

Declaration of the 4th BRICS Communication Ministers Meeting

15 Sep 2018

Declaration of the 4th BRICS Communication Ministers Meeting Adopted by Ministers of Communications on iNkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre KZN, RSA 15 September 2018

We, the Ministers 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 Durban, KwaZulu Natal Province, Republic of South Africa, at the 4th BRICS Ministers of Communication Meeting, on 15 September 2018, under the theme “Advancing Inclusive Growth through Industry and SMME Participation”;

Guided by the overall theme of South Africa’s Chair-ship of BRICS in 2018:

“BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the Fourth Industrial Revolution”;

Recalling the vision agreed in the Ufa Declaration that ICTs are an important medium to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries, that developing countries have great potential in the ICT ecosystem, and that ICTs enhance opportunities for the establishment of global partnerships for sustainable development;

Therefore, we commit to the continued implementation of the programmes and agendas that seek to implement the Ufa ambitions outlined in the Development Agenda and Action Plan (DAAP) as contained in the Bengaluru Communique of November 2016 and consensus decisions of the Hangzhou Declaration of July 2017.

Ministers acknowledged mainly the significant impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution will have on current industrial manufacturing methods and business models, labour structures, the productivity and competitiveness, the emergence and application of new technologies and digitization including a re-look of current regulatory interventions. The net effect on all this on the economic growth and the development is unequalled opportunities for BRICS Members.

Noting that the Fourth Industrial Revolution will also bring major challenges, Ministers re-affirmed the urgent need for BRICS Members to ready themselves to respond accordingly in policy formulation, development of legislations, and engagement of citizens and effective creation of a conducive environment that will allow members to benefit from the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Ministers remained aware of the unique position that BRICS members have and the competitive advantages in particular areas of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Therefore, Ministers agreed to:

1. Support the commencement of the full operationalisation of Partnership on New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR), and agree with the setting up of an Advisory Group, comprising of the appropriate Ministries, to develop, as a first step, the Terms of Reference and a Work Plan aligned with the Fourth Industrial Revolution priorities, to be submitted to the BRICS Chair. The PartNIR aims at deepening BRICS cooperation in digitalisation, industrialisation, innovation, inclusiveness and investment, to maximise the opportunities and address the challenges arising from the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It should enhance comparative advantages, boost economic growth, promote economic transformation of BRICS countries, strengthen sustainable industrial production capacity, create networks of science parks and technology business incubators, and support small and medium-sized enterprises in technology intensive areas as pronounced in the 10th BRICS Summit Johannesburg Declaration on the 27th July 2018. In view of the important role of digitalization in the main areas of PartNIR and the due responsibility of ICTs sector to support achieving it, the Ministers resolved to set up a Digital BRICS Task Force

(DBTF) under the WG of ICT Cooperation, to further commit to the full participation of Ministers of Communication in the work of PartNIR and alignment of the ICT sector work-stream program. The DBTF will focus on promoting the deployment of ICT infrastructure, enhancing digital transformation, and facilitating adoption of innovation technologies so as to improve BRICS Members readiness for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

2. Dedicate greater effort towards the exchange of information and communications technology (ICT) policies, regulation and legislation. To that extent, the 4th BRICS Ministers of Communication Meeting encouraged setting-up of the BRICS ICT Regulators Forum. The purpose of the forum is to share and exchange ideas, best practices and capacity building related to the ICT sector. Ministers noted the different legislative frameworks for regulators, and agreed to the ongoing discussion within member states. The Regulators Forum may, within the framework of cooperation led by the BRICS Ministers of Communications, develop its work program and modus operandi by preparing a concept note and terms of reference.
3. Commit to improving continuous exchange of ideas and cooperation between BRICS Members in the context of international engagements and cooperation. In that regard, acknowledge the effort put by the BRICS members to participate in the ICT activities of international organizations, including UN, ITU and G20.
4. Appreciate the work carried out by the Focus Group of the BRICS Institute of Future Networks (BIFN) and endorse the model of establishment of a Council of decentralised BRICS Institute of Future Networks. The Council, as the BIFN's decision-making body, composed of the representatives designated by the BRICS Communications Ministers, shall decide on terms of reference and work program of the BIFN. Each BRICS member shall decide on the level of its participation and designate either a premium national body or establish such a body to be the local branch of the BIFN. The Council will be supported by a BIFN Secretariat to be set up at a location of one of the BRICS Members. The Council will develop a mechanism on the operationalization of the Secretariat, at the earliest convenience.
5. Reiterate the commitment made in 2017 at Hangzhou, China to “fully stimulate the innovation of the industry, to continue to expand support to industrial innovation, improve intellectual property protection system, optimize innovation development environment, study and judge technology development trends in depth, and provide guidance for the rapid and sound development of the industry”. Small, Micro, Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) are the most intrinsically vibrant and dynamic enterprise community with the huge potential to contribute to growth and create jobs. Furthermore, SMMEs can create a foundation for enhanced communication and cooperation among BRICS members. Therefore, it is important for government to support and invest in the innovation and development of ICT SMMEs and broader ICT industry. This collective commitment of the Ministers of Communications is fully supported by the outcomes of the 4th Business to Business Engagements. Informed by our collective mission to position SMMEs as the drivers of growth and job creation SMMEs should be actively involved in the ICT sector such as the manufacturing value chains. We further undertake to promote the cooperation of SMMEs from BRICS members.
6. Recognising that to deepen the commitment, there is a need for strengthening and improving the Working Group on ICT cooperation. In this regard, the WG on ICT cooperation needs to hold regular interaction to take stock of the decisions taken and the status of their implementation.

7. Aware of the fast development of the digital economy throughout the world and the ICTs as the essential enabler for the digital economy, we undertake to increase cooperation on the digital economy, enhance exchange and communication, and facilitate an appropriate ICT ecosystem for accelerating the digital economy across sectors for BRICS members.
8. Taking note of the important role of the internet and emerging technologies play in the digital transformation of economies, and facing the historical opportunity the Internet applications provided whilst expanding from the consumer sector to the production sector and the virtual economy to the real economy, undertake to organize relevant activities in the forms of joint research, seminars and workshops, to enhance cooperation in realizing the all-around, whole-industry, and full-value-chain development of traditional industry, comprehensively improving the level of economic development, and facilitating the development of innovative technologies and their use across industries, including the network infrastructure, application platforms, new technologies, standardization, information security.
9. Continue all efforts of eliminating the digital divide between the rural and the urban; between BRICS countries and developed countries; and accelerating the diversified development of the world's software and IT equipment market. The increased ICT infrastructure investment, sharing of best practice and models of deploying innovations that have contributed to the advancement of universal telecommunications access, remains important and encouraged. Such efforts should be supported by capacity building aimed at creating awareness on the use of ICT, establishing public trust in the use of ICT and promoting the safe use of ICT for the development of all citizens.
10. BRICS Ministers of Communication noted the presentation of a project on improving sustainability of the DNS system of the internet by Russia and China, and on DigiLocker and cooperation for 5G project/M2M by India. Ministers also noted the fast development of industrial internet in China.
11. Ministers congratulated South Africa for the successful hosting of the recently concluded ITU Telecom World 2018 in Durban.

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