



Draft Concept Note

On BRICS-Africa Cooperation: Progress, Prospects and Challenges

29th – 30th August 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa

The University of Johannesburg, Confucius Institute (UJCI) and Oxfam International's
Africa-China Dialogue Platform (ACDP)

I. Introduction

The University of Johannesburg Confucius Institute (UJCI) and the UJ SARChI Chair of African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy in collaboration with Oxfam International's Africa-China Dialogue Platform (ACDP) based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, are organising a two-day pre-BRICS Seminar on August 29 – 30 August 2017 at the Resolution Circle Towers in Auckland Park, Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Confucius Institute is one of the nine flagship centres of excellence at the University of Johannesburg. It was established in July 2014 as a joint venture between the University of Johannesburg (UJ), Nanjing Tech University (NTU), and the Confucius Institute Headquarters or Hanban, with the aim of facilitating language training, cultural exchanges, and public diplomacy that deepen Sino-South African relations. UJCI aims to establish itself as the first hybrid Confucius Institute on the continent conducting research and policy analysis on Africa – China relations.

The NRF SARChI Chair: African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy is a research and post-graduate research and teaching initiative under the aegis of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg. It seeks to respond to the fluctuating state of Africa's international affairs by developing a research and outreach agenda embedded in strong basic and applied primary research. The NRF SARChI Chair is further committed to engaging in research that bridges the divide between the worlds of theory and practice/decision making. It adopts an inter-disciplinary approach on the nexus between domestic politics and foreign policy, and implements a multi-dimensional research agenda, comprising a focus on South African foreign policy; African diplomacy; African integration at continental, regional and sub-regional levels; and Africa's co-operation with, and search for strategic partnerships with the outside world.

Oxfam International's Africa-China Dialogue Platform (ACDP) was established in March 2016. The objective of the ACDP is to promote and facilitate meaningful and constructive policy dialogue and partnership between Chinese and African citizens, policy researchers and stakeholders. The ACDP undertakes policy research around the Forum for China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) along the themes of agriculture, sustainable development and climate change, and peace and security.

The main objective of the research seminar is to highlight the extent to which BRICS policies promote the African Agenda; examine BRICS collaboration with African countries including the African Union Commission (AUC), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The seminar, held in the lead up to the upcoming BRICS summit, will also focus on the role of the BRICS bank in funding infrastructural development in Africa.

In attendance will be academics, think tanks, state officials, members of the diplomatic corps, civil society, students, the media, and the private sector. The South African government officials will be drawn from the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

II. Context

The BRICS countries have little in common. They are distinct from one another economically, culturally, politically, linguistically. They do not have geographical links either. The BRICS grouping is providing a new way of reimagining global governance, especially in an era when the pillars of post-World War II multilateralism seem shaky, when global insecurities and uncertainties are multiplying, and when global governance institutions are in need of renewal. The BRICS challenges the claim to universality by Western dominated multilateral bodies, even though it does not have as its immediate objective the intention to overhaul the fundamentals of the contemporary global system. The BRICS countries seek to make multilateral organisations receptive to different voices and influences.

Goldman Sachs Group economist Jim O'Neill coined the acronym BRIC representing Brazil, Russia, India and China classified as emerging economies. He projected that these countries would become the largest and most influential economies by 2050. From 2006, the move towards the institutionalisation of the grouping started with a meeting on the margins of the 61st United Nations General Assembly in New York. This diplomatic effort led to several other meetings, for example, the BRIC Heads of State/Government meeting in July 2008 and the finance ministers' meeting in November 2008. Following this, the inaugural BRIC summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia in 2009. During this summit, there were calls for a more democratic and multipolar world based on the rule of international law, equality, mutual respect, cooperation, co-ordinated action, and collective decision making by all states in the world.

The second summit in 2010 was held in Brazil during which the BRIC bloc reiterated its 2009 stance that called for a collegial, rule based, democratic, and multipolar world. The summit discussions, accented economic issues, specifically international trade, agriculture, and energy. The relationship between BRIC and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other multilateral institutions also featured. The BRIC affirmed its commitment to the United Nation's (UN) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) bias towards developing countries through development cooperation.

The third BRIC summit in 2011 took place in China and welcomed South Africa as a new member. Once again, the member countries renewed their commitment to international multilateralism and underlined the need to reform the international financial system. The group also expressed commitment to intensify economic cooperation among the member states.

