SOUTH AFRICAN BRICS BUSINESS COUNCIL (SABBC) UPDATE 3

# SHAPING THE FUTURE: BRICS BUSINESS COUNCIL'S VISION FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH

The recent BRICS Business Council AGM in Brazil presented an opportunity for delegates from Global South countries to lay the groundwork for participating in an unfolding economic landscape.

The knowledge shared at the AGM was a testimony to the important work that has already been done to achieve this goal of economic transformation. This work was summarised in the annual report, which outlines 47 private sector-led initiatives and strategic recommendations across key economic sectors.

Delegates also discussed a landmark white paper that could meaningfully contribute to addressing the skills and technology shortages in BRICS economies. Titled "Tackling Skills and Tech Shortages in BRICS," the paper contains a blueprint to address labour market imbalances.

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**IN THIS EDITION:**











# TRADE WITH BRICS+ GROWS AMID GLOBAL REALIGNMENTS

Dr Stavros Nicolaou

The 2024 Trade Assessment Report reveals that South Africa's trade with BRICS+ countries totalled $56.1 billion last year, 21% of the nation's total trade volume. The bulk of this figure is made up of exports to China and India, but new markets like Indonesia and the UAE are steadily growing.

Given that Euro-American economies are projected to stagnate, the report suggests that "expanding exports to growing BRICS+ countries could improve the country's overall trade balance".

Dr. Stavros Nicolaou, a member of the South African BRICS Business Council (SABBC), echoed this sentiment, noting: "We look to enhance trade with those geographies that present the best economic opportunity for the South African business community."

That includes "trade with the West, the East, and the emerging South," he added, emphasising a balanced, pragmatic approach.

The proposed U.S. tariffs could slash South African export earnings by R8–12 billion over the next 12 months, with key sectors such as platinum group metals, agri-business, and automotive manufacturing likely to bear the brunt.

**"Higher tariffs and increased export costs are likely to diminish South Africa's price competitiveness in the U.S. market," Dr. Nicolaou warned.**

Already, the South African Reserve Bank has revised 2025's growth forecast from 1.8% to 1.7%. Nicolaou stressed that the impact is tangible: "The United States' tariff regime has already exerted externalities on the country's growth prospects."

For South African SMEs, the news compounds longstanding structural issues such as infrastructure bottlenecks and limited market access. Dr. Nicolaou was candid: "It is often argued that economic agents cannot outpace the effects of years of suboptimal industrial policies, sluggish GDP growth, and a declining industrial base."

He advocated for a productivity-focused strategy, which includes improving the ease of doing business, upskilling in science and mathematics, and investing in value-added manufacturing to avoid raw material dependency.

"To effectively integrate industries into the global network, South Africa must focus on improving its industrial productivity," he said.

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**_WITH TRADITIONAL MARKETS LOOKING INCREASINGLY VOLATILE, THE SABBC IS URGING BUSINESSES TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES. "WE SEE THAT THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SOUTH AFRICAN BUSINESSES, ESPECIALLY SMES, TO EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE MARKETS WITHIN AFRICA, ASIA, EUROPE, AND THE MIDDLE EAST," NICOLAOU EXPLAINED._**

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"To effectively integrate industries into the global network, South Africa must focus on improving its industrial productivity," he said.

With traditional markets looking increasingly volatile, the SABBC is urging businesses to consider alternatives. "We see that there is an opportunity for South African businesses, especially SMEs, to explore alternative markets within Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East," Nicolaou explained.

He also emphasised leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to boost intra-African trade.

While some speculate that the tensions may encourage BRICS nations to accelerate de-dollarization, Nicolaou clarified that "there has been no serious discussion on de-dollarization within the BRICS Business Council."

Instead, he said the focus has been on "settlement in local currencies within BRICS nations to reduce the cost of doing business and improve efficiency."

Despite the challenges, the SABBC stresses continued engagement with all global partners. "The United States remains an extremely important market for SA," said Nicolaou. "We will continue to trade with and look to derive maximum value from all trading partners."

