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Russia's BRICS Chairmanship in 2020



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COOPERATION IN BRICS is the permanent priority of the Russian foreign policy. The motto of the Russian BRICS Chairmanship in 2020 — “BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Shared Security and Innovative Growth” — reflected not only the main goal of Russia's year in BRICS, but also the entire multifaceted collaboration in the BRICS format, which aimed to contribute into raising living standards and quality of life of the peoples of our five countries.

Making traditional emphasis on the continuity of the BRICS process, Russia was aiming to ensure a harmonious transition from the Brazilian Chairmanship, while all ideas endorsed by the Leaders at the XI BRICS Summit in November 2019 were also part of the 2020 agenda. In this regard Russia continued to promote all three pillars of the BRICS strategic partnership — policy and security, economy and finance, culture and people-to-people exchanges.

Despite extraordinary conditions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the BRICS countries continued proactively expanding their cooperation in all key areas and managed to maintain the momentum to produce concrete results. Over 150 events, including 25 ministerial meetings, were held in-person and via videoconferences, ensuring further progress in mutually beneficial and pragmatic cooperation. Among them were the XII BRICS Summit held on November 17, two Meetings of BRICS Foreign Ministers on April 28 and September 4, the X Meeting of the BRICS High Representatives for Security on September 17, and many more, including regular dialogue between finance, trade and economy, health, energy, science, tourism agencies, etc.

One of the main BRICS priorities for Russia was to coordinate collective measures to combat the pandemic and to intensify collaboration between epidemiological services of the five countries and protect the lives and health of citizens. BRICS already had a solid basis for that. Back in 2015, the BRICS Ufa Declaration included an agreement to enhance cooperation in addressing the challenges to health and human well-being including through developing effective joint responses to the continuing spread of major diseases (HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, etc.), as well as the emergence of new infections with a pandemic potential. Pursuant to that agreement, Russia suggested to create an early warning system for infectious diseases outbreaks. Efforts of BRICS countries to combat the COVID-19 were also supported by the New Development Bank, which decided to reserve USD 10 bn for these purposes.

The Russian Direct Investment Fund signed agreements with Indian and Brazilian partners on clinical trials of the Sputnik V vaccine and with pharmaceutical companies in China and India on the production of this vaccine. Our scope of cooperation in this area will grow further, as we have the second coronavirus vaccine registered recently in October in Russia — EpiVacCorona, and the third one is coming soon.

Besides, in the Moscow Declaration (full text: <https://bit.ly/3kDl6lE>) adopted at the XII BRICS Summit, the Leaders reiterated their commitment to establish the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development



November 17, 2020: The XII BRICS Summit held via videoconference



From left: Venkatesh Varma, Ambassador of India to Russia, and Boris Mashtaler, Executive Director of the National Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences of Russia, hold the Indian flag and pose for a photo after the Award Ceremony of the 5th BRICS Film Festival (October 1-7, 2020)



Centre mentioned in the Johannesburg Declaration (2018), and encouraged timely and effective implementation of this initiative.

Maintaining close coordination on the G20 agenda, the BRICS countries are dedicated to support comprehensive measures to overcome the impact of the pandemic to restore global value chains and the openness of international trade. Russia's initiative on the green corridors free from wars and sanctions, primarily with regard to humanitarian supplies of food and vital medicine, is envisioned along the same lines.

This year the pandemic forced BRICS countries to take emergency measures to support national industries, finance and the social sphere, to revive their economies and return them to a trajectory of sustainable growth. The Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership for the period until 2025 adopted at the XII BRICS Summit (full text: <https://bit.ly/2lGaCnM>) is aimed to assist countries in that goal. The document defines a development path of BRICS and sets the framework for cooperation in accordance with current economic trends and conditions. By adopting the BRICS Strategy, the countries demonstrated their determination to jointly address new global challenges, including macroeconomic shocks and financial volatility, and draw up a positive, balanced and clear economic agenda.

It also comes in line with the aspiration

to stimulate strong economic growth by the support of the multilateral trading system based on the rules and principles of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and to resist emerging global uncertainty caused by a number of factors, including unilateral and protectionist measures.

More to say, the grouping confirmed its will to embrace the digitization wave, as well, which opens the floor for raising effectiveness and economic competitiveness, improving quality of life, addressing digital divide (also by promoting the Partnership for the New Industrial Revolution), overcoming cumulative social, economic, infrastructure imbalances, all being factors of sustainable growth in BRICS. It is further provided for an increased use of national currencies in mutual trade.

