

OFFICIAL



**BRICS CONTACT GROUP  
ON ECONOMIC AND TRADE ISSUES (CGETI)**

**JOINT DECLARATION OF THE 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS TRADE MINISTERS MEETING**

21st May 2025



1. The BRICS Trade Ministers met on 21 May 2025 in Brasília, Brazil. They exchanged views on major global and regional trends and challenges related to trade and investment.

2. Ministers welcome the work carried out under the BRICS Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues (CGETI) in 2025 under challenging circumstances. While calling for placing development dimension at the center of the global trade agenda, the Ministers agreed to enhance our solidarity by enhancing trade and investment cooperation.

3. Reiterating the strong support for a multilateral trading system underscoring the need to strengthen the MTS with the WTO at its core as well as the responsiveness of the organization in light of the emerging global challenges in particular arbitrary and protectionist measures fragmentating global trade, while upholding the principles of special and differential treatment. Ministers approved the **BRICS Declaration on WTO Reform and Strengthening of the Multilateral Trading System**, included in Annex I.

4. Ministers note the progress of the ongoing discussions of the revised version of the **Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2030**, instruct CGETI to finalize the document and submit it to the Leaders for endorsement. The revised version of the Economic Partnership follows the version approved during the Russian 2020 Chairship. Ministers recalled the decision to task CGETI to negotiate the document, even though its implementation would eventually fall under different ministerial tracks and working groups.

5. Ministers welcome the conclusion of the **BRICS Data Economy Governance Understanding** under the fifth pillar of the Work Plan for the Digital Economy Working Group. The document aims to share policy and practice experiences



related to national data governance frameworks as well as improve BRICS data economy. Ministers approve the document, included in Annex II.

6. Ministers welcome the conclusion of the **BRICS Trade and Sustainable Development Framework**. The Trade and Sustainable Development Framework stipulates that CGETI may discuss trade and sustainable development in separate sessions that shall provide a dedicated platform with the aim of enhancing BRICS coordination on cross-cutting trade and environment topics and supporting the fulfilment of Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. Ministers approve the document, included in Annex III.

7. Ministers welcome the discussions on a framework on trade facilitation in CGETI and instruct the CGETI to continue to work on this topic.

8. Ministers recognize the importance of discussing investment facilitation in CGETI.

9. The Ministers reiterate their full support to Brazil's BRICS Chairship in 2025 under the theme "Strengthening Global South Cooperation for More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance". They express their commitment to working together to ensure the success of the XVII BRICS Summit. The Ministers look forward to the next BRICS Trade Ministers meeting to be hosted by India as incoming Chair of BRICS in 2026.



## ANNEX I

### **BRICS Declaration on WTO Reform and Strengthening of the Multilateral Trading System**

*Emphasizing that international trade is an important engine for inclusive growth, combating poverty and hunger, promoting sustainable development in its three dimensions and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,*

*Acknowledging the seismic shifts in global trade that are resulting in growing challenges and geopolitical uncertainties affecting the multilateral trading system and bringing it to an existential risk,*

*Recognizing that the BRICS countries, representing 48.5% of the world's population, 39% of the world's economy and 24% of international trade, have an important role to play in addressing and responding to these challenges,*

*Reiterating our strong support for actions aimed at ensuring a rules-based, open, transparent, fair, inclusive, equitable, non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core, while upholding the principles of special and differential treatment,*

*Underscoring the need to strengthen the responsiveness of the WTO in light of emerging global challenges, in particular any arbitrary unilateral and protectionist measures that are fragmenting global trade,*

*Recalling the previous arrangements of the BRICS Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues pertaining to the multilateral trading system and the WTO reform,*

We, the BRICS members, declare the following:



1. The multilateral trading system has long been at a crossroads. The proliferation of trade-restrictive actions, whether in the form of indiscriminate rising of tariffs and non-tariff measures, or protectionism under the guise of environmental objectives, threatens to further reduce global trade, disrupt global supply chains, and introduce uncertainty into international economic and trade activities, potentially exacerbating existing economic disparities and affecting prospects for global economic development. The Ministers voiced serious concerns about the rise of unilateral tariff and non-tariff measures which distort trade and are inconsistent with WTO rules.

2. We are deeply concerned with these policies and practices that undermine the WTO rules and the multilateral system. We will further promote fair competition in full compliance with WTO rules, with a view to fostering a favorable trade environment.

3. We firmly support actions enabling trade and investment among BRICS members to realize their full potential and act as a driver of global growth and prosperity. We will promote a policy framework that supports trade and investment cooperation among BRICS members.