At the same time, he called for reform of global trade systems: "We need to return to well-established principles of open markets and a WTO rules-based multilateral system."

South Africa is not choosing sides in the geopolitical tug-of-war. Instead, it is choosing a strategy. "Strategic non-alignment is a phrase that I would highly emphasise in this context," Nicolaou concluded.

As BRICS+ expands and trade shifts eastward and southward, South Africa's challenge is to ensure its trade posture remains resilient, balanced, and above all, future-focused.

# THE POTENTIAL RISKS TO ACHIEVING AN INCLUSIVE TRADE SYSTEM AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Digital technologies create opportunities for an inclusive trade system. For example, digital e-commerce platforms open avenues for small businesses and underrepresented economic sectors to participate in global trade.

**Enhanced accessibility and efficiency allow developing countries to unlock their trade potential, attract investment, and foster economic growth.**

However, there are risks that need attention to ensure truly inclusive growth. BRICS countries need to grapple with these risks to ensure mutually beneficial trade that supports sustainable (i.e. sustained growth) that is inclusive.

These risks include centralised control of data and market power; dependency on proprietary technologies; erosion of local value chains; suppression of labour market development; and regulatory challenges.

### KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR BRICS COUNTRIES

BRICS countries should resist the push by the global technology giants for digital transactions to be exempt from tariffs. The advance of digital technologies potentially weakens the position of industrialising countries as international firms can bypass import duties, local taxes, and other domestic regulations.

To enhance regulation, BRICS countries should work together to develop frameworks for appropriate regulatory and competition rules for digital platforms, including addressing data privacy and ownership, which draw on international experience, such as the measures taken by the EU and India to ensure a level playing field for local businesses in e-commerce and online search activities.

The key principle for these regulations should be a fair distribution of extraction in line with value creation.

To enhance capacity building in trade digitalisation, BRICS countries can focus on strengthening digital literacy, promoting digital infrastructure, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing, and encouraging policy coherence.

Ms Busi Mabuza

Collaboration with other multilateral institutions for capacity building including the WTO, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) to provide technical assistance to BRICS nations on digitalised trade is imperative.

Other institutions that could be considered for technical assistance include the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), the World Customs Organisation and the World Bank.

BRICS countries may need to assist second- and third-tier firms in obtaining affordable digital technology licences or developing alternative models to lessen the licensing burden. Establishing a 'Catalogue of BRICS Digital SMME Suppliers' through an open and competitive digital market platform to align specific technology and production services demand and supply across industry value chains could be beneficial to SMMEs.

De-risking SMME investments in new technologies and products by using combined technology services and hybrid financing models (such as matching grants and pre-commercial procurement) could also facilitate the inclusion of these firms within traded industrial value chains.

***This article is based on remarks made during a panel discussion at the BRICS Business Forum on July 5 in Rio de Janeiro.**

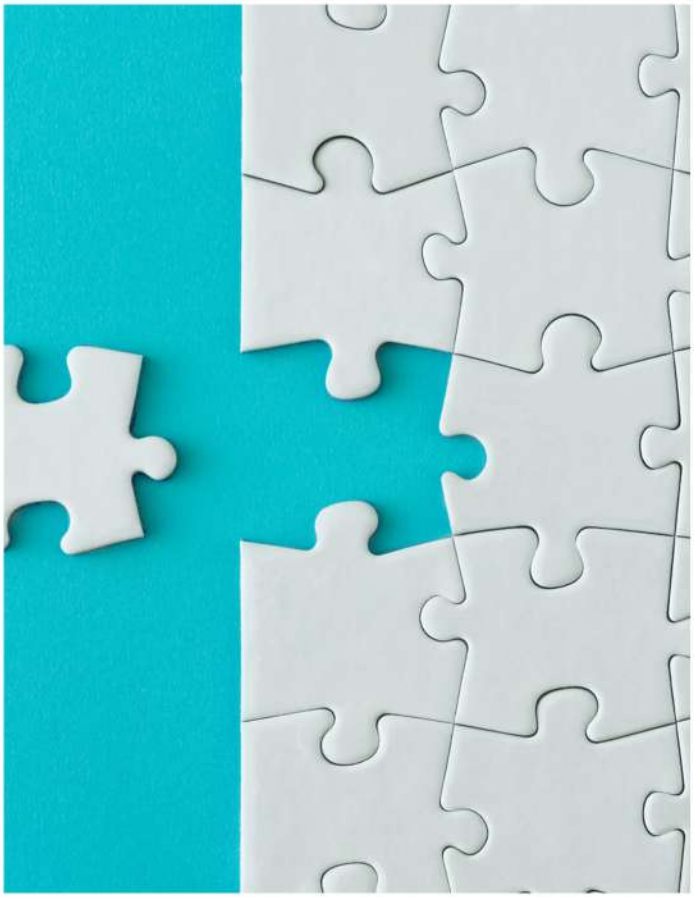
# FROM ANIMAL TESTING TO STRICT LABELLING RULES: HERE'S WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DOING BUSINESS IN BRICS COUNTRIES

