



## JOINT COMMUNIQUE OF THE 14<sup>TH</sup> BRICS TRADE MINISTERS MEETING

We, the BRICS Trade Ministers, gathered under the Chairmanship of Mr. Maxim Reshetnikov, Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, to review the progress made in the spheres of trade and economic cooperation, and to exchange views on the further joint steps in key areas of mutual interest.

### *Multilateral Trading System and the World Trade Organization (WTO)*

We underline that predictable, fair, equitable and competitive trade environment consistent with WTO rules is crucial for advancing economic prosperity. In this light, we note with concern that current trade challenges, such as unilateral trade measures that go against WTO rules and principles, protectionist environmental policies, the current global subsidy race, including repurposing of trade-distorting subsidies, have a market-distorting effect, damage global trade, and worsen trade imbalances among the WTO Members.

We thus endorse **BRICS Declaration on the WTO**, stressing the BRICS Members' support for the open, fair, transparent, predictable, equitable, non-discriminatory, inclusive, consensus- and rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core, and highlighting its importance for just global development. We welcome the outcomes of the 13th Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi (UAE) and reiterate our commitment to work towards the implementation of the decisions and declarations of WTO Ministerials. We note, however, there is still a need for further efforts in many outstanding issues. BRICS Members stress the importance of transparent, accessible and inclusive discussions within the WTO and the importance of consensus decision making. We reaffirm that no WTO Member should be deprived of the opportunity to participate in such discussions and pursue positive efforts towards improving the framework of the multilateral trading system.

We underscore that an accessible, effective, two-tier fully-functioning WTO dispute settlement system is of paramount importance in providing security and predictability of the multilateral trading system, and we agree to engage constructively within the WTO to attain the goal to deliver a ‘fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system’ by 2024 to fulfill the MC-12 mandate confirmed by the WTO Members at MC-13.

We agree to substantially enhance our dialogue on multilateral trading system and WTO-related issues to make our voice heard at the trade-related multilateral level, including at the WTO, through **BRICS Informal Consultative Framework on WTO issues**.

#### *Joint value chains*

We highlight that secure, resilient, stable, effective and open supply chains are crucial for sustainable development. Acknowledging the role of the BRICS Members as the world largest producers of natural resources, we underscore the importance of strengthening cooperation of the BRICS Members across the entire value chain and agree to take joint actions with the aim to oppose unilateral protectionist measures that are inconsistent with the existing WTO provisions, and thus we endorse **BRICS Statement on Ensuring Effective Functioning of Joint Value Chains**.

#### *Trade-related climate measures*

We acknowledge that a stable, transparent and predictable trading environment consistent with WTO rules, as well as non-discriminatory access to modern technologies can play a major role in achieving environmental and climate goals.

We stand against the introduction of protectionist and trade-distortive measures, as well as market distortive subsidies, under the pretext of implementing environmental policies, which lead to competitive distortions and create barriers to market access.

BRICS Members should ensure that measures taken to combat climate change should respect WTO commitments, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade. To this end, BRICS Members should cooperate and prevent the adoption of such measures in international fora.

In this regard, we agree that there is a need to promote and strengthen the multilateral response to address global environmental challenges, such as climate change, in a manner

consistent with the WTO rules and the existing multilateral environmental and climate agreements, including the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement. We underscore that cooperation should be enhanced in the area of green trade and green standards. We call on the developed countries to implement their commitments made at the UNFCCC, such as the finance, technology and skills transfer, and capacity building.

To this end, we endorse **BRICS Statement on Environmental and Climate-Related Trade Measures**.

*Trade Facilitation in Agriculture*

The BRICS Members agree that resilience of supply chains and unimpeded trade in agriculture is crucial for ensuring food security and livelihoods, especially for low-income or resource-poor farmers. In this light, we underline the importance of facilitating trade in agriculture and ensuring smooth cross-border movement of agricultural products and agree to elaborate concrete measures, through appropriate mechanisms, exchange of best practices related to SPS and TBT regulatory issues, and utilize digital means such as electronic documents, mutual recognition of digital authentications and use of electronic payment to facilitate and improve intra-BRICS trade, while giving due consideration to the food security challenges faced by the vulnerable food import-dependent developing ones, and therefore we endorse **BRICS Principles on Trade Facilitation in Agriculture**.

*Cooperation on Special Economic Zones*

We share the willingness to unleash the potential of Special Economic Zones of the BRICS Members as a well-established mechanism for promotion of trade and industrial cooperation, providing enterprises with a variety of tools for ease of doing business. We recognize that the effectiveness of Special Economic Zones has already been proven in the BRICS Members and globally, among others providing investment opportunities.

In line with **BRICS Cooperation Framework on Special Economic Zones** that we endorse, we intend to promote capacity building and sharing of best practices of the BRICS Members in creating and managing zones with special treatment or incentives, as well as assisting business in localizing industrial production in accordance with our national laws.

*Fostering E-Commerce*

We emphasize that e-commerce has become one of the most important drivers of global economic growth, fostering international trade in goods and services, ensuring foreign investment flows and facilitating innovation. Since the BRICS Members hold great potential in e-commerce in both B2B and B2C segments, and with due regard to the correspondent initiatives adopted by the grouping so far, we aspire to further increase trust in e-commerce and ensure full-fledged protection of the rights of e-commerce parties. For this reason, we endorse **BRICS Joint Statement on Fostering E-Commerce** containing the BRICS Members' vision regarding prospects for consumer rights protection, exploration of online dispute resolution tools and integration of businesses into global trade through e-commerce.

#### *Exploring the Role of Digital Technologies*

Holding high the banner of technological development, with a substantial share of the BRICS companies pursuing related research and applying diverse digital technologies in practice, we will endeavor, jointly with other BRICS fora dealing with digital economy agenda, to conduct capacity-building activities, including workshops and other formats of exchange of experience, to explore the potential for BRICS practical cooperation on applying digital technologies in trade and investment, as practiced during the current Chairship.

