

Proposed Agenda for Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) Cooperation on Population Matters 2015-2020

1. We, representatives of 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 Brasilia, Brazil, on February 12, 2015 at the BRICS First Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Population Matters to discuss and coordinate positions of mutual interest and identify future directions for our cooperation in population-related issues within the framework of BRICS.
2. In observance of the guiding principles of the ICPD Programme of Action and key actions for its further implementation, we recognize the vital importance of integrating population factors into national development plans and to promote a long-term balanced population development. We underscore the relevance of demographic transition and post-transition challenges, including population ageing and mortality reduction, especially maternal and child mortality, and mortality from violence and other external causes. We confirm our strong commitment to address social issues in general and in particular gender inequality, women's rights, as well as the rights of persons with disabilities and issues faced by young people, adolescents and children. We reaffirm our determination to ensure sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for all.
3. We reiterate our intention to collaborate continuously through dialogue, sharing of experiences and capacity building on population related issues of mutual concern to the Member States. We also confirm our intention to advance a development agenda beyond 2015.
4. This agenda builds on the considerable consensus amongst our countries that has developed since population-related issues were first highlighted as a relevant area for cooperation in the Plan of Action of Delhi, issued in the fourth BRICS summit, in 2012. The same commitment was later reassured in the eThekweni Declaration of the fifth BRICS summit, held in Durban, in 2013, as well as in both the Fortaleza Declaration and the Plan of Action of Fortaleza produced at the sixth BRICS summit in 2014.
5. We recognize that the BRICS Inaugural Seminar of Officials and Experts on Population Matters was a significant milestone for our cooperation and welcome the second edition of the Seminar. We reaffirm the importance of the Framework for BRICS Cooperation on Population Matters, proposed in Hazyview, South Africa, as a guideline for future BRICS cooperation in these issues.
6. We recall as principles of cooperation: equality, reciprocity, transparency, efficiency, mutual understanding and consensus, to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes. We strongly encourage collaboration to be pragmatic, with innovative approaches on issues of substance.
7. The BRICS cooperation on population related issues should add value to existing intergovernmental and multilateral initiatives, especially that of the United Nations.
8. Cooperation on population-related matters will be pursued through: capacity building and training; exchange of information, knowledge and expertise; sharing of best practices and lessons learnt through national experience, successes and challenges, which includes the annual convening of a seminar of officials and experts on population matters (rotating amongst BRICS Member States).
9. We also agree to convene a meeting of BRICS Ministers responsible for population matters every six years (rotating amongst BRICS Member States) to re-evaluate, adjust and define our agenda on population issues, which is open-ended and progressive.

10. We agree, under the Framework for BRICS Cooperation on Population Matters, that the following areas of cooperation shall be prioritized in the 2015-2020 period:

11. Planning, methodology, indicators and goals

a. Methodologies for demographic projections: Most countries in the world, BRICS Countries in particular, are going through fast, and sometimes difficult to predict, demographic transitions. Accurate predictions of population trends and composition are central to policy design and affect mainly the implementation of urban, rural, housing, health, education and social protection policies. These fast transitions pose great challenges to traditional demographic models and methodologies. In order to continue to produce precise predictions, methodological advances are required. Many BRICS countries have advanced in this direction. Sharing new methodological advances in population prediction is a much promising area for collaboration.

b. Monitoring Systems: Over the past few years a series of worldwide and national systems to monitor the ICPD Plan of Action have been proposed. One of them was the result of the 2012 Inter-agencies Technical Meeting, convened by the United Nations in New York. Another worldwide system was the result of a conference in Taicang (China) in November 2013 and was incorporated into the Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the ICPD. Meanwhile, many BRICS countries have developed and implemented their own national monitoring systems. As these systems mature and are streamlined, it will become increasingly important for BRICS countries to share their experience and expertise in monitoring the ICPD Plan of Action and the resolutions of recent regional conferences.

c. Sustainable Development Goals: The objective of the 48th Session of the Commission on Population and Development - CPD, to be held in April 2015, is the proper inclusion of population issue in the post-2015 development agenda. The Open Working Group proposed a set of 17 objectives and 169 goals to form the post-2015 development agenda and the basis for the selection of the Sustainable Development Goals - SDG. All BRICS countries are actively participating in the definition of the world development agenda, while also discussing this matter internally to define the domestic agenda. Hence, it is auspicious that BRICS countries have the opportunity to share their experiences and views related to the definition of national and global development agendas for the next decades.

d. Integrating population in national development plans: One of the central goals of the ICPD Plan of Action is the integration of population issues in national development plans. Another important goal is to coordinate and integrate the actions of government agencies and civil society organizations to build well-structured national policies on population and development. The Plan of Action does not specify how exactly countries are supposed to integrate population issues into their development plans and neither does it define how governmental and non-governmental actions should be coordinated. Nevertheless, many countries, including some BRICS countries, led the way, demonstrating articulated strategies to take population issues in consideration when planning and implementing policies. Sharing BRICS countries experiences and worldwide best practices will serve well to foster the proper integration of population matters in BRICS national plans.