As the BRICS economies deepen cooperation across key sectors, a growing consensus acknowledges that traditional tariffs are no longer the sole barriers to trade. Non-tariff measures (NTMs), from regulatory divergence to procedural inefficiencies, now present some of the most pressing obstacles to seamless trade among BRICS nations.

The BRICS Business Council's 2025 Non-Tariff Measures Report, published under Brazil's presidency, provides a comprehensive analysis of these challenges.

Drawing from private sector feedback and real-world case studies, the report identifies systemic trade barriers across technical regulations, customs, public procurement, and services.

This article distills the report's most impactful insights, offering a strategic lens for stakeholders engaged in policymaking, investment, trade facilitation, and regulatory reform.



### TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE (TBT): ADDRESSING REGULATORY MISALIGNMENT

Technical barriers such as product standards, labelling requirements, and conformity assessments account for a significant share of NTMs reported by BRICS exporters.

**Cosmetics and Animal Testing**: China's continued requirement for animal testing on imported cosmetics, despite global shifts toward cruelty-free standards, has created an uneven playing field for foreign producers. These measures are viewed as unnecessarily restrictive, increasing costs and impeding market access.

- **Duplicate Certifications in Electronics:** China's Compulsory Certification (CCC) regime mandates local testing, even for products certified under widely recognised standards (e.g., IEC, UL, CE). The absence of a fast-track pathway for low-risk goods exacerbates delays and compliance costs.

- **India's Expanded Labelling Rules:** New regulations in India require detailed product labelling across sectors, raising administrative burdens for exporters, particularly SMEs. The report emphasises the need for greater regulatory harmonisation across BRICS markets to reduce such fragmentation.

Takeaway for stakeholders: Mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) and regulatory convergence can improve cost-efficiency and predictability in cross-border trade. This is especially critical for SMEs and time-sensitive supply chains.

## SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY (SPS) MEASURES: SCIENCE-BASED APPROACHES NEEDED

SPS measures are essential for food and biosecurity, but overly cautious or inconsistent applications can function as de facto trade barriers.

- **Agricultural Import Restrictions:** India's suspension of imports of Chinese apples, pears, and garlic, citing pest management concerns, has halted trade worth hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Despite efforts to resume dialogue, restrictions remain in place.

- **Lack of Alignment on Animal Health Protocols:** The report notes the absence of mutual recognition frameworks for disease zoning and compartmentalisation in animal-origin products. This leads to blanket bans during disease outbreaks, even when risks are geographically localised.

Stakeholder implication: Enhanced technical cooperation and science-based risk assessment aligned with the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) standards can promote more resilient and predictable agricultural trade.

## SERVICES AND LICENCING BARRIERS: MARKET ENTRY CHALLENGES FOR FOREIGN FIRMS

Services trade is increasingly vital for economic integration, yet foreign service providers face restrictions that limit operational flexibility and investment incentives.