#### *Support for MSMEs*

We recognize that the MSMEs sector is a well-proved lever of economic growth, enabling an increase in overall labor productivity, household incomes and quality of goods and services. To better learn the BRICS experiences of nurturing the sector, we intend to exchange domestic practices of supporting MSMEs, including through digital services and platforms aimed at simplifying business operations. We also welcome the ongoing work on the publication “**MSME sector in BRICS: trends and cooperation opportunities**” that sheds a light on the MSMEs development programs as well as barriers that the BRICS Members face and will endeavor to finalize it by the end of the current Chairship.

We note with satisfaction that the BRICS entrepreneurs are interested in exploring each other's markets. We recognize the importance of maintaining existing value chains created with participation of MSMEs, as well as building up new cooperative ties for MSMEs, especially high-tech ones, within BRICS. We will strive to intensify

cooperation among the BRICS MSMEs, and may consider a possibility of launching common development programs in the field of exports, industrial cooperation, and technology exchange with the assistance of national institutes for business support and development.

*Other matters*

We reaffirm the importance of continuing cooperation among the BRICS Members under the existing Working Mechanism on Technical Regulation, Standards, Metrology, Conformity Assessment and Accreditation, as well as call for expanding various areas of cooperation, including, by the interested BRICS Members, in the field of Halal.

We welcome cooperation under BRICS IPR Cooperation Mechanism. We emphasize the practical approach of work in this format, specifically the implementation of initiatives and projects aimed at supporting MSMEs, assisting right holders in intellectual property commercialization, including when entering foreign markets. We particularly note the importance of issues related to the introduction of advanced technologies, primarily Artificial Intelligence, into the operation of the IPRCM. We look forward to further positive and constructive cooperation in this area.

We welcome the Conference “**BRICS Partnership for the Digital Economy Development: Prospects of Seamless Cross-Border Cooperation**” held on July 24, 2024 with participation of the BRICS representatives and recognize its contribution to capacity building activities within BRICS.

List of Annexes

1. BRICS Declaration on the WTO
2. BRICS Dialogue on Ensuring Effective Functioning of Joint Value Chains
3. BRICS Statement on Environmental and Climate-Related Trade Measures
4. BRICS Principles on Trade Facilitation in Agriculture
5. BRICS Cooperation Framework on Special Economic Zones
6. BRICS Joint Statement on Fostering E-Commerce





## **BRICS DECLARATION ON THE WTO**

### ***Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development***

*Recalling* that in the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025 the BRICS Members have committed to support the multilateral trading system based on the rules and principles of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and resist emerging global uncertainty caused by several factors, including the rise of unilateral and protectionist measures including in the guise of environmental protection that run counter to the spirit of multilateralism and rules of the WTO,

*Emphasizing* the importance and BRICS Members' strong support to the open, fair, transparent, predictable, equitable, non-discriminatory, inclusive, consensus- and rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core,

*Reiterating* the decision under the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025 to take actions to support the necessary WTO reform to enhance the WTO's resilience, authority and efficacy, and promote development and inclusivity, the BRICS Members declare the following:

We recall our commitment to the common objective of the WTO as enshrined in the Marrakesh Agreement.

1. We welcome the outcomes of the 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) in Abu Dhabi (UAE) and reiterate our commitment to work towards the implementation of the decisions and declarations of WTO Ministerials. We note, however, there is still a need for further efforts in many outstanding issues including negotiations on the development of existing trade rules in the spheres of agriculture, dispute settlement reform, fisheries subsidies and special and differential treatment. We thus underscore our strong intention and commitment to settle these unresolved issues.

- a. Determined to achieve tangible progress in negotiations by MC14 we will explore ways to overcome the existing divergences between WTO Member's on agriculture negotiating issues.

Recognizing the difficult situation in delivering tangible results based on the existing WTO mandates the BRICS Members agree on the following. First, we will explore other complimentary areas of engagement, including discussing opportunities for enhancing productivity and production, facilitating trade in agriculture and ensuring smooth cross-border movement of agricultural products. Second, we will seek solutions to overcome the barriers causing the current stalemate in the negotiations and holding back the WTO Members from reforming and benefiting from unleashing the full potential of predictable, fair, equitable and effective WTO multilateral trade rules, ensuring food security and livelihoods, especially for low-income or resource-poor farmers, providing for unimpeded trade flows. To this end, we propose holding consultations with the BRICS Members to explore and share ideas and proposals to encourage the WTO Members to follow suit.

- b. We acknowledge the importance of the work undertaken in the Council for Trade in Services (in regular and special session) and its subsidiary bodies. We support to reinvigorate work on trade in services within the existing mandates.
- c. Taking into account the relationship between trade and investment, as well as the importance of attracting foreign investments and improving their transparency we need to exchange views on how to improve and facilitate investment flows, which will benefit the BRICS Members and note the importance of deliberations at the WTO on all issues impacting the multilateral trading system, taking into account development dimension being an integral part of the deliberations.
- d. We underscore the significance of the ongoing second phase of the WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies agreement and will work towards successful conclusion as soon as possible, based on the MC13 text on effective disciplines regarding overcapacity and overfishing and recognizing Special and Differential



Treatment for developing, including least developed countries, in line with SDG 14.6.