12. Demographic groups

a. Early childhood care: Studies in neuroscience, development psychology and economics have increasingly made clear the central importance of comprehensive care for children during the gestational period and over their first years of life. Comprehensive public policies in this area and their interface to family support are central to ensure both women empowerment and child development. Many Member States have developed robust and innovative national policies to cope with this important challenge. Sharing experiences in designing, implementing, monitoring

and evaluating early childhood policies and programs will allow Member States to identify best practices, make better informed decisions, and improve their national programs and policies.

b. Youth Policies: In recent years, youth has become a large, and also an important, demographic group with great potential for innovation and skills to contribute to the development of nations. To foster the fulfillment of these prospects, BRICS countries should address their youth through public policies that embrace their specific needs, assuring their right to education, work opportunities, physical and mental health, as well as to a violence-free and healthy environment. Member States have designed and implemented a range of initiatives that promote the full development of the capacities of their youth population. Sharing those experiences would be of great value to refine actions and improve results.

c. Youth transition to work: Associated to the demographic transition and the demographic dividend, most countries have now reached the peak of its youth population: there are now more young people than ever before. However, due to the current demographic trends, these countries will never have such large youth population in the future. Therefore, even though all youth at all times deserve adequate and comprehensive public policies to promote their full development and productive transition to work, the attention to youth-specific policies should naturally escalate as youth population reaches its peak. An important component to the set of youth policies is the promotion of a smooth and productive transition to economic activities. All BRICS Member States have rich experiences in designing and implementing such policies, sharing this information will be of extreme importance to improve the performance of their respective national policies.

d. Persons with disabilities, diversity and inclusion for all: Persons with disabilities represent a significant proportion of the population. Nonetheless, disabilities are still a symbolic and explicit motive for discrimination. Assuring a disability-inclusive development - that promotes participation and equality for persons with disabilities and values their contribution in all aspects of social and economic life - is essential to achieve a proper sustainable development. Sharing experiences in adopting and implementing disability-inclusive national development strategies and disability-targeted actions amongst BRICS countries is vital to strengthen the commitment of Member States on the inclusion of this demographic group.

13. Demographic transition and post-transition

a. Demographic dividend (bonus): Most BRICS Countries still possess some demographic dividend. We recognize the vital importance of this dividend to foster development. Nonetheless, to fully benefit from it, a proper integration of population factors into national public policies is required. The demographic dividend means smaller dependency ratios and a proportionally larger working age population. Hence, to fully benefit from the dividend, countries need policies to promote job creation and foster labor productivity. Public policy should also ensure workers have the qualification they need to fully contribute to and benefit from the additional economic growth stimulated by the demographic dividend. In many occasions, Member States have been quite successful in designing public policies that wisely use the demographic dividend. Sharing these experiences will be of great importance to all Member States.

b. Ageing and intergeneration transfers: Population ageing is a worldwide phenomenon. For some Member States, it is already a reality, for others it is in the near future. Ageing, as any other major change in population age structure, drastically changes the demand for public services: the demand for schools and daycare centers for the very young decline as the demand for health services, pensions and care for the elderly increase. Public policy needs fitting to properly deal with these changes, otherwise many public services could become inadequate and lost their efficacy. Member States have been coping with ageing in very innovative ways.

Sharing information on the design, implementation and evaluation of these initiatives will facilitate all Members States to improve their national policies.

14. Women empowerment

a. Gender gaps in labor outcomes: Since the ICPD in Cairo twenty years ago and the Beijing conference in 1995, countries worldwide have made important and sizeable progresses in promoting gender equality and women empowerment. In certain areas, however, major gaps remain. The labor market is one of these areas: gender gaps in the access to better jobs and in work pay persist. BRICS Member States are aware of these persistent inequalities and have devoted significant effort and created innovative public policies to overcome these gaps. The initiatives and experiences of Member States in promoting gender equality in economic activities have been rich and diverse, sharing these experiences will be crucial for Member States to revise and improve their policies in dealing with this challenging agenda.

b. Caring for the very young and dependent elderly: Caring for the very young and for the dependent elderly has traditionally been a burden that weighs mainly on women. To ensure the quality care these groups need and deserve - without imposing a disproportional burden on women - is a great challenge and a major goal for public policies devoted to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women. With the accelerated ageing of the population, solving this challenge should become an absolute priority. Amongst BRICS countries, there are many policies designed to deal with this challenge and many others are being designed and will be implemented soon. Sharing these experiences, evaluations, new ideas and proposals will be of great importance for Member States to choose wisely their policies, avoiding ineffective solutions.

c. Eliminating violence against women: Violence against children and women, in particular sexual violence, is a critical indicator of gender inequality, exclusion and discrimination, with negative implications on the autonomy, self-determination and physical and mental health of women. Effective public policies, as well as, preventive, penal and protective measures are needed to eradicate all forms of gender-based violence, especially towards the most vulnerable women. BRICS countries have developed and implemented different plans aiming the prevention of violence and the protection of women. Sharing experiences and debating their impacts would be of crucial importance to improve national policies of each Member State.

d. Empowerment and political participation of women: In all BRICS countries, women are still underrepresented at decision-making levels. Empowering women intends to reduce the gender gap, not only in the political process, but also in every aspect of public and private life. Promoting mechanisms for women's equal participation and equitable representation is a prerequisite for democracy and a goal to eradicate social exclusion, which affects specially women at risk. BRICS countries have employed many initiatives in order to comply with the commitment to enlarge and strengthen spaces that enable equal participation of women in policy-making and decision-taking in all areas of government. Sharing those experiences will help Member States to improve their policies aimed at empowering women.