- **After-Sales Service Licencing**: Requirements for local incorporation, complex licencing processes, and approval of foreign technical personnel in countries such as Russia and China delay service delivery and increase costs for industrial goods suppliers.

- **Economic Needs Tests (ENTs):** ENTs are applied across sectors such as retail and education in India and South Africa. The discretionary nature of approval processes, with limited transparency or economic modelling, generates uncertainty for potential investors.

- **Restrictions on Legal Services:** In India, regulations limit the ability of foreign law firms to operate on equal footing, despite increasing demand for cross-border advisory services. These restrictions hinder legal harmonisation and professional mobility.

Action point: Transparent, criteria-based service market entry frameworks would bolster investor confidence and promote fair competition across BRICS.

## GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT: FAVOURING LOCAL CONTENT OVER OPEN COMPETITION

Procurement-related NTMs include local content requirements and price preferences, often designed to promote domestic industry but with trade-distorting consequences.

- **In-Country Value (ICV) Requirements:** In sectors such as defence, IT, and renewable energy, governments apply ICV measures that prioritise local suppliers. These provisions, while strategic for industrial development, can disadvantage foreign competitors and delay innovation transfer.

- **Local Preference in Port Equipment Procurement:** China's tendering system grants a 20% price preference to local producers. In combination with mandatory CCC certification and long lead times, foreign joint ventures face substantial cost and timeline challenges.

Implications: A balance is needed between industrial policy goals and open, rules-based procurement practises. Transparent criteria and mutual recognition of standards can increase participation while supporting local capacity-building.

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP): FRAGMENTED FRAMEWORKS INCREASE RISK

In the digital and innovation economy, BRICS companies face IP challenges due to inconsistent protections for software, algorithms, and trade secrets.

- **Divergent Standards in IT and AI:** Countries like Russia and South Africa impose local certification standards misaligned with global norms (e.g., ISO, WIPO). IP localisation and varying patent interpretations raise compliance risks for global tech firms.

*Strategic takeaway: Greater alignment in IP frameworks would lower legal uncertainty and facilitate intra-BRICS innovation flows, particularly in high-growth sectors such as fintech, biotech, and AI.*

## CUSTOMS, LOGISTICS, AND PROCEDURAL DELAYS: UNDERMINING SUPPLY CHAIN AGILITY

- **Infrastructure, documentation, and clearance** inefficiencies continue to hinder trade efficiency, even where formal tariffs are low.
- **Brazil's Import Procedures**: Port equipment imports face prolonged pre-shipment inspections and inconsistent application of Brazil's single-window customs platform, resulting in supply chain delays.
- **Barriers to Biosimilars:** Complex approval processes, including overlapping patent reviews and regulatory disputes, delay the cross-border flow of affordable biosimilar medicines. This issue has both commercial and public health implications.

Opportunity: Accelerating paperless trade systems and adopting digital trade facilitation tools, already successful in parts of China and Europe, can reduce transaction costs and boost regional competitiveness.

## A ROADMAP FOR HARMONISATION

The BRICS Business Council's 2025 report underscores that non-tariff measures, while less visible than tariffs, pose substantial barriers to intra-BRICS trade.

Many NTMs stem from genuine regulatory objectives (e.g., safety, health, local development), yet the absence of mutual recognition, harmonisation, and process standardisation turns these measures into trade bottlenecks.

For policymakers and private sector leaders, this report offers both a diagnosis and a blueprint. Aligning regulatory frameworks, simplifying service licencing, and streamlining customs procedures are not just administrative fixes; they are strategic investments in inclusive, sustainable growth across the BRICS nations.

*The above is a summarised version of the BRICS Non-Tariff Measures Report 2025*

# BRICS BUSINESS COUNCIL UNVEILS 47 INITIATIVES TO DRIVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

At its annual meeting in Rio de Janeiro last month, the BRICS Business Council presented a comprehensive and forward-looking annual report, which outlines 47 private sector-led initiatives and a full suite of strategic recommendations across key economic sectors.