The fourth BRICS summit was held in New Delhi, India, the following year. Its outcome was the New Delhi Declaration. In this Declaration references were made to the crisis in the Eurozone, the then-upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the G20 summit in Mexico and the eighth World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Geneva. The summit also highlighted the significance of the BRICS and the comparatively good performance of the member countries despite the Eurozone financial crisis. Noteworthy, the BRICS leaders discussed the idea of setting up a South-South development fund, the forerunner to the proposed BRICS Development Bank.

The fifth summit was held in Africa for the first time in 2013. South Africa hosted the gathering in its coastal city of Durban. The summit adopted the eThekweni, Declaration that contained two commitments: (i) to establish the BRICS Development Bank and (ii) Contingent Reserves Agreement. The summit also opened new fields of cooperation such as the BRICS Multilateral Infrastructure Co-Financing, the BRICS Multilateral Cooperation and Co-Financing Agreement for Sustainable Development, and the BRICS Business Council.

The sixth summit was held in Fortaleza, Brazil, in 2014. Two economic institutions were proposed during the meeting (i) the BRICS bank (New Development Bank), to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects within the BRICS region and other developing countries and (ii) the Contingent Reserves Arrangement (CRA), with an initial sum of US\$ 100 billion, which the BRICS countries will be able to use to forestall short-term liquidity pressures. Notably, during this summit the BRICS countries adopted a key decision

on launching comprehensive talks regarding the BRICS Strategy for Economic Partnership and a draft BRICS Roadmap for BRICS Trade, Economic and Investment Cooperation.

The seventh summit of BRICS was held in Ufa, Russia in 2015. This summit marked a shift from a dialogue to an economic partnership with BRICS leaders pledging to forge a closer economic partnership. This would then be the “key guideline” for expanding trade, investment, and cooperation in broad areas, from manufacturing to energy. BRICS leaders officially launched the New Development Bank, which would serve as an alternative for developing countries to secure financial support.

The eighth summit 2016 took place in Goa, India. India adopted a five-pronged approach for the Summit dubbed IIIIC to stand for: Institution building (to improve and institutionalise Brics cooperation), Implementation (of the decisions taken in previous summits), Integrating (integration of current cooperation mechanisms), Innovation (new cooperation mechanisms) and Continuity (keeping up with the existing mechanisms). The idea of establishing an alternative (BRICS) credit rating agency that emerged during the Ufa summit was affirmed by the Goa declaration.

Just over a decade after its inception, the ninth BRICS summit will be held in Xiamen, Fujian Province, China, from 3-5 September, 2017 under the theme “*BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future*”. The events of 2016 have added uncertainty to an already fragile global political economy. Trump’s election on an anti-globalisation rhetoric platform and Britain’s exit from the European Union (EU) are marking a shift away from international cooperation and changing international relations and organizations. It is within this context that BRICS countries are taking multilateral efforts to a higher level and defining a new era of multilateralism in the 21st century. The priority areas during China’s BRICS Chairmanship include:

- Deepen BRICS cooperation for common development.
- Strengthen global governance to jointly meet challenges.
- Carry-out people-to-people exchanges to support BRICS cooperation.
- Make institutional improvements and build broader partnerships.

The theme for this seminar is “*The BRICS - Africa Cooperation: Progress, Prospects and Challenges*”. Africa’s affiliation to the BRICS grouping is still not clearly defined, even though there have been attempts to do so, for example at the eThekweni BRICS Summit whose theme was “*Unlocking Africa’s Potential: BRICS and Africa Cooperation on Infrastructure*”. This meeting pledged increased support for key African programmes such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA); the African Union Action Plan 2010-2015; the New Partnerships for Africa’s Development Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative; as well as Regional Infrastructure Master Plans. This Pre-BRICS meeting is therefore important to understand the BRICS African agenda in order to synergise Africa’s agency.

III. Outputs

The main output from the seminar will include a policy brief and Occasional paper on the broad theme of the seminar.

IV. Outcomes

It is anticipated that the seminar will lead to the following outcomes:

- Enhanced intellectual interaction and knowledge sharing among different stakeholders engaging in BRICS partnership with African countries.
- Increased technical and policy knowledge on BRICS as well as BRICS partnership with African countries and institutions.
- Key policy recommendations in strengthening BRICS partnership with African countries and institutions.
- Enhanced capacity of stakeholders including African policy makers to understand the nature, challenges and opportunities the partnership presents.
- Impact the upcoming BRICS meeting in China to promote the African agenda.

V. Format

The seminar will take the form of plenary sessions in which invited panellists will each make a twenty- minute presentation on specific topics. After each presentation, the floor be open for comments and questions from the audience.