4. We support the multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core and are determined to preserve its integrity and effective functioning. As we mark its 30th anniversary, we emphasize that the Organization is the only multilateral institution holding the necessary mandate, expertise, universal reach, and capacity to lead on the multiple dimensions of international trade discussions, including the negotiation of new trade rules. The WTO is fundamental to fostering fair and well-functioning global trade, especially in times of looming protectionism and global food insecurity.



5. We recall the commitment made at the 12<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference and reaffirmed at the 13<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference to work towards the necessary reform of the Organization to improve all its functions. We emphasize the importance of reforming the WTO, while reaffirming its objectives and foundational principles and reiterating the centrality of the development dimension of its work. We will continue our cooperation at the WTO both on improving WTO flexibilities for developing Members, including least developed countries (LDCs), and on countering trade-related practices that impede just global development. We also stress the importance of consensus-based decision-making in the WTO and emphasize the strengthening of the special and differential treatment for developing Members, including LDCs, and developing countries in the process of accession to the WTO.

6. We strongly believe that an accessible, effective, fully-functioning, two-tier and binding WTO dispute settlement system is of paramount importance to rebuild trust in the multilateral trading system and in preventing the proliferation of protectionist measures, including under the guise of environmental protection, in violation of WTO rules. While we appreciate the efforts made by WTO Members to fulfill the MC13 mandate, we regret that the 2024 deadline for the full restoration of the fully and well-functioning WTO dispute settlement system has passed without a definitive result. We remain committed to the urgent restoration of a fully and well-functioning system accessible to all Members no later than the 14<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference. In this regard, we reaffirm our willingness to accelerate work on unresolved issues in an inclusive and transparent manner, and call on all other WTO Members to do the same.

7. We are deeply concerned that the world is not making sufficient progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, with only 17% of the targets being on track. While recognizing that we live in times of major socio-economic challenges and environmental crises, we stress that international cooperation has



a crucial role to play in ensuring that trade and the three dimensions of sustainable development are mutually supportive and underpinned by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

8. While reaffirming that trade is to be conducted with a view to raising standards of living, ensuring full employment, pursuing sustainable development, and enhancing the means for doing so in a manner consistent with our respective needs and concerns at different levels of economic development, we underscore the importance of ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of sustainable development. In this regard, we urge all WTO Members to pay special attention to the needs of developing countries, including LDCs, in all WTO work.

9. We emphasize that policies and regulations aimed at improving sustainability and resilience of our economies, including in agriculture and food systems, should be in compliance with WTO rules, giving due consideration to constraints of countries at different levels of development, and to avoid unnecessary obstacles to trade.

10. We further emphasize that measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade. We call on all countries to strive for a path towards positive incentives that would set clear and transparent standards, rather than adopting a punitive approach.

11. We support a successful 14th WTO Ministerial Conference and hold the view that WTO Members should keep a proper level of ambition. To this end, we commit to actively participate in the preparation of MC14, and to strive for concrete, tangible, development-oriented, and mutually beneficial outcomes. We look forward to making progress at the MC14 in 2026 in Cameroon by delivering



priority outcomes on long-standing issues, especially on topics of interest of developing countries, including LDCs.

12. Underlining the importance of an inclusive multilateral trading system and the need to comply with the guidelines for the accession of LDCs, those of us who are also WTO Members commit ourselves to support fellow BRICS members in their WTO accession processes and will assist them, including through capacity building, to facilitate their full participation in the multilateral trading system.

13. We noted that the inaugural meeting of the Informal Consultative Framework took place. We reaffirm our intention to further advance the dialogue on the challenges undermining the effectiveness and credibility of the WTO and solutions to these challenges including through the Informal Consultative Framework meetings among our Delegations in Geneva. We also emphasize the importance of ensuring such discussions contribute meaningfully to the formal WTO process and reflect the priorities of developing countries.



## ANNEX II

### **BRICS Data Economy Governance Understanding**

While digital technologies increasingly permeate every aspect of daily life in terms of communication, social interaction, online purchases and production, there is a need to protect the individual and ensure that the data economy functions for the benefit of all. On the one hand, the global digital economy has experienced rapid development, with new spaces emerging for promoting wealth creation models, on the other, there is a need to improve the distribution of the benefits of the digital transformation with developing countries, ensuring the progress of human civilization. At the core of the digital economy is data.