These recommendations aim to accelerate intra-BRICS cooperation, drive innovation, and reshape global trade through inclusive, sustainable growth.

The report arrives at a pivotal moment. With the recent inclusion of Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia, BRICS now represents 48.5% of the global population, 39% of global GDP, and nearly a quarter of global trade. This expanded capacity, the Council notes, brings with it not just influence, but also responsibility—to lead the way in shaping a more balanced, resilient, and multipolar world economy.

The 2025 annual report adopts a three-tiered approach: high-level strategic recommendations to guide government policy, targeted policy actions, and 47 actionable private sector initiatives to bring these ideas to life.

***At the heart of this approach is a renewed focus on cooperation, innovation, and investment.***

***From food security and climate resilience to green manufacturing and digital infrastructure, the Council sets forth practical pathways to deepen economic integration.***

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS BY SECTOR

In agribusiness, the BBC calls for a unified BRICS food logistics and storage investment programme, enhanced by smart technologies to curb post-harvest losses.

A proposal for an Integrated Regulatory Framework for Food Security aims to harmonise sanitary and phytosanitary standards, ensuring smooth cross-border agricultural trade.

Notably, the Council proposes the creation of a BRICS regenerative agriculture programme, supported by a green credit market and funding mechanisms tailored to small-scale farmers transitioning to sustainable practices.

In aviation, the Council recommends a Multilateral Air Services Agreement (MASA) to open new air traffic routes among BRICS nations.

Expedited visa procedures for business travellers and carbon reduction strategies through the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)—including SAF-specific tax incentives and infrastructure development—were also endorsed.

The Council's digital economy strategy emphasises inclusive access and cybersecurity for MSMEs, underpinned by investments in digital infrastructure in underserved areas.

Through public-private partnerships, BRICS aims to advance AI deployment in health, education, and agriculture. Secure digital trade channels and integrated customs systems are also proposed to modernise commerce among members.

When it comes to energy, green economy and climate, a coordinated BRICS renewable energy strategy is proposed, including joint investments in infrastructure and R&D for clean energy technologies.

To ensure policy alignment, a unified clean energy regulatory framework would harmonise sustainability criteria and certification processes across BRICS.
In tandem, the Council recommends a harmonised circular economy policy, which aims to achieve resource efficiency in urban and industrial settings, bolstered by green financing incentives.

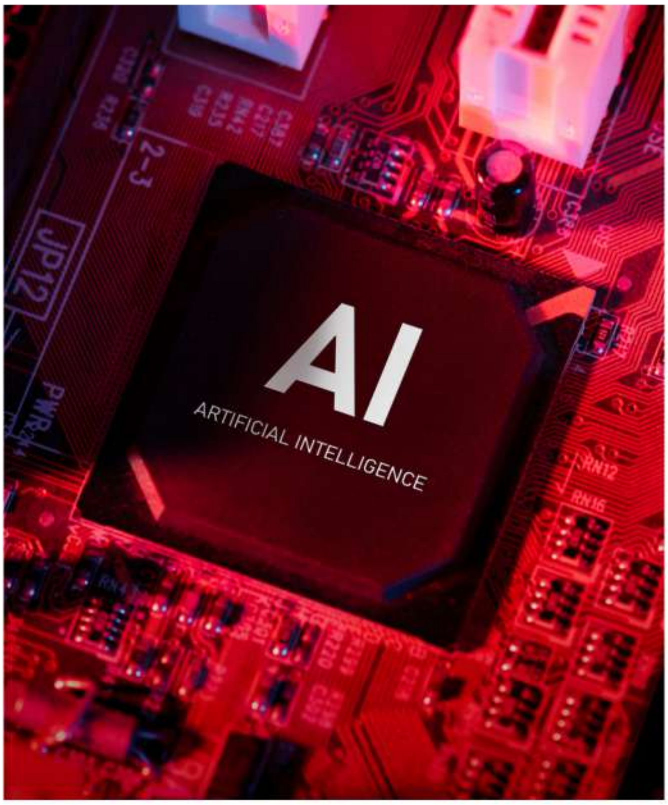
When it comes to financial services, the Council targets inclusive access to development and trade finance, particularly for SMEs.

