

Statement by Minister Naledi Pandor
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BRICS Cooperation and Global and Regional Issues (*8 mins*)

Standalone Meeting of
BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations

Time: 11:13 Monday 10 June 2024

Honourable Chair, Minister Lavrov,

Honourable BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations,

BRICS Sherpas and Sous-Sherpas,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank Minister Lavrov, our host, for bringing us together in this wonderful city.

Chairperson, allow me to begin by expressing our government and the delegation's condolences to our Iran colleague, the government and its people following the tragic passing of our colleague, Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian and President Raisi.

Dear colleagues, South Africa has just held successful free and fair national and provincial election. This was the most competitive election we have held since attaining democracy in 1994, with a record number of political parties on the ballot and independent candidates standing for the first time.

Since 1994, South Africans have worked together to build a country that is democratic, prosperous and free and we take pride in the progress we have recorded in entrenching democracy.

I value this opportunity to participate in our first meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations since Leaders took the decision to invite Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to join BRICS as full members during the XV BRICS Summit held in Johannesburg on 23 August 2023.

Let me express my appreciation to our Chair, Minister Lavrov, for hosting our meeting in this historic town of Nizhny Novgorod, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Nizhny Novgorod is significant for its contribution to the development of the Russian state and Russian culture but also for being an important trade centre linking northern Europe to Central Asia and Byzantium.

Our meeting is historic for several reasons.

We mark the expansion of BRICS to include further members of the global South and so increase our voice and influence as we continue to strive to shape a more fair, just and representative multipolar world order.

We also face very complex and political challenges that require ingenuity, innovation and increased global cooperation and we can be a force for good.

South Africa stands ready to work with our new members as they join all BRICS cooperation tracks and structures.

BRICS has increasingly become an important global forum. It is important that we maintain the momentum across all pillars of cooperation in the BRICS spirit of solidarity, openness, mutual respect and understanding in full consultation and consensus. Our collaboration can enhance effective action in all three pillars of BRICS, namely financial and economic cooperation, political and security cooperation, and cultural and people-to-people cooperation.

Together, we can realise the full potential of our BRICS economic partnership for mutually beneficial and inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. We therefore welcome the establishment of a Task Force to prepare a “BRICS Report on Improving the International Monetary and Financial System” and Central Bank discussions on the feasibility of establishing a BRICS international settlement and depository platform.

South Africa supports efforts to improve the stability of the International Monetary and Financial System, particularly through enhancing the interconnectivity of supply chains and payment systems to promote trade and investment among BRICS members and the broader global South.

Excellencies,

Our vision for BRICS is to foster a partnership that promotes the inclusion of countries of the global South in a fair, just, and equitable world, based on mutual respect and the equal sovereignty of nations. We see our partnership as a catalyst for sustained and mutually beneficial global growth and sustainable development that addresses the needs and demands of the entire world, not just the rich and the privileged.

One of the critical challenges of this time is the need to accelerate progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

South Africa welcomes the Secretary General's convening of the Summit of the Future. We are committed to ensuring that this is successful in contributing to bridging the development divide and proving new solutions to tomorrow's challenges.

The Summit of the Future should allow for progress in achieving the sustainable development goals and advance our debates on transforming the international systems of power, governance, finance, debt, trade, and technology so that no one and no country is left behind.

Excellencies,

As BRICS, we share a commitment to upholding and strengthening international law and advancing the central role of the United Nations in promoting inclusive multilateralism to foster increased cooperation between sovereign states in pursuit of international peace and security, sustainable development, democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms for all.

It is our shared belief that International Law should be uniformly applied and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter should be upheld by all. One of the ambitions we must uphold is an end to colonial domination and oppression, wherever it occurs.

South Africa will continue to act within the institutions of global governance to protect the rights, including the fundamental right to life, of the people of Palestine. The continued bombardment of Gaza has resulted in a disastrous humanitarian crisis, loss of lives and destruction of essential infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools and universities and left Gaza largely uninhabitable. The invasion of Rafah perpetuates an already dire humanitarian situation, and the safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid is vital for the survival of the Palestinian population.

All of us must consider playing a role in securing peace and security for both Palestine and Israel.

South Africa welcomes the order by the International Court of Justice of 24 May 2024 that Israel should halt military action in Rafah. The provisional measures ordered by the Court thus far signal a decisive victory for the international rule of law and a significant milestone in the search for justice for the Palestinian people. The provisional measures also affirm the importance of global governance institutions including organs of the United Nations. It remains vital for all member states to respect and implement the decisions of the Court.

There can be no real and lasting peace in the region in the absence of justice for Palestine and a just and equitable resolution to the Palestinian question – for the benefit of both Palestinians and Israelis. Escalation not only threatens regional stability but risks further inflaming an already tense and hugely volatile situation on the ground.

South Africa therefore strongly calls for a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire. The only realistic solution is the creation of two-states based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the Capital of Palestine. We reiterate our support for the full membership of Palestine in the United Nations.

Excellencies,

South Africa is preparing to assume the G20 Presidency on 1 December 2024 building on the achievement of Brazil's Chairship in 2024 and India's successful Chairship in 2023. We are acutely aware of the importance of ensuring that the G20 remains sensitive to the needs of the developing economies of Africa and those of the Global South.

We hope to work with all in ensuring that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals remains at the center of international financing discussions; that long outstanding commitments are met; and that new, at-scale, affordable, and accessible funding is mobilised to support sustainable development. South Africa will also work to efficiently respond to the current global economic, climate, and energy crises, the debt crisis facing Africa and other developing countries, and to curb illicit financial flows in an effort to afford developing countries a fair opportunity at sustainable development. The inclusion of the African Union as a member of the G20 during India's Chairship provides a unique opportunity for South Africa and all G20 members to jointly champion Agenda 2063.

In closing, Minister Lavrov, I assure you of South Africa's full support in your hosting a successful XVI BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia in October this year.

I thank you.