



**BUILDING FOR RESILIENCE, INNOVATION,
COOPERATION AND SUSTAINABILITY**

BRICS LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT MINISTERS' DECLARATION

15th July 2026, Hyderabad, Telangana



DECLARATION OF THE TWELFTH LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT MINISTERS' MEETING 2026

Introduction

1. We, the Ministers responsible for Labour and Employment and Heads of Delegation of the BRICS countries convened in Hyderabad on 15th July 2026 for the twelfth BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' meeting under the Chairship of India. Drawing from the theme of India's Chairship "*Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability*", the meeting focused on strengthening BRICS cooperation in labour welfare with emphasis on social security, formalisation of labour markets, enhancing female labour force participation, skill development and employability of labour force and digital transformation in the world of work.
2. We recall previous BRICS endeavours on social protection extension, skill development, platform work, and gender equality. We commend the progress made by our countries in fulfilling shared commitments from our previous meetings, while recognising that each Member State progresses according to its national circumstances, legal frameworks, and fiscal capacities.
3. We recognize that the world of work is undergoing a structural transformation driven by digitalisation, artificial intelligence, demographic shifts, labour market dynamics, evolving skills demand and new forms of work including the gig and platform economy. These transformations present both opportunities and challenges that require a coordinated, people-centred policy approach.



Advancing Social Security and Formalisation of Labour Markets

4. We reaffirm that stepping up efforts to protect and improve people's livelihoods, building sustainable social protection systems, advancing the formalisation of the labour market, and promoting high quality and productive employment, is essential for reducing poverty, addressing inequality, and ensuring decent work.
5. We recognise the importance of a life cycle approach to the expansion of social protection within the framework of the existing social protection systems with the aim of providing continuous coverage across different branches of social security, as a cornerstone for social justice. Achieving the aforementioned goal requires sustainable and equitable financing of social protection systems according to national circumstances, priorities and capacities.
6. We also underscore the significance of promoting labour market formalisation through simplified administrative procedures, reduced compliance costs, and targeted policy interventions.
7. We commend the collective efforts of our countries in expanding social protection coverage. In this regard, we shall endeavour to progressively expand social protection coverage from existing levels as per nationally determined levels, based on member states' respective circumstances, priorities, and capacities.
8. We recognise the importance of protecting the rights of workers moving across borders, ensuring portability of benefits, and avoiding double coverage of social security contributions. We encourage Member States to conclude multilateral and bilateral SSAs and MoUs in accordance with national laws and regulations.



Enhancing Women's Participation and Inclusion in the Workforce

9. We recognise the importance of increasing women's participation in the labour force for achieving inclusive, sustainable, and resilient economic growth. Women's inclusion in the world of work and their economic empowerment enhances productivity, innovation, and shared prosperity.
10. We continue to acknowledge and recognise increased participation of women in the labour force, including by supporting safe and equitable workplaces. BRICS member states have narrowed down the labour force participation gap since 2012, and will continue to promote women's participation in the labour force.
11. We encourage increased participation of women in STEM, green, digital and AI, and care sectors, through targeted education initiatives, mentorship, skill development, and career advancement policies, including measures to address occupational segregation and the gender pay gap.
12. We commit to strengthening policy frameworks that empower women through expanded access to skills development, parental leave policies, and protection against workplace harassment and discrimination, and increased opportunities to participate in emerging sectors of the economy. In this regard, we shall also work towards enhancing women's representation and participation in leadership roles across public and private sectors.
13. We emphasise the voluntary exchange of best practices, to support evidence-informed policymaking through data sharing, analysis, and policy dialogue thereby enabling more effective and targeted policy responses to enhance women's workforce participation.