It also prioritises the harmonisation of sustainable finance taxonomies to enable cross-border investments through green bonds and loans. Enhanced risk mitigation tools are proposed to attract long-term private and public capital for climate action.

In relation to infrastructure, transport and logistics, BRICS nations are urged to establish a joint infrastructure task force to identify priority logistics corridors. This would be supported by freight/passenger demand studies to ensure feasibility and demand-driven development.

The report also calls on the New Development Bank (NDB) to create a dedicated infrastructure fund and a fast-track process for approving low-carbon projects.

On the manufacturing front, the Council proposes a BRICS-wide sustainable manufacturing framework, including financial support mechanisms and common regulatory standards, in order to accelerate the green transition in industry.




In addition, a focus on technology sharing and innovation partnerships is encouraged through joint intellectual property (IP) frameworks and collaborative research funding.

Recognising the demands of the digital and green economy, the Council emphasises massive reskilling in high technologies, especially through TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) institutions and university-industry collaboration.

***Policy actions include financing upskilling programmes, expanding applied research, and reorienting labour policies to promote cross-sector mobility and employability.***

***In order to boost trade and investment, the BBC places strong emphasis on reducing trade friction. It calls for regulatory convergence through aligned non-tariff measures and digital trade systems that simplify cross-border transactions.***

***A recommendation to negotiate BRICS-wide investment agreements and facilitate FDI flows includes proposals to strengthen IP protection, streamline profit repatriation, and harmonise investment policy frameworks.***

# AFRICA'S STRATEGIC ROLE IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD THROUGH BRICS

The global order is transforming. The old unipolar model, shaped by neoliberal and neo-colonial frameworks, is giving way to a more inclusive, multipolar reality. As BRICS expands, Africa has a vital role to play, not just as a participant, but as a key architect of this new world.

Mr Elias Monage

BRICS now represents 45% of the global population and 37% of global GDP (PPP). That scale alone signals a major shift. But more importantly, BRICS operates through consensus, giving emerging economies, particularly in the Global South, a stronger voice in global decision-making.

## REFORMING GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS

A central theme of the 2025 BRICS Summit was the urgent need to reform multilateral institutions like the UN Security Council, the IMF, and the World Bank.

These reforms aren't just about balance; they're about fairness. African countries deserve greater representation in bodies where global rules are made. This will ensure that decisions reflect the interests of all regions, not just the most powerful.

## EXPANSION BRINGS OPPORTUNITY

The recent expansion of BRICS opens doors for Africa to strengthen trade relationships and access new markets.

While no single trade agreement currently binds BRICS nations, there is real potential to explore Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) or preferential arrangements.

Investment in infrastructure and development finance is also crucial. Through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Africa can harmonise regulations, scale markets, and target BRICS nations for mutually beneficial growth.

## A SHIFT IN CURRENCY USE

BRICS countries are increasingly trading in their national currencies, reducing reliance on the US dollar or euro.

This helps lower transaction costs and promotes economic sovereignty. More importantly, it challenges the dominance of current financial systems and encourages reform of global monetary structures.

## HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY AND AI

Africa stands to gain significantly from BRICS' joint commitment to global AI governance.

Digital tools and AI can dramatically improve trade efficiency, especially in a continent still grappling with outdated infrastructure and complex customs procedures.

With the right support, Africa can adopt blockchain for secure trade, standardise digital documentation, and use data flows to improve supply chains. Greater policy coordination within BRICS will be key.

## HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The BRICS Partnership for the Elimination of Socially Determined Diseases offers a chance to reduce health disparities across Africa.

By investing in healthcare infrastructure and digital tools (telemedicine and mobile health apps), we can bring care to rural and underserved communities.

## FOOD SECURITY AND GREEN GROWTH

Food sovereignty remains a top priority. BRICS can support Africa through collaborative agricultural research, climate-smart practises, and sustainable development strategies.