- e. We highlight the centrality of the development agenda at the WTO. We agree that WTO Members should be equipped with the tools necessary to support structural transformation in developing countries and advance economic development through industrialization. We also underline that anti-competitive trade policies infringe on our paths to industrialization and economic modernization, and undermine the prospects of a just and towards equitable, inclusive, and balanced global development. Such policies may in particular be hidden behind environmental and other similar pretexts and have adverse effect on the economic development of the WTO Members. In this regard, we welcome MC13 outcomes aimed at providing developing, specifically least developed country members, with more flexibilities under the WTO Agreements. We will continue our cooperation at the WTO both on improving WTO flexibilities to make them more effective to provide policy space for industrialization of developing WTO Members and on countering trade-related practices that impede just global development.
- f. We strongly believe that an accessible, effective and fully-functioning WTO dispute settlement system is of paramount importance in providing security and predictability of the multilateral trading system, global and regional supply chains as well as preventing the proliferation of protectionist measures, including in the guise of environmental protection, that violate WTO rules. The restoration of the dispute settlement mechanism is urgently important to uphold the credibility of the WTO. Thus, we agree to engage constructively within the WTO to deliver a ‘fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system’ by 2024 to fulfil the MC12 mandate confirmed by the WTO Members at MC13. We underscore that technical dispute settlement discussions in Geneva should lead us towards the restoration of a two-tier fully-functioning dispute settlement system as a key step in the WTO reform.
- g. Along with an increasing pressure on the dispute settlement system another example of the WTO institutional crisis is the monitoring and negotiating functioning of the

regular WTO working groups, councils and committees. We acknowledge the importance of institutional means in monitoring and furthering the objectives of the WTO Agreements, including negotiating initiatives. However, we note that there is a serious need for operational improvements in efficiency of certain WTO bodies (for example, Committee on Balance of Payments, Working Group on Trade, Debt and Finance, Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology). In this respect, we call for the review and re-invigoration of the work of such regular bodies. To this end, we intend to jointly identify possible ways to make the work of such bodies more efficient. We look forward to receive positive recommendations from these Committees towards MC14.

BRICS Members stress the importance of transparent, accessible and inclusive discussions within the WTO and the importance of consensus decision making. We reaffirm that no WTO Member should be deprived of the opportunity to participate in such discussions and pursue positive efforts towards improving the framework of the multilateral trading system.

2. We note current trade challenges the multilateral trading system is facing such as unilateral trade measures that go against WTO rules and principles, protectionist environmental policies, subsidy race, as well as activities of transnational corporations (TNCs) that may have a market-distorting effect, as provided below.

- a. BRICS Members underscore the importance of coherency of international climate and environmental arrangements, such as the Rio conventions and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, developed in international fora with the WTO rules. To this end, BRICS Members agree to take appropriate steps to ensure that climate and environmental arrangements, as well as trade measures adopted by Members and any related arrangements between and amongst Members, that affect trade are consistent with the WTO rules, scientifically based, do not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination and do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade. BRICS Members oppose unilateralism and “green” protectionism, uphold that the WTO is the main fora for international trade rules setting.

- b. The current global subsidy race, including repurposing of trade-distorting subsidies, provoked by several developed WTO Members under the guise of environmental protection considerations, worsens local and global competitive conditions, damages global trade and exacerbates existing trade imbalances among the WTO Members, in particular to developing countries.
- c. We note the complexity of TNC's effects on international trade and acknowledge the scarcity of relevant discussions both within BRICS and at the WTO. We, therefore, need to explore the effects of TNCs' policies on level playing field in international trade.
- d. We express our deep regret for the increase in quantity and the negative implications of unilateral trade restrictive measures that are inconsistent with the existing provisions of the WTO and also go against the most-favoured-nation principle, as well as the other underpinning principles of the WTO, thus significantly undermining the multilateral trading system. Such measures are becoming increasingly sophisticated and take various forms such as individual measures against private companies, technologies export control, prohibition of access to ports and the other means of transportation, restrictions on international payments. Consequently, supply chains, including vital ones, are suffering from such disruptions. This in turn hinders global economic recovery and sustainable economic development. We are resolute in jointly opposing protectionism and unilateralism. We acknowledge the need for a resilient and responsive WTO to tackle current trade challenges, however, the process of finding such responses should be based on a positive and constructive cooperation, while also addressing the interests of all WTO Members, especially developing and least-developed ones. We recognize the impact on the world economy from unilateral approaches in breach of international law and also note that the situation is complicated further by unilateral trade restrictive measures.
- e. We underscore the critical role technology plays in increasing productivity and output, and in diversifying economies to better integrate into the regional and global value chains. Therefore, it must be recognized that effective and adequate access to

technology should be secured with the aim to contribute to economic development of all WTO Members, including developing and least-developed ones.

3. BRICS Members emphasize the significance of an inclusive multilateral trading system and support fellow BRICS Members in their WTO accession processes. We will enhance collaboration with our BRICS counterparts and other WTO Members to assist, including through the capacity building, the BRICS Members acceding to the WTO to engage fully into the multilateral trading system.

4. We would make our voice heard and cooperate within the WTO to safeguard and improve multilateral trade rules and promote the openness, inclusiveness, stability and resilience of global supply chains. We will build convergence on issues pertaining to the multilateral trading system, including the WTO reform, as well as the other trade policy issues of common interest, to coordinate our positions regarding further promotion of global trade and investments. To approach this goal, we agree to substantially enhance our cooperation on multilateral trade and trade related issues advance dialogue and facilitate views/opinion exchange among BRICS Members as reflected in the Annex on Strengthening the organization of BRICS work on WTO and WTO-related issues. Such cooperation could extend to themes related to but not limited to trade and economic development, trade and environment, technology transfer and cooperation, and WTO reform.