Data is progressively recognized as a strategic asset, integral to policy-making, private and public sector innovation, production efficiency, job creation and performance management, creating new entrepreneurial opportunities for businesses and individuals. It plays an increasingly important role in innovative development and public governance, including digital public infrastructure (DPI). Notwithstanding, there is a lack of basic international consensus on key aspects of its economic impact, as well as statistical information on data flows. This, together with existing regulatory fragmentation, leads to a scenario of uncertainty that aggravates asymmetries and limits investment opportunities in universal connectivity and data products, thus hindering the capacity of people in developing countries to better integrate into the global digital economy.

To enable developing countries to harness the benefits of the digital economy, an open, inclusive, secure, cooperative, non-discriminatory, fair, and equitable approach is critical to governance of data. While respecting applicable legal frameworks related to privacy, personal data protection, national security, public interest, and intellectual property rights, the BRICS nations acknowledge that



participation in the global digital economy can be improved through the design of a global framework on data governance, including cross-border data flows, to address the principles of collection, recording, storage, organization, processing and transfer of data; promote the interoperability of national data policy regulations; and seek to distribute the monetary and non-monetary benefits of data among developing countries, including Least Developed Countries(LDCs) and their citizens.

Recognizing the growing significance of data as a driver of economic growth, job creation, innovation, sovereignty and sustainable development, this Understanding aims to establish a roadmap of future work areas to explore commonalities and leverage the data economy across BRICS to promote safe access to technology, safeguard individual and national interests, promote the digitalization of industry and services, and the expansion of intra-BRICS trade for an open, inclusive, sustainable, fair, equitable, safe and secure digital future.

### **Objectives**

1. To promote a fair, secure, open, inclusive, cooperative and non-discriminatory data economy among BRICS nations.
2. To ensure data sovereignty while facilitating efficient, effective, safe, and trusted cross-border data flows, in accordance with national frameworks.
3. To leverage capacities of national statistical offices and relevant stakeholders on methodologies for capturing the value of data in the national account estimations.
4. To engage national statistical offices in efforts to improve the measurement of data flows, including through exploring a common taxonomy for data, and to develop indicators for the data economy.
5. To explore common regulatory practices in relation to trade and competition policies for the data-driven economy and study the impact of



- different regulatory practices on digital sovereignty as well as economic development.
6. To strengthen the central role of governments in managing high quality data through digital public infrastructures for public policy purposes and explore sharing mechanisms with the private sector, in accordance with national legal frameworks.
  7. To safeguard individual privacy, personal data protection, and ethical usage of personal and non-personal data.
  8. To enhance cooperation on digital infrastructure, respecting national laws and regulations on personal data protection, to support innovative business models, such as trusted data spaces, local digital platforms, data markets, data exchanges, among others.
  9. To support digital transformation of the industry, trade, services, and sustainable economic development through technological data-driven resources.
  10. To acknowledge the importance of safe electronic cross-border data transmission, in accordance with national regulations, to foster e-commerce and digital trade as drivers of economic growth and sustainable development.

### **Guiding Principles**

1. **Sovereign Data Governance** – Each BRICS nation retains the sovereign right to own and regulate data while enabling safe, secure, efficient, effective and trusted cross-border data flows under mutually agreed frameworks.
2. **Fair and Equitable Access** – Encourage fair and equitable access to data and data-driven resources, ensuring inclusivity and sharing of benefits for businesses, entrepreneurs, national companies, MSMEs as well as remote and rural areas, in accordance with national legal frameworks.



3. **Interoperability, Portability and Standardization** – Foster mutual recognition of standards in data and metadata, promoting interoperability of governance frameworks and portability of data wherever possible, subject to national regulatory frameworks.
4. **Transparency and Accountability** – Encourage transparent governance mechanisms and accountability for all stakeholders in data collection, processing, transfer, treatment and usage in accordance with national laws and regulations.
5. **People-Centered Digital Transformation** – Advance people-centered digital transformation, including through digital public infrastructures, taking into account ethical aspects and sustainability, as part of a mutually supportive digital and green transformations.
6. **Shared benefits, Inclusiveness and Development** – Ensure that different regions, industries and social groups in each BRICS country can participate in and benefit from the development of the digital economy equally, thus contributing to bridge the digital divides.

### **Mechanism for Digital Transformation and Cross-Border Data Flows**

1. **Mutually Recognized Data Governance Mechanisms** – Subject to national laws and regulations, facilitate establishing a mutually recognized and trusted framework for cross-border data transfers that balances national security concerns with mutual economic and social benefits.
2. **Data Localization and Accessibility** – Recognize the importance of data localization for legitimate public policy objectives while promoting interoperability with trust for seamless digital trade, as per governed by national laws.



3. **Data Portability** – Explore the role of data portability, wherever possible including non-personal data, as a tool to promote competition subject to national laws and regulations.
4. **Consumer Protection:