



***BRICS@15: Intra - BRICS Cooperation for Continuity,
Consolidation and Consensus***

***BRICS LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT MINISTERS'
DECLARATION***

July, 2021
New Delhi



**Ministry of Labour & Employment
Government of India**





BRICS LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT MINISTERS' DECLARATION JULY 2021, NEW DELHI, INDIA

Introduction

1. We, the Ministers of Labour and Employment from 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 virtually under the Indian Presidency on 15 July 2021, for the Seventh BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting to exchange views on the recent global labour market issues shaped by COVID-19 pandemic situation, enhance information sharing, discuss and agree upon specific areas of cooperation in our endeavour to address labour and employment challenges commonly faced by BRICS Member States.
2. We note with utmost concern that the world endures an unprecedented time countering adverse effects of COVID-19, which has profoundly impacted lives, livelihoods and economic activities. The world of work has witnessed long lasting impacts ranging from working hour and income losses, rising unemployment and closure of businesses to disruptions in economic activities, especially in labour intensive ones with adverse effects on workers engaged in the informal economy, women workers as well as young people, being the most affected.
3. We note with great concern that the fallout created by the pandemic has negatively impacted the efforts that had been made to addressing unemployment, decent work deficits and inequality. We express support for the global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient as adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2021.
4. Employment Working Group Meetings, including during difficult times of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 under Russia's Presidency and in 2021 under India's Presidency demonstrate the level of commitment, trust and confidence which the Member States have posed in each other to improve labour, employment and social security policies while learning from each other's experience in evolving appropriate policy responses. It illustrates the strong determination of BRICS Member States to recover with stronger national economies, inclusive labour markets and social protection systems. In pursuance of this objective, the Indian Presidency focussed on four key pillars of labour and employment policies: Promoting Social Security Agreements amongst BRICS Nations; Formalisation of Labour Markets; Participation of Women in the Labour Force; and Gig and Platform Workers: Role in the Labour Market.

Promoting Social Security Agreements amongst BRICS Nations

5. Globalization, paired with varied economic growth and differences in the demography of the countries all over the world have propelled international labour migration, which makes it



challenging and more important than ever to guarantee the social security rights of migrant workers. This has led to a growing number of countries signing bilateral/multilateral social security agreements to ensure social security rights and access to social protection of the migrant workers.

6. In order to achieve progress in concluding social security agreements, we take into account the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) labour standards which provide guidance on decent labour migration conditions. We acknowledge the contribution of the Virtual Liaison Office jointly hosted by the ILO and the International Social Security Association (ISSA) to support the BRICS countries in their efforts to maintain a continued strong cooperation in matters of social security.
7. Building on previous Declarations of BRICS Summits and Labour and Employment Ministers' Meetings (LEMM), the Conclusions of the Recurrent Discussion on Social Protection (Social Security) adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2021 and with the support of ILO and ISSA, we are committed to deepening social security cooperation among our countries. We resolve to carry out exchange of information among BRICS countries on employment and social security for cross-border labour flows and initiate social security agreements between BRICS nations within a reasonable timeframe.

Formalisation of Labour Markets

8. Labour market informality continues to pose a major challenge to all the BRICS member states. The pandemic has aggravated the formalisation risk. Reiterating our commitment made in the 2016 BRICS LEMM Declaration, we strive to enhance the transition from informality to formality as a means towards improving living and working conditions, productivity and job growth and strengthening efforts to reduce poverty through access to quality employment and social protection. We welcome various innovative approaches and policy interventions that have been implemented in the BRICS Member States aimed at reducing informality and facilitating the transition to the formal economy. We will further strengthen our policies, regulations and measures to facilitate the transition from the informal to the formal economy, taking into account, the ILO Recommendation 204 and UN Sustainable Development Goals.
9. The use of technology has high potential to facilitate faster transition to formality – for aspects such as providing access to social protection, simplifying registration, allowing digital wage payment, enhancing access to finance, increasing productivity, supporting labour inspection and compliance with laws. We ask the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes to undertake an in-depth research on “E-formality practices, i.e., the use of technology for formalization in the BRICS countries” to assess their scalability and transferability.

Participation of Women in the Labour Force

10. We recognize that gender gaps and the low participation of women in the labour market remain a formidable challenge in some of the BRICS nations. The sustained participation of women in the labour market and strategies for the promotion of women participation in remunerative, productive and decent work are top priorities in our policy agenda.



11. The COVID-19 pandemic has further affected women workers in multiple ways, exacerbating gender inequalities in the labour market. We reiterate our commitment to gender-responsive employment and social protection policies for medium and long term recovery, including macroeconomic policies, sectoral policies and active labour market policies. Investment in the care economy for decent jobs remains a critical aspect of such a policy agenda.

Gig and Platform Workers: Role in the Labour Market

12. Digital labour platforms are a distinctive part of the digital economy. These platforms have created unprecedented opportunities for businesses, society and workers, but at the same time, presented challenges relating to working conditions, social protection, the regularity of work and incomes.
13. We reaffirm our commitment to support the development of the digital economy, including digital delivery of services, while acknowledging the role of digital platforms in providing resilience to national economies in the face of crisis such as COVID-19.
14. We acknowledge the positive impact of digital platforms in facilitation of job creation, entrepreneurship and development of micro and small businesses, and in providing livelihood opportunities for disadvantaged groups, including women, and persons with disabilities.
15. We will strive to leverage the opportunities and overcome the challenges emerging from the rise of digital labour platforms, to ensure sustainable enterprise development and decent work for all, and to work towards achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Way Forward

16. We will present this Declaration to the BRICS Summit for our Leaders' consideration as they strive to deepen cooperation for achieving a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable development trajectory.
17. We welcome the research support provided by the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes for the BRICS Ministerial and Employment Working Group discussions. We note that as per the directions of the Sixth Ministerial Meeting in 2020 under the Russian Presidency, the Network is currently engaged in a research study on the theme 'Support of Employment and Income in the Context of COVID-19 Crisis'.
18. The Ministerial Meeting and EWG discussions have significantly benefitted from the technical support provided by the ILO and ISSA. We appreciate their expertise and will continue working closely with these international organisations.
19. We express our sincerest appreciation to the Indian Presidency for organising the EWG meetings and the Seventh BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting. We look forward to our next meeting under the Presidency of the People's Republic of China in 2022.