**STRENGTHENING THE ORGANIZATION OF BRICS WORK  
ON WTO AND WTO-RELATED ISSUES**  
*Annex to the BRICS Declaration on the WTO*

*Recalling* that in the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025 the BRICS Members have committed to support the multilateral trading system based on the rules and principles of the World Trade Organization (WTO),

*Recognizing* the growing role of BRICS in setting international trade agenda and driving global economy,

*Emphasizing* the need to effectively respond to contemporary challenges to the multilateral trading system, while at the same time prioritizing outcomes on long-pending mandated issues,

*Recognizing* the value of enhanced cooperation of BRICS Members on multilateral trade and trade-related issues to increase the effectiveness of such responses,

*Aiming* to better understand each other's views and positions in respect of the WTO agenda elements,

BRICS Members agree to advance dialogue on the WTO and WTO-related issues by establishing an Informal Consultative Framework on WTO issues.

The aim of the Informal Consultative Framework is to promote information sharing between BRICS Members and to increase their awareness about each other's views and positions in respect of different elements of the WTO agenda, current and future.

The Informal Consultative Framework is to be based on the following operational pillars<sup>1</sup>:

1. BRICS Members' Delegations to the WTO, if necessary, at the level of the Heads of BRICS Missions to the WTO, will hold meetings to exchange views and consult on the WTO agenda issues. Capital-based officials are encouraged/invited to participate in such meetings, where appropriate/necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> To make the discussion free and productive, no rules or procedures or other disciplines for the meetings are suggested at this point.

2. Such meetings are to be held on a regular basis, and on an “ad hoc” basis, if needed.<sup>2</sup>
3. BRICS Chairing Member’s representative chairs such meetings and proposes their agendas, in consultation with and taking into account inputs from the other BRICS Members.

BRICS Members also recognize the importance of building expertise and producing quality research on global trade regulatory matters for fueling effective discussions among BRICS Members on the WTO and WTO-related issues. To this end, BRICS Members agree to explore the possibility of promoting the cooperation of their research centers and think tanks engaged in WTO and trade policy studies and analysis, including for capacity building of national experts and launching joint research projects, as appropriate.

To do this, by the end of October 2024, BRICS Members are encouraged to provide the Chair with the coordinates of their research centers and think tanks to promote further dialogue between them, as feasible.

The present understanding in no way changes rights and obligations of the BRICS Members under the WTO Agreement. BRICS Members that do not have the status of a WTO Member are invited to participate in the meetings under the Informal Consultative Framework.

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<sup>2</sup> Before major WTO events, such as WTO Ministerial Conferences and General Council meetings, and other events to be decided *ad hoc* by participants of the Informal Consultative Framework on the WTO issues.



## **BRICS STATEMENT ON ENSURING EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF JOINT VALUE CHAINS**

*Recalling,*

*the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025, which encompasses the promotion of effective integration of BRICS enterprises into global and regional value chains, as well as the enhancement of supply chain connectivity through identifying bottlenecks in regional supply chains so as to ensure more efficient and timely operation of supply chains,*

*the BRICS Initiative on Enhancing Cooperation on Supply Chains of 2022, which provides for the maintenance of openness, efficiency, stability and resilience of the global and regional supply chains, as well as reinforcement of investment cooperation, trade and supply chains cooperation,*

*Johannesburg II Declaration of 23 August 2023, which provides for the promotion of cooperation among BRICS countries with the aim to enhance the interconnectivity of supply chains and payment systems so as to promote trade and investment flows,*

*Recognizing that taking concerted measures to facilitate production and trade in goods and services, as well as to stimulate mutual investments, will allow members to use their resources more efficiently, increase their production competitiveness in world markets, expand their export potential and promote their citizens' well-being,*

BRICS Members agree on the following:

1. BRICS Members account for 27 % of the world GDP and 45 % of the world population. BRICS as a group is one of the largest producers of natural resources, including oil, gas, coal, diamonds, cobalt, lithium, nickel, copper, niobium, palladium, platinum, rhodium, gallium, germanium, magnesium, scandium, rare earth elements, and others. However, these resources, as well as other economic resources such as human capital,

financial resources and technologies, are allocated unevenly among the BRICS Members. This represents an opportunity. Access to such resources is a major comparative advantage of BRICS Members as well as a strong base for the development of industries and intra-BRICS global value chains (GVCs). BRICS Members commit to exploring how their unique individual and collective endowments of critical and non-critical minerals and materials can be leveraged to become a global leader in renewables, low-carbon technologies and energy in an inclusive manner.

2. To this end, BRICS Members should strengthen their cooperation across the entire value chain, including activities related to research and diversification of production, promotion of value addition, and development of efficient and multimodal logistics networks, while ensuring non-discriminatory and equitable treatment for trade and safeguarding the security, stability and resilience of global supply chains.

3. To advance this goal, as feasible and practicable, BRICS Members should endeavor to, *inter alia*:

- create economic and legal incentives for developing joint industrial and investment projects along the entire value chain,
- strengthen BRICS Members' collaboration and coordination on creating technologies, developing human capital and sharing knowledge,
- foster structural transformation and industrialization within BRICS Members to achieve economic and global supply chain diversification and building resilience, particularly in the low-carbon and green technologies and energy sectors,
- take joint actions to promote regional connectivity through integrating various modes of transport for an efficient and sustainable transport system in the BRICS Members, reiterating the agreement made in the Joint Statement of the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations of June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024 to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all Member states while carrying out transport cooperation.
- facilitate investments in transport infrastructure, human capital, research and development, creation of new technology, scientific and technical know-how, knowledge intensive goods and services, digital economy and trade facilitation digital tools in a manner that promotes economic cooperation between BRICS Members,