The New Development Bank (NDB) is in great demand in such circumstances. Its overall portfolio of infrastructure investment projects exceeded USD 20 bn. As many as 62 large projects are already being implemented in the BRICS countries. The NDB just recently opened its third regional office in Moscow and is about to open another one in India next year. Prospects of expansion of stakeholders would further increase its capacity and relevance as well-reputed global financial institution. Currently the Bank enjoys AA+ long-term credit rating by Fitch and S&P as well AAA by Japan Credit Rating. The BRICS Contingent Currency Arrangement is also fully operational.



October 27, 2020: BRICS Parliamentary Forum



BRICS Foreign Ministers Council online meeting, Moscow, April 28, 2020

Among the major achievements of the Russian Chairmanship — successful implementation of the Energy Research Cooperation Platform initiative (expert reports have been prepared on the projected development of the fuel and energy sectors in the BRICS countries until 2040), the launch of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance. The five countries continued enhancing cooperation in science, technology and innovation. The next round of the BRICSMATH competition for schoolchildren was held along with contests for young scientists and innovators and their research projects. Intensive contacts have been underway between our academic and scientific centres. Their coverage is truly impressive — from ocean and polar research to astronomy and artificial intelligence. The BRICS Film Festival was aired online. A strong impetus was given to the tracks of sports, tourism, agriculture, urban development, environment protection.

Throughout this year the BRICS countries have been closely coordinating their efforts on a wide range of the current international and regional matters, expanding their cooperation on combating terrorism, drug trafficking and corruption, as well as on international information security.

This success is largely due to our coinciding or similar approaches to the central role of the United Nations and international law, as well as to a positive, unified and forward-looking agenda. The core of

the BRICS activities is based on the principles of international relations enshrined in the UN Charter such as nonintervention in the internal affairs of states, resolution of disputes by peaceful means, inadmissibility of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, etc.

Proceeding from the fact that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and that any act of terrorism, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever motives and purposes, deserves to be condemned, the Leaders endorsed the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy (full text: <https://bit.ly/35Afu6W>). It would further allow to work out common measures and more closely coordinate in the UN and other fora, promote implementation of the UN Global CT-Strategy as well as early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. It is also aimed to complement and strengthen the existing bilateral and multilateral ties among the BRICS countries, and to make a meaningful contribution to the global efforts of preventing and combating the threat of terrorism.

Russia's Chairmanship in 2020 coincided with the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the foundation of the United Nations. In the Moscow Declaration the Leaders emphasized that the Victory in the WWII is the common

legacy, and they paid a tribute to all those who fought against fascism, tyranny and militarism, colonialism as well as for freedom of nations, and stressed the importance of preservation and inadmissibility of desecration or destruction of monuments erected in their remembrance.

They also noted the duty to remember contributions made by all countries, including loss of lives of soldiers and civilians during the WWII, as well as reinforced commitment to a world of peace, stability and prosperity, mutual respect and equality. It was also stated that born out of the horrors of the Second World War, the United Nations, as a common endeavour for humanity, was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and since then has helped to shape the very structure of relations between nations in the modern age. The BRICS Leaders urged for a resolute stand against the rehabilitation of Nazi ideology, racism, xenophobia, colonialism and the distortion of history, and many countries including India became co-sponsors of Russia-proposed relevant UN GA resolution.

That is exactly the reason why we should proceed towards multipolarity and the reform of global governance institutions, including the UN, based on maximum broad consensus and respect of interests of all nations keeping in mind the need to preserve the central role of the UN system. Sovereign states are encouraged to cooperate to maintain peace and security, advance sustainable development, ensure the promotion and protection of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all with the aim to build a brighter shared future for the international community based on mutually beneficial cooperation.

BRICS global agenda is widely supported by other nations as well, and that motivated us some years ago to establish the BRICS Plus and BRICS Outreach formats, which along with the interested states takes onboard international and regional organizations as well. That makes us also guided by the so-called “Integration of integrations” concept. Such dialogue is also very important to promote global governance reform to make it more inclusive, representative and democratic with meaningful and greater representation of developing countries in international decision-making. Due to the pandemic and eventual prevailing of videoconferencing interaction, these formats were not convened this year. However, we remain committed to continue such kind of partnership in the future with the hope to resume it during the Indian Chairmanship if the epidemiological situation permits.

In general, we believe that despite the pandemic the Russian Chairmanship managed to keep BRICS on its track in proceeding to the goal of a constructive polycentric and expanding multidimensional practical cooperation. With obvious big results and benefits achieved and forward-looking agenda ahead, the Forum would further reiterate its growing relevance as a crucial mechanism supplementing global efforts aimed at the establishment of a truly just and multipolar world.

We highly appreciate the constructive contribution of our Indian friends to the Russian BRICS Chairmanship in 2020!

Keeping in mind this solid common ground, we wish the Indian Chairmanship in BRICS in 2021 every success, and extend our full support in ensuring further continuity and enriching the five-parties cooperation with new interesting projects and ideas!