Cooperation on Employability, Skills Mapping and Development

14. We recognize that technological acceleration, just transition, and demographic changes are reshaping labour markets. This requires the need for adopting the people-centered approach, investing in human capital, advancing high-quality population development, conducting workforce training, re-skilling and promoting lifelong learning pathways to address global labour market mismatches.
15. We take note of the ongoing feasibility study on International Reference Classification of Occupations being conducted by the ILO in collaboration with India, joined by Brazil, and we encourage Member States to consider the participation in the pilot in key sectors, i.e., Digital, Care, and Green.
16. We commit to strengthen collaboration in forecasting skills needs by analysing labour market trends in digital, green, care and other priority sectors.
17. We shall make efforts to promote youth employability through expanded apprenticeships, internships, vocational education, entrepreneurship programmes, and targeted initiatives for youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET), with an aspiration of reducing the NEET rate in accordance with national circumstances and different levels of progress while recognising that Member States with good progress may focus on maintaining momentum.



Leveraging Digital Technologies for all workers, including Gig and Platform Workers

18. We recognize the transformative role of digital technologies in expanding the outreach of social protection and enhancing inclusiveness and accessibility for workers' welfare. This can facilitate the identification of eligible beneficiaries, providing them with the right support through interoperable labour platforms, with due regard to domestic digital governance and data protection frameworks.
19. We recognize that the gig and platform economy is a fast-growing sector in the BRICS countries and is rapidly emerging as a driving force for employment generation and enterprise development. Given its dynamic and evolving nature, we also acknowledge the importance of exploring innovative, nationally tailored policy approaches to increase social protection coverage to workers in this sector.
20. We will work on strengthening worker registration systems, and technology-enabled social protection delivery mechanisms, including digital contribution tracking, optimize online application channels and improve the accuracy and timeliness of social security benefit payments, while ensuring data protection, privacy, and availing of offline registration alternatives.
21. We will work together to create opportunities to exchange knowledge and experiences, showcase our digital innovations, and help alleviate the transition challenges, through peer learning and South-South and Triangular cooperation with extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. We further agree to explore appropriate mechanisms to facilitate this exchange.



Engagement with Knowledge Partners

22. We thank the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and International Social Security Association (ISSA) for their technical support for the 2026 BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' meeting and will continue to work closely with them.
23. We further recognize the pivotal role of the BRICS Employment Working Group and reaffirm our commitment to amplifying the voice and priorities of emerging and developing economies in global labour governance.

Way Forward

24. We endorse the work done by Employment Working Group and progress made in building on Virtual Liaison Office. We adopt BRICS CONNECT (BRICS Cooperation Network for Capacity Building, Employability, and New Skills and Technologies), a streamlined, flexible platform with four components:
 - Capacity Building for Advancing Social Security
 - Women's participation in the workforce
 - Skills and Employability
 - Digital Public Infrastructure
25. We agree to submit this Declaration of the 12th Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting 2026 for the consideration by our Leaders during Indian Presidency.
26. We reaffirm our collective commitment to building resilient labour markets that are formal, inclusive, gender-responsive, digitally empowered, and future-ready, ensuring that no worker is left behind.



27. We emphasize that the work of the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes provides invaluable input to national strategies in the field of labour and employment. We look forward to deepening our research on issues of common interest to BRICS countries and enhancing academic and research exchanges and cooperation in this regard. We encourage all member states and partners to join this Network.

28. We express our appreciation to India for successfully hosting the BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting in 2026 and look forward to continued collaboration in 2027 under the next Chairship of People's Republic of China.



BRICS CONNECT

BRICS Cooperation Network for Capacity Building, Employability, New Skills & Technologies

1. Background

BRICS countries are undergoing significant transformations driven by technological change, evolving labour market dynamics and demographic shifts. This presents both opportunities and challenges for strengthening and advancing social protection systems, inclusion of women in the workforce, cooperation on skills and employability and leveraging digital technology for worker well-being to ensure equitable access to economic opportunities across diverse population groups. The aforementioned aspects are also a prerequisite for building more resilient, innovative, cooperative and sustainable pathways.

In this context, there is growing recognition of the importance of data-driven policymaking, digital public infrastructure, and targeted strategies to improve labour market outcomes. Inspired by the BRICS philosophy of cooperation and inclusive growth, developing a structured mechanism can support shared learning, facilitate the exchange of experiences, and enable the voluntary adaptation of innovative approaches in line with national contexts, circumstances and priorities.