- facilitate cooperation of BRICS companies by identifying potential investment opportunities, entry points into value chains and trade,
- facilitate access to trade finance facilities, financial instruments, faster, cheaper, more transparent and more inclusive cross-border payment system, in accordance with national laws and international obligations, including remittances, in particular in national currencies, between BRICS Members,
- take joint actions with the aim to oppose unilateral protectionist measures that are inconsistent with the existing WTO provisions, particularly those measures that deliberately disrupt global supply chains and lead to the fragmentation of the global trade, and to promote a more resilient and sustainable multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core that recognizes the need for policy space to move up the value chain,
- recognize the success of the Kimberley Process in stopping the financing of conflicts through the exploration of rough diamonds, the BRICS Members support it as the only universal mechanism for regulating trade in rough diamonds,
- explore to establish an informal platform in BRICS format to ensure sustainable development of the diamond mining, trading and manufacturing sectors,
- elaborate an independent mechanism for precious metals market participants within BRICS aimed at increasing the turnover of precious metals between BRICS Members and establishing their own precious metals rules and quality standards,
- establish a dialogue for further elaboration of joint actions aimed at ensuring sustainable trade in a manner that promotes structural transformation of BRICS economies and other potential areas,
- promote digital transformation of BRICS Members' economies, as well as trade facilitation, including use of electronic bills of lading and] digitalization of other trade documents,
- promote more sustainability in supply chains, including the circular economy approaches related to trade and investment cooperation,
- share best practices regarding the development, entrance into and participation in the GVCs.

4. Bearing in mind that trade in services can play a crucial role in helping climbing up the global value chains, as a follow-up to the consensus of 2023, BRICS Members will continue discussions on the establishment of the BRICS Trade in Services Network (BTSN) in order to reach consensus as soon as possible, and aim to promote implementation of BRICS Trade in Services cooperation Roadmap and relevant documents including the BRICS framework for cooperation in trade in professional services.

5. Recognizing the crucial role of micro small and medium enterprises (MSME) in value chains, BRICS Members should create a special focus on integrating MSMEs into global value chains. This includes, simplifying trade procedures and documentation for micro small and medium enterprises, developing MSME-focused logistics solutions, and creating digital platforms for MSME participation in cross border e-commerce.

6. Highlighting the importance of supporting and strengthening a rules-based multilateral trade system, BRICS Members agree to enhance collaboration and coordination at the WTO, in order to foster equity in the international trade and accommodate the special development needs of developing and least developed countries. Meanwhile, BRICS Members agree to strengthen cooperation under multilateral trading framework on the topic of global supply chains.



## **BRICS STATEMENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE-RELATED TRADE MEASURES**

Today, the world is undergoing momentous changes compounded by global challenges such as climate change and environmental degradation. Despite extensive and convincing scientific data on the current and anticipated climate change, there is great uncertainty over assessments of the actual form of climate change and its influence on ecosystems, economic as well as social processes and costs in different countries and regions. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for climate change adaptation, mitigation and action. Countries, backed by a science- and equity-based approach, need to evaluate its specific responses to climate change and implement these within their contexts. Considering the uncertainty in assessing future climate change and its consequences the BRICS Members believe that it is necessary to take actions and are ready to responsibly and constructively participate in relevant international initiatives. Action to protect the environment and combat climate change should be based on scientifically proven assessment of risks, operationalization of the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities, and respective capabilities in the light of different national circumstances the necessity to take early measures to mitigate or prevent them, to adapt to negative impacts that are already happening, and to enhance the protection of national and societal interests from climate change.

BRICS Members recognize various national circumstances and challenges, the importance of ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and new forms of energy in the fight against climate change, as well as the right of countries to choose a pathway to low-emission development in accordance with their domestic circumstances, their climate action commitments, levels of development and policy space.

To promote equitable and cost-effective transition to low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development across the world we need to focus on the following aspects.

On various platforms, BRICS have brought attention to the growing trend towards unilateralism, trade protectionism and fragmentation of international cooperation jeopardizing trust, and consequently ambitious sustainable climate action.

### **1. Improvement of the Multilateral Trading System**

The fragmentation of the multilateral trading system provoked by “green” protectionist measures may prevent the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and UNFCCC commitments limiting the possibility of faster and cheaper deployment of low-carbon industries, as well as leading to such as unilateral trade measures, including but not limited to tariff measures, that go against WTO rules and principles and restricting access to modern technologies. In this context, BRICS Members should oppose unilateralism and “green” protectionism, uphold the position that the WTO is the main fora for international trade rules-setting, exchange views on how best the WTO can promote investment flows especially for developing and least developed countries, maintain security and stability of global supply chains. It is vital to emphasize the importance of ensuring that all measures taken to tackle climate change, environmental pollution and loss of bio diversity are designed, adopted and implemented in full conformity with the WTO rules and consistent with the Rio conventions and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and do not constitute means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade. BRICS Members, in this regard, support the COP28’s First Global Stock Take’s call for the multilateral system to ensure that “measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade”.

Furthermore, BRICS Members affirm that the importance of upholding the WTO provisions multilateral system should recognize the WTO’s special and differential treatment provisions and the UNFCCC’s principle of equity, Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR–RC) within national circumstances,

encouraging all nations to engage in climate action, while considering their unique circumstances and development levels.

BRICS Members should ensure that environmental policies do not result in protectionist or trade distorting measures, which cause competitive imbalances and hinder market access, stand against the introduction of protectionist and trade-distortive measures, as well as market distortive subsidies, under the pretext of implementing environmental policies, which lead to competitive distortions and create barriers to market access.

BRICS Members should ensure that measures taken to combat climate change should respect WTO commitments, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade. To this end, BRICS Members should cooperate and prevent the adoption of such measures in international fora.

The facilitation of trade in environmental goods and services can meaningfully contribute to achieving climate goals and developing low-carbon industries. To that end, interested BRICS Members should work towards addressing existing challenges to trade in environmental goods and services, including unilateral trade-restrictive measures. Interested BRICS Members could also work towards shaping the scope of environmental goods and services.