These partnerships will help Africa feed itself and contribute to global food systems.

## A STRONGER ROLE FOR THE NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK

Marking its 10th anniversary, the New Development Bank must now prioritise African infrastructure, renewable energy, and logistics.

Deeper collaboration with initiatives like AfCFTA will drive regional integration and strengthen Africa's value chains.

Africa's time is now. With BRICS, we have a unique platform to reshape global governance, secure our interests, and build a future rooted in equity and cooperation.

Let's seize this moment to lead, innovate, and grow together.

***Elias Monage is a member of the South Africa BRICS Business Council and Chairperson of the BBP Group.***

***THESE REFORMS AREN'T JUST ABOUT BALANCE; THEY'RE ABOUT FAIRNESS. AFRICAN COUNTRIES DESERVE GREATER REPRESENTATION IN BODIES WHERE GLOBAL RULES ARE MADE. THIS WILL ENSURE THAT DECISIONS REFLECT THE INTERESTS OF ALL REGIONS, NOT JUST THE MOST POWERFUL.***


# COULD AN APP HELP SOLVE BRICS'S SKILLS SHORTAGE?

At this year's BRICS Business Forum in Rio de Janeiro, a landmark white paper addressing the skills and technology shortages plaguing BRICS economies was presented to high-level delegates, including members of the South African BRICS Business Council. Titled "Tackling Skills and Tech Shortages in BRICS," the paper sets out an ambitious, collaborative blueprint to address labour market imbalances across the alliance, offering both diagnostics and actionable solutions.

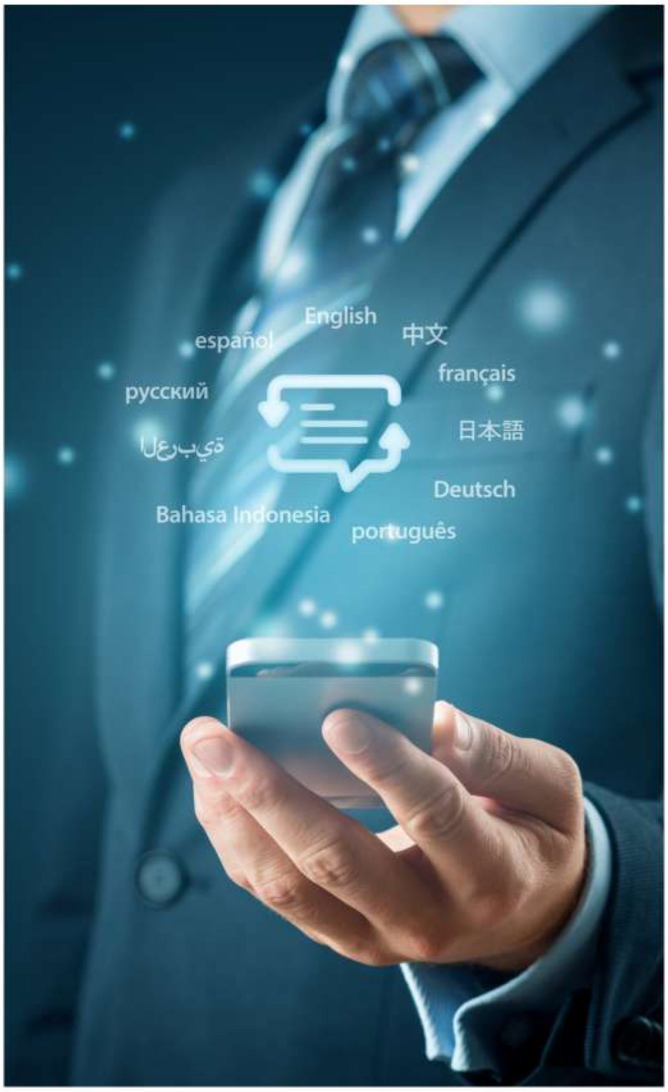
Ms Mapule Ncanywa

The white paper highlights the urgent need for integrated approaches to workforce development amid rapid digital transformation and shifting industrial demands. The document focuses on three core challenges: talent shortages in key sectors, limited access to advanced technology, and fragmented credentialing systems.