Towards this endeavour, the BRICS Virtual Liaison Office for Social Security Cooperation reflects the shared commitments of the member states towards closer cooperation on social protection, data collection, analysis, knowledge production, networking and discussion. Adding to the existing BRICS VLO initiative, BRICS CONNECT seeks to advance cooperation by moving towards tangible and action-oriented outcomes. The dimensions of BRICS CONNECT are aligned with the four priority areas i.e. advancing social security, enhancing female labour force participation, cooperating on employability and skills mapping and leveraging technology



for workers' well-being. Each priority contributes to strengthening institutional capacities, promoting knowledge exchange, and supporting targeted interventions in their respective domains.

Together, these mechanisms aim to foster collaboration, build technical capabilities, and support inclusive, sustainable, and forward-looking policy frameworks across BRICS economies.

2. BRICS CONNECT

Launched under India's BRICS Chairship in 2026, BRICS CONNECT will prioritize the current Chairship's focus areas, with the flexibility to integrate new priorities as they arise under subsequent BRICS Chairships.

BRICS CONNECT will have the following components:

(i) Capacity Building in Advancing Social Security

This includes strengthening institutional capacities of member states through experience sharing on national strategies for enhancing social protection coverage, methodologies relating to its estimation, approaches for integrating different dimensions of social security into implementation strategies, and aspects related to sustainable financing solutions.

(ii) Women's Participation in the Workforce

Under BRICS CONNECT, this component fosters voluntary exchange of policies, programmes, and innovative practices to boost women's participation in the workforce. It covers quality employment, skills, entrepreneurship, work-life balance, safe workplaces, and barrier reduction. Supported by evidence-based research, technical exchanges, and policy dialogues, this would facilitate to design more effective interventions for enhancing women's participation in the workforce.



(iii) Skills and Employability

This component under BRICS CONNECT includes experience sharing on labour market information systems, skills forecasting methodologies, vocational education and training frameworks, and approaches for addressing skills Gaps particularly in Digital, Care and Green Sectors. It can also facilitate policy dialogue and joint analytical work on emerging skill needs and evolving patterns of employment, while promoting mutual recognition of skills and lifelong learning systems, to promote a resilient workforce equipped with the skills necessary for the future of work.

(iv) Digital Public Infrastructure

This component under BRICS CONNECT serves as a platform for BRICS Member States to showcase their digital innovations and share solutions relating to labour market governance, social security delivery, employment services or related areas. This would support other interested Members to adapt such innovations, in accordance with their respective national priorities and requirements. Such cooperation may be undertaken on a voluntary basis and through mutual consensus among interested Member States.

3. Cooperation under BRICS CONNECT

All cooperation and activities under BRICS CONNECT shall be undertaken on a voluntary, non-binding basis and in accordance with the national laws, regulations, priorities and institutional frameworks of the Member States, including collaboration with international knowledge partners.



4. Scope of Work

- Enable a collaborative BRICS platform for continuous exchange of best practices, tools, and policy approaches related to skills intelligence and workforce planning.
- Capacity building through workshops and knowledge-sharing initiatives for supporting countries in adopting and customising digital tools.
- Promote multilateral collaboration by engaging international knowledge partners to facilitate structured dialogue, peer learning and coordinated action.

5. Role of Member Countries

- Voluntarily participate in consultations, knowledge-sharing sessions, and peer-learning activities to exchange national experiences and best practices.
- Nominate officials and experts to participate in training, workshops, and capacity-building initiatives.

6. Implementation Mechanism

- The modalities of implementation mechanism for BRICS CONNECT shall be developed within the VLO initiative through consultations among member countries, ensuring alignment with principles of cooperation and respect for national priorities.
- Decisions and activities under BRICS CONNECT shall be undertaken by consensus among participating member states.
- Any revisions or modifications to this Terms of Reference shall be carried out through consultations among Member States, on the basis of consensus and mutual agreement.