BRICS Members are also aware the standards, testing and certification protocols for green goods are being done with less consideration of developing countries realities and capabilities. BRICS Members emphasize that standards, testing and certification of green products must not be done to create further trade distorting non-tariff barriers to trade and that developing countries specialized agencies and authorities must be capacitated and actively participate in standard, testing and certification processes. BRICS Members agree to enhance cooperation on the standards, testing and certification of green products and to exchange, where appropriate, the information on best practices and expertise in these areas.

BRICS Members call on the developed countries to implement their commitments made at the UNFCCC, such as the finance, technology and skills transfer, and capacity building.

BRICS Members will, whenever appropriate, also support promotion of mechanisms with a focus on long tenure, concessional financing for the clean technology sectors.

We also note that digitalization of trade procedures and customs clearance not only reduce trade costs and make trade more inclusive, but also significantly reduce GHG emissions and contribute to forest conservation. Thus, BRICS Members shall endeavour, where appropriate and in accordance with national capacities, to increasingly accept electronic copies of supporting documents required for import, export, or transit formalities.

BRICS Members underline that developed countries shall provide financial resources to assist developing countries with respect to both mitigation and adaptation in continuation of their existing obligations under the UNFCCC and should continue to take the lead in providing and scaling up mitigation action by mobilizing climate finance, in line with their respective obligations and taking into account the different needs and priorities of developing countries, including least developed countries.

BRICS Members underscore that support provided by developed countries should be commensurate with the climate actions taken by developing countries including least developed countries. Ambition of action needs to match with the ambition of support to developing countries, including least developed countries.

BRICS Members also call on developed countries to fulfil their commitments on finance, technology and skills transfer prior to creating unilateral coercive and punitive cross border measures. The climate green energy transition offers our global society an opportunity to rectify historic injustices – developed countries are called to support this opportunity and not create policies that perpetuate historic legacy injustices and structural impediments to socio-economic development for all.

## **2. Improvement of Access to Technology and Technologic Neutrality**

The non-discriminatory access to modern technology is crucial to achieving climate and environmental goals. We note the gap between developed and developing countries in access to vital technologies aimed at combating climate change and achieving the carbon neutrality, taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries. BRICS Members should promote an equal and non-discriminative access to technologies that contribute to the achievement of global environmental and climate goals to all countries, especially developing, including least developed ones.

BRICS Members recognize that all available technologies should be used to achieve climate goals. To this end, BRICS Members oppose arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination of energy sources with equivalent end-use characteristics in terms of greenhouse gas emissions.

We need to enhance cooperation in the development of technologies, know-hows and innovations aimed at combating climate change and protecting the environment. We should effectively strengthen our cooperation in the sphere of high-tech research, innovation, and enhance our capabilities for scientific and technological innovation and competition on the global market.

BRICS Members need to create a friendly business environment for voluntary technology sharing, including a set of appropriate rules and channels for technology transfer to ensure its affordability and accessibility. To this end, interested BRICS Members agree to explore working towards creating a common BRICS environmentally sound technologies platform on a voluntary basis.

### **3. Improvement of Cooperation and Expertise Exchange**

BRICS Members should exchange expertise in the field of combating climate change and environmental protection, in particular in the area of green standards, and green trade. Inviting the international organizations such as UNIDO, UNCTAD, WTO and others, to compile a compendium of expertise and best practices on green products and industries to render support for the development of such products and industries for BRICS Members.

BRICS Members also commit to coordinating to the extent possible on the UNFCCC's Forum on the Impacts of Implementation of Response Measures, and its Katowice Committee of Experts.

BRICS Members should strengthen and encourage cooperation between their metrology, standardization and accreditation authorities or bodies in the field of elaboration, adoption and implementation of metrological technical regulations and standards aimed at combating climate change and protecting the environment.

BRICS Members commit to further collaboration on minerals beneficiations needed for low-carbon emission technologies future. In this regard, BRICS Members will endeavour to collaborate to ensure that mineral resources within BRICS Members and our regions are

utilised for the sustainable development objectives of our countries, our regions and its people. In this regard, BRICS Members will evaluate trade support mechanisms and activities that can further enhance this collaboration.

BRICS Members recognize that critical and non-critical minerals and other raw materials are crucial for new energy industries. In this context, BRICS Members should establish a regular dialogue on critical and non-critical minerals and other raw materials and their extraction and processing technologies with the aim to ensure the resilience of trade flows, and value addition close to source, as well as consider mechanisms to maintain an open, inclusive and fair trade of mineral resources among BRICS Members.





## **BRICS PRINCIPLES ON TRADE FACILITATION IN AGRICULTURE**

*Recalling,*

the Action Plan 2021-2024 for Agricultural Cooperation of BRICS Countries, which, *inter alia*, promotes improvement of trade facilitation, digital agricultural solutions and cooperation in the field of SPS measures;

the Joint Communiqué of the BRICS Trade Ministers of 9 June 2022, which promotes trade facilitation;

the BRICS Statement on Strengthening the Multilateral Trading System and Reforming the WTO (2022), which, in para 12, calls for the continuation of the reform process to achieve fair and balanced rules for agriculture;

the Joint Declaration of the XI Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Agriculture (2021), which, in para 17 on Trade Facilitation, states as follows:

*We recognize that international agri-food trade is critical in achieving global food security and ensuring adequate nutrition. We also recognize that enhancing market predictability and avoiding disruption of food supply chains is critical to ensure stable access to food. We reiterate the importance of an open, transparent, inclusive, and nondiscriminatory multilateral trading system consistent with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules.*

the BRICS Digital Economy Partnership Framework (2022), which encourages the use of digital means to promote trade facilitation, such as paperless customs clearance, use of electronic documents, mutual recognition of digital authentications, and use of electronic payment; and which aims to improve port management, logistics, supply chain and trade facilitation work;

BRICS Members agree on the following in order to facilitate trade in agricultural products, improve sustainability of the agricultural sector and resilience of the supply chains:

1. BRICS Members agree to elaborate concrete measures, through appropriate mechanisms, to facilitate and improve intra-BRICS trade. In this regard, BRICS Members should endeavour through the relevant domestic departments and agencies, *inter alia*, to exchange their practices related to SPS and TBT regulatory issues as provided for in the correspondent WTO Agreements.