**A STRATEGIC SHIFT: FROM NATIONAL GAPS TO BRICS-WIDE SOLUTIONS**

The white paper acknowledges that while BRICS nations share common problems—including deficits in digital, technical, and vocational skills—each country faces distinct obstacles shaped by its demographics, economic maturity, and innovation capacity.

For instance, while India and Egypt possess vast pools of young, trainable talent, Russia and China are contending with ageing populations and increasing demand for tech specialists. South Africa and Brazil, meanwhile, boast high levels of skill in specific sectors, such as mining and renewable energy, but face constrained domestic demand and a skills mismatch.




By viewing these challenges through a complementary lens, the paper proposes a practical and coordinated response: a BRICS Global Remote Employment Platform, a Credential Recognition Framework, and Future Skills Training Hubs. These three pillars form an ecosystem designed to drive south-south cooperation and enable talent mobility at scale.

## SECTOR PRIORITISATION: OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa's priority sectors identified in the report—mining, renewable energy, ICT, finance, public health, and cybersecurity—align closely with the country's National Development Plan and Critical Skills Visa List. The white paper urges South African businesses to plug into BRICS-wide recruitment pipelines and adopt the proposed digital infrastructure to access verified talent from across the alliance.

The shared staffing model is especially compelling. It suggests matching surplus labour markets in India and Ethiopia with demand-heavy sectors in South Africa.

### UNIFIED STANDARDS, RECOGNISED CREDENTIALS

One of the report's most tangible proposals is the BRICS Credential Recognition Framework, building on efforts initiated by the BRICS Skills and Technology Standardisation Working Committee.

This framework would harmonise training qualifications, reduce red tape in hiring foreign specialists, and promote trust in cross-border job placements.

In practical terms, a South African ICT company could soon hire a certified AI engineer from Iran or a health-tech specialist from India without facing regulatory bottlenecks. The paper highlights Brazil's SENAI system and Russia's "Work in Russia" platform as models for AI-driven candidate screening and standardised contract templates.

### BRICS GLOBAL REMOTE EMPLOYMENT PLATFORM: A GAME-CHANGER

Arguably, the centrepiece of the white paper is the proposed BRICS Global Remote Employment Platform. Designed to connect skilled professionals with employers across member states, the platform would support cross-border employment with local currency payment systems; secure contracts that comply with national labour, IP, and data laws; AI-powered translation tools to bridge cultural and linguistic divides; integration with national programmes like South Africa's SETAs and India's NSDC.

To ensure local implementation, each country would host a national employment service office, offering tailored legal and administrative support. For South African businesses, this means streamlined recruitment and deeper access to specialised international talent.

### FROM TRAINING TO INNOVATION: A FULL-CYCLE ECOSYSTEM

The white paper doesn't stop at employment. It proposes a cycle of training, employment, and innovation driven by joint efforts such as, BRICS future skills training bases, providing sector-specific workshops; competency-based learning accredited across BRICS nations; skills competitions and apprenticeships, encouraging practical excellence; integration with the BRICS+ alliance of science and technology innovation to boost R&D and IP protection.

For South African stakeholders, participation in these initiatives could open doors for SMEs and education institutions, facilitating not just employment but local tech ecosystem growth.

***Mapule Ncanywa is the leader of the Skills Development & Innovation Working Group***

### A CALL TO ACTION FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY

***The white paper concludes with a strong call for pilot partners across BRICS+ to co-develop and test the proposed ecosystem. For members of the South African BRICS Business Council, this is a clear invitation to lead in shaping the future BRICS talent strategy.***

***Key areas for immediate business engagement include: participating in the pilot rollout of the Remote Employment Platform; contributing to the credential recognition framework, partnering on training and internship programmes; and advocating for harmonised policy support across ministries and agencies.***