15. Sexual and reproductive health

a. Maternal mortality: The reduction of maternal mortality ratio by three quarters between 1990 and 2015 is probably one of the hardest of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to be achieved. Although this is certainly a great challenge to all BRICS Member States, some have had a much better performance than others. Therefore, systematic exchange of experiences and information on designing and implementing programs in this area is crucial for the improvement of public policies devoted to prevent maternal mortality in all Member States.

b. Neonatal mortality: All BRICS Countries have accomplished major advances towards reducing infant mortality and meeting the challenging Millennium Development Goal of reducing under-five mortality rate by two thirds between 1990 and 2015. In most countries, however, the decline in mortality has concentrated on children after the first four weeks of life. In fact, reductions in neonatal mortality proved to be, in general, more difficult to accomplish than reductions in infant mortality. Many BRICS countries have designed and implemented innovative and effective policies to reduce neonatal mortality. Sharing experiences and debating world trends and best practices will be of fundamental value to Member States in improving their national policies directed to reduce infant mortality beyond the MDG target for 2015.

c. HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STI): Sexually transmitted infections remain a major public health problem, compounded by the appearance of HIV/AIDS around 1980. The STIs, especially syphilis, represent a major hindrance to the worldwide goal of ensuring sexual and reproductive health for all. Moreover, for BRICS Member States, the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goal of universal access to diagnosis and treatment for all those who need it and of reversing the spread HIV/AIDS is a substantial task. Over the last decade, a series of ambitious programs have been designed and implemented worldwide and amongst BRICS countries aiming at preventing, promoting early detection and providing universal access to the treatment of HIV/AIDS and other STIs. Sharing experiences in the implementation of these programs and policies, as well as identifying the best cost-effective practices, will be of uttermost importance as BRICS Countries seek to improve, expand and optimize their national policies.

16. Migration and urbanization

a. Urbanization and sustainable cities: Many BRICS countries have gone through fast urbanization processes. National, regional and local governments in these countries have implemented a very rich set of policies to cope with this process and its consequences. Not all policies have been equally successful in ensuring economic, social and environmental sustainability to the growing cities, neither have all of them been able to ensure a better quality of life for all. The rich experience of BRICS Member States with fast urbanization offers a unique opportunity to identify best practices. Hence, sharing experiences in designing, implementing and evaluating policies focused on this phenomenon is a promising area for cooperation among BRICS countries.

b. Social sustainability: The urbanization process can lead to large asymmetries of opportunity and living conditions in fast growing cities, as the experience of developing countries has demonstrated. Along with economic and environmental dimensions, social sustainability is recognized by BRICS countries as one of the three pillars of overall sustainability. Enlarging peoples' opportunities and protecting them with sound social policies can promote long term social cohesion and stability. BRICS countries have successfully built social sustainability by reducing extreme poverty, protecting collective goods, and creating access to economic opportunities and public services. Exchanging experiences in those different and complementary areas is an opportunity to enhance mutual efforts for a sustainable future for urban populations.

c. Programs dedicated to return migration, retention of domestic talents and to international scientific interchanges: Most Member States have devoted substantial resources to finance study abroad and exchange programs that have benefited their talented students, researchers and specialists. However, not all of these talents returned. In fact, historically, Member States characterize themselves much more as exporters than as receivers of international talents: nowadays, BRICS countries have a sizeable contingent of talented expatriated specialists working abroad in the most developed countries. Many of the Member States have been experimenting programs to promote return migration of talented specialists and prevent further brain drain, without inhibiting international scientific interchange and cooperation. Sharing all

these innovative experiences will benefit Member States in designing creative and effective policies to promote and retain talented workers in particular.

d. International migration: Over the past decade, BRICS countries have been experiencing rates of economic growth well above those prevalent among the most developed countries. As a consequence, the Member States have recently begun to receive talents from all over the world. Effective immigration policies, however, are necessary to translate this potential for attracting foreign talents into effective immigration. These policies should include the simplification of working visa requirements for highly skilled workers, but also should cover social policies that facilitate the social inclusion of new immigrants. Some BRICS countries have already accumulated experience in promoting immigration of highly skilled workers, while others are still taking their first steps in this direction. Sharing policy designs and experiences with immigration policy will allow all Member States to improve their national policies.

Source: <http://brics.itamaraty.gov.br/category-english/21-documents/250-proposed-agenda-for-brazil-russia-india-china-south-africa-brics-cooperation-on-population-matters-2015-2020>