2. BRICS Members agree that recognition of equivalence of SPS measures, even if they differ from the national ones, should take into account *inter alia*, all the evidence provided by the exporting countries, in particular results of inspections that ensure appropriate level of SPS protection. BRICS Members strive for efficient mutual technical assistance on the issue.

3. BRICS Members should oppose unilateral trade-restrictive measures, which are inconsistent with existing WTO provisions and that directly or indirectly affect trade in agricultural products and agricultural inputs, as well as measures adopted under the pretext of climate change and environmental protection.

4. BRICS Members recognize that transition to low-carbon development, including the solid fuels phase-out, should not, in particular, threaten food security and sustainable economic development. The transition to low-carbon fuels should take into consideration the socioeconomic needs and technological capabilities of each country, especially developing and least developed ones. BRICS Members should put forward that all trade restrictive measures taken under the pretext of climate change and environmental protection that affect trade in agricultural products shall be science-based, shall not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination and shall not create unnecessary obstacles to trade.

5. BRICS Members also agree on the importance of discussing the application of WTO-consistent export prohibitions and restrictions and minimizing their impact on the accessibility of international food markets and the food security of countries, including the vulnerable food import-dependent developing countries.

6. Recognizing the role agricultural production and productivity play in fueling international agri-food trade and safeguarding global food security, BRICS Members highlight the importance of promoting investments, enhancing agricultural production and productivity, as well as promoting collaboration and coordination on developing agriculture and agriculture-related technologies and know-how, and sharing relevant scientific knowledge and experience. BRICS Members also highlight the importance of enhancing access to finance required for trade in food in particular financing of food imports by vulnerable food import-dependent developing countries, agricultural inputs and bolstering agricultural production and productivity.

7. BRICS Members recognize the importance of reducing trade costs in order to facilitate agricultural trade. To this end, BRICS Members will identify areas of collaboration within a cooperative framework.

8. BRICS Members underline the importance of digital technologies in trade facilitation and the global implementation of appropriate new technologies and smart solutions such as e-certification, traceability and supply chain integrity technologies for agricultural products, electronic bills of lading and conformity assessment platforms. The BRICS Digital Economy Partnership Framework of 2022 encourages the use of digital means to promote trade facilitation, such as paperless customs clearance, use of electronic documents, mutual recognition of digital authentications and use of electronic payment. The use of electronic bills of lading could serve as an effective approach to promote facilitation of trade in both agricultural and non-agricultural goods. Nowadays, the use of electronic bills of lading has become a trend in international trade. More than half of BRICS Members are applying electronic bills of lading in international trade. Recognizing the positive role of electronic bills of lading in the transportation of goods, including but not limited to the agricultural bulk cargo and containers, BRICS Members agree to exchange their best practices by compiling a compendium in this regard.

9. BRICS Members agree to mobilize their efforts with the aim to foster the WTO discussions on the outstanding issues in agriculture negotiations including through any coordinated positions on such issues.



## **BRICS COOPERATION FRAMEWORK ON SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES (SEZs)**

### **1. Matter of cooperation**

1.1. The purpose of the Cooperation Framework elaborated in development of economic cooperation pillars of BRICS is to unleash the potential of Special Economic Zones of the BRICS countries as a well-established mechanism for promotion of trade and industrial cooperation, providing enterprises with a variety of tools for ease of doing business.

1.2 The Parties of the Cooperation Framework recognize that the effectiveness of Special Economic Zones has already been proven in the BRICS countries and globally for the facilitation of manufacturing, including those but not limited to high-tech sectors of the economy, IT and IT enabled services, tourism, port and transport infrastructure, development and commercialization of technologies, as well as for the production of new types of value added products. The Parties also acknowledge that Special Economic Zones provide immense opportunities for encouraging additional investment in priority areas of economic development.

1.3 The Cooperation Framework is intended to promote capacity building and sharing of best practices of the BRICS countries in creating and managing zones with special treatment or incentives, as well as assisting business in localizing industrial production in accordance with their national laws.

1.4. In this Cooperation Framework, Special Economic Zones are understood as areas with special treatment or incentives, which may include Special Economic Zones, Free Economic Zones, Free Ports, Free Trade Zones, Industrial Zones, Industrial Parks, Technoparks. The scope and coverage of the SEZs is as per the domestic laws and regulations of the Member States.

1.5. The Parties intend to establish and develop cooperation among Special Economic Zones based on the principles of transparency, mutual benefit, mutual understanding, mutual respect and trust.

## **2. Key areas of cooperation**

2.1. The Parties recognize the importance of developing cooperation on a consensus basis in the following areas:

- raising awareness of the contribution of Special Economic Zones to sustainable and resilient development;
- implementation of joint programs and business missions as feasible for exchange of experiences;
- exchange of approaches to implementation of standards, and methodologies for managing Special Economic Zones;
- exchange of experiences of Special Economic Zones aimed at achieving Sustainable Development Goals, including addressing climate change through elaboration of issues on low-carbon development and green transformation;
- search for new investment niches;
- assistance in localization of business to the facilities of Special Economic Zones of the BRICS countries;
- exchange, if applicable and feasible, of non-confidential information on the needs of Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and Suppliers in raw materials, components, logistics solutions, as well as proposals from the Parties;
- enhance institutional arrangements to carry out practice-oriented activities;
- other areas ensuring the fulfillment of this Cooperation Framework within the competence and in line with domestic regulations of the Parties.

