereas progress on fighting anti-microbial resistance has been limited.](#)<sup>1</sup>

#### **4. How do you view the "BRICS plus" model?**

The "BRICS plus" model is a good alternative to the formal expansion of the forum's membership in terms of strengthening its legitimacy. I have already mentioned that starting from 2013 leaders of BRICS and partner regional countries meet at outreach summits. This mechanism allows engage other actors in the BRICS process without compromising the founding countries' leadership. At the same time, it is important to keep the agenda of such meetings focused primarily on BRICS own problems.

#### **5. How could the five nations promote intra-BRICS cooperation?**

First of all, they should focus on practical implementation of the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership. The Strategy should be supplemented by a list of projects providing for joint investment of several or all five BRICS member states.

Secondly, the five countries could concentrate on delivery on their past commitments. A number of decisions aimed at promoting intra-BRICS cooperation in different areas have been made since the establishment of the forum. Now the focus should be shifted from deliberation to action.

#### **6. What is the current state of your nation's economic ties with other four nations?**

The potential of Russian economic cooperation with other four BRICS nations is underutilized. The level of political dialogue often surpasses that of economic relations. According to the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership, the five countries count for 17.3% of the global trade. At the same time, statistics show that only about 10% of Russian exports go to other BRICS countries, whereas for Brazil this figure stands at 25%. Russian bilateral trade with BRICS partners, except China, demonstrates unstable dynamics. Similar trends are observed in investment cooperation. Most of the Russian investment projects are traditionally related to oil and gas, nuclear energy, wood processing and low value added segments of production. BRICS mechanisms should be used to upgrade the institutional base for strengthening our economic ties, provide an environment conducive for growing trade and investment, and facilitate cooperation on innovations and new technologies.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information see the results of monitoring of compliance with the BRICS summits' decisions by the Center for International Institutions Research (CIIR) at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPa) and University of Toronto: <http://www.ranepa.ru/eng/ciir-ranepa/research-areas/brics/analytics>