



The Tenth Meeting of the BRICS Trade Ministers

23 July 2020

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

We, the BRICS Trade Ministers, gathered under the chairmanship of Mr. Maxim Reshetnikov, Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, to review the progress made in the spheres of trade and economic cooperation, and to exchange views on the further joint steps to be made in key areas of mutual interest.

We expressed great concern at the negative impact the COVID-19 pandemic has on the BRICS economies, and emerging market economies and developing countries in general as well as on specific economic sectors and social groups most critically exposed to the crisis. We exchanged information on our nationally adopted measures as well as short-term and mid-term stimulus packages aimed at fostering a recovery and a return to steady economic growth. We also discussed the negative implications of COVID-19 for intra-BRICS economic relations. Based on these discussions, along with the assessment of the progress achieved by BRICS so far, we reached broad consensus on the ways to further enhance the BRICS economic cooperation and agreed upon the following.

We agree to work together with the aim to improve the functioning and inclusive participation in **global supply chains**, as well as global and regional value chains that were affected by the pandemic. We also emphasize the importance of reviewing trade and economic measures that were taken by the BRICS countries in response to effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, identifying opportunities of rebuilding and creating new

value chains, especially in sectors most affected by the pandemic, as well as identifying ways to promote wider participation of our countries in regional and global value chains.

We underline the importance of an effectively functioning, transparent, open, inclusive, non-discriminatory, rules-based multilateral trading system, as embodied in the **WTO**. We agree that urgent actions are needed to restore the normal functioning of all WTO's functions. In this regard, we endorse a stand-alone Joint Statement by BRICS countries on Multilateral Trading System and the WTO Reform.

We reiterate the importance of **transparency** and predictability of international and intra-BRICS trade, including through compliance with WTO commitments on transparency. We agree to enhance cooperation and exchange of views on transparency-related issues.

We reiterate our aspiration for creating a positive environment for investors operating in BRICS countries and for BRICS investors operating in other markets. Given the role of the BRICS economies in the global restoration of **international investment** flows and their position as major exporters of capital and destinations of FDI, we recognize that appropriate instruments aimed at creating the favorable environment for investments at the domestic, intra-BRICS and international levels may promote international trade, sustainable development and inclusive growth. We confirm that the issues of the enhancement of transparency and cooperation are important for BRICS countries' investors. Enhancing transparency, streamlining national administrative procedures and requirements are critical to promote investments. We recognize the need for BRICS countries to regulate investment in ways that would ensure that it supports national economic development priorities, including industrialization. We encourage cooperation on technical assistance and capacity building provided to developing countries and LDCs on investment promotion and facilitation. In this regard, we endorse BRICS Understanding on Investment Facilitation as annexed.

Taking into account the increase in digital transactions, boosted by the pandemic, we recognize the importance of strengthening intra-BRICS cooperation on **e-commerce** by exchanging experience and good practices on various approaches to regulation of e-commerce. We will enhance our cooperation through the BRICS E-commerce Working Group. We recognize the potential for establishing a workstream to examine the experience of BRICS and other countries, as well as international associations in the field of **consumer protection in e-commerce** and create a basis for exploring the development of a practical framework for ensuring consumer protection in the BRICS countries including through pilot projects and initiatives.

We will continue working together to improve the business environment for **MSMEs**. We recognize the range of challenges confronting MSMEs including from regulatory changes affecting trade. We will continue our exchange of experiences and best practices with respect to improving MSMEs' operational capacity and enhancing their participation in global value chains, in order to gain a better understanding of the specific conditions, concerns and policy priorities in our different national contexts. We also reiterate the importance of outcome documents endorsed by our trade ministers such as the BRICS MSMEs Cooperation Framework in 2016 and the Terms of Reference to Strengthen Institutional Arrangements on MSME cooperation in 2018. In this regard, we endorse the BRICS Concept paper on the Guidelines for Promoting Effective Participation of MSMEs in International Trade as annexed.

We appreciate the continuous cooperation and engagement among the BRICS countries in the field of **intellectual property**. We welcome the concerted and successful work of the IPRCM and the BRICS Heads of Intellectual Property Offices (HIPO), which not only ensures a positive synergy on the basis of consensus and mutual support, but also encourages BRICS to play a constructive role towards the promotion of IPR activities beneficial to the society at large.

We commend the outcomes of cooperation among BRICS countries under the Working Mechanism on **Technical Regulation, Standards, Metrology, Conformity Assessment and Accreditation** and reaffirm the importance of further cooperation in the fields of technical regulations, standardization, metrology, conformity assessment and accreditation by information and best practices exchange strengthening dialogue in relevant international organizations.

We emphasize the crucial role of **digital technologies** in supporting seamless global trade and business conduct, provision of social services and international interactions, as revealed by the pandemic. At the same time we recognize the importance of deeper examination of the social and economic gaps resulting from uneven distribution of access to both digital infrastructure and digital skills that limit shared benefits of digitalization. We acknowledge that our countries are not at the same levels of digital development, and we emphasize the need for a dedicated focus on overcoming the digital divide and to support developing countries to address its socio-economic implications. We are unanimous in the view that digital technologies are a key component of making the domestic economic achievements tangible for all, and recognize that an inclusive business environment is important to meet that end.

We acknowledge that the BRICS countries have done significant work for development of their vast **remote and rural areas**, and that there is a need to further enhance infrastructure, provision of services and employment opportunities. Taking note that the pandemic has forced temporary contraction of opportunities for physical interaction, we acknowledge that establishment of digital infrastructure can help overcome poverty and achieve sustainable development. We recognize the importance of comprehensive development of our remote and rural areas to improve connectivity, boost livelihoods and economic growth.

We agree to develop pragmatic economic cooperation and forge a closer economic partnership with a view to strengthening the post-pandemic global economic recovery, reduce potential risks for global trade and investments, unleash the

potential of digital technologies and promote sustainable development in the BRICS members. For this reason we welcome the ongoing formulation of the **Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025** as a framework for moving forward in the aforementioned directions. We will also further implement the BRICS Action Agenda on Economic and Trade Cooperation to guide our economic and trade cooperation.

We acknowledge the importance of annual updates of the **BRICS Joint Statistical Publication**, as the tool for keeping track of the bottlenecks BRICS need to overcome in order to ensure sustainable and inclusive development of the national economies and the BRICS population.

Recognizing the importance of other international economic fora, most notably the Group of Twenty, we commit to continue intra-BRICS dialogue and cooperation in such fora.

Annexes

I. Guidelines for Promoting Effective Participation of MSMEs in International Trade

II. BRICS Understanding on Investment Facilitation