## **3. Mechanisms of cooperation**

3.1. The Parties acknowledge the importance of operationalizing cooperation through mutual expert consultations and coordination of positions, exchange

of information, business missions and development of joint solutions in the areas of cooperation.

3.2. In order to enhance practical cooperation, the Parties on a consensus basis will endeavor to establish a forum for cooperation on Special Economic Zones of the BRICS countries to comprise, depending on the countries' decision, either government officials or the private sector, or any other organization authorized by the state to represent the interests of or provide public policy advice in the field of SEZs.

3.3. The Parties to the Cooperation Framework agree to nominate the focal points either from the public sector or the private sector, or any other organization authorized by the state, dealing with the matters of the Cooperation Framework as feasible within the current Chairship.

3.4. The Presiding BRICS country may endeavor to gather information on the activities carried out at both public and private levels throughout the year in line with the Cooperation Framework's provisions and may report progress on such cooperation during the BRICS Trade Ministers Meeting.



## **BRICS JOINT STATEMENT ON FOSTERING E-COMMERCE**

E-Commerce has become one of the most important drivers of global economic growth. Development of cross-border e-commerce fosters international trade in goods and services, ensures foreign investment flows and facilitates innovation.

The BRICS countries hold great potential in e-commerce in both B2B and B2C segments. The onward development of the BRICS cooperation in the field of e-commerce will serve as a leverage to improve security and transparency of supply chains increasing efficiency of the latter.

Since 2014, the BRICS countries have emphasized the need for cooperation on e-commerce. In this vein, a number of initiatives were adopted including 2015 Framework for BRICS E-commerce Cooperation, 2017 BRICS E-Commerce Cooperation Initiative, 2018 BRICS Cooperation Framework on Inclusive E-Commerce Development, 2019 Outlines for BRICS Cooperation on E-Commerce, and 2021 Framework for Ensuring Consumer Protection in E-Commerce.

With endorsement of the BRICS Digital Economy Partnership Framework in 2022, the BRICS members paved the way for establishment of the Digital Economy Working Group to deal with e-commerce and consumer protection matters as one of its pillars.

The BRICS countries, thus, recognize the progress made so far and aspire to further increase trust in e-commerce and ensure full-fledged protection of the rights of e-commerce parties. Building on the previous commitments and with a view to unveil the potential of digital technologies, the BRICS countries agree on the following:

### **Consumer Rights Protection in E-Commerce**

The BRICS countries will endeavour to regularly exchange information on respective national legislation and domestic experiences in elaborating and implementing policies

aimed at securing sufficient, inclusive, and transparent public digital mechanisms for consumer protection, as well as on , inter alia, cutting-edge practices such as establishing single-window digital services concerning consumer protection within e-government systems.

The BRICS countries will endeavour to facilitate innovation in the field of public mechanisms for consumer protection through dialogue on the best practices of applying digital instruments in the processes of filing, consideration, and satisfaction of consumer claims.

The BRICS countries will endeavor to strengthen cooperation on elaborating common approaches on ensuring consumer protection in e-commerce and e-commerce transaction assurance standards, and exchange views on relevant proposals in the International Organization for Standardization

The abovementioned activities will be conducted to the extent practicable under the Digital Economy Working Group and in line with domestic laws and regulations.

### **Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) in Cross-Border E-Commerce**

The BRICS countries express their interest in jointly exploring the possibilities of online dispute resolution as a digitally-enabled alternative dispute resolution procedure, assisting parties of a dispute to reach an agreement avoiding litigation, and reducing the risk of losses or disbenefit for consumers.

The BRICS countries acknowledge that a transparent and predictable legal framework that incorporates sufficient remedy is one of the key factors for preserving current pace of development of cross-border e-commerce.

The BRICS countries will, to the extent practicable, inform each other on existing national regulatory frameworks, cases of successful integration of online dispute resolution services and experience in setting ODR-related infrastructure (e.g. recognition of electronic agreements, use of electronic communications for pre-trial settlements, transparent procedure of enforcement of awards).



The BRICS countries, when deemed necessary, and in line with domestic laws and regulations will communicate with stakeholders, e.g. national ODR providers, on the matters of integrating legal-tech tools based on available digital technologies in ODR.

The abovementioned activities will be conducted to the extent practicable under the Digital Economy Working Group and in line with domestic laws and regulations.

### **Integration of Businesses into Global Trade through E-Commerce**

The BRICS countries recognize that e-commerce and, in particular, export sales channels it provides, are crucial for the BRICS companies to enter regional and global markets. In this regard, the BRICS countries intend to strengthen cooperation on unlocking the potential of businesses, including MSMEs, through the means of e-commerce.

The BRICS countries particularly aspire to examine availability of national marketplaces for the products of the BRICS companies. The BRICS countries, thus, intend to exchange opportunities and hindrances for their companies to enter mutual marketplaces. In cases when the key barrier is lacking awareness of the marketplace's functioning rather than objective limitations, the BRICS countries will help conduct capacity building workshops and associated activities, among others, for marketplaces to explain how to set up a store, manage customers inquiries and operate their platform effectively.

The BRICS countries will discuss opportunities for launching national and collective stores within BRICS marketplaces, thus reducing the financial, administrative and marketing burden of businesses entering new markets separately.

Recognizing, among others, the relevance of the issue of small value product trade to the cross-border e-commerce cooperation, the BRICS countries agreed to exchange views on respective matters falling within the mandate of the BRICS Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues.

The BRICS countries recognize the need to increase the participation of women in e-commerce in order to enhance the role of women in regional and global trade.

The BRICS countries may consider promoting and calling upon enterprises to actively participate in mutual exhibitions within BRICS, and enhance intra-BRICS trade facilitation through e-commerce.

The BRICS countries will endeavour to strengthen cooperation among the national agencies or other bodies responsible for assisting businesses in exporting their products for the abovementioned activities to be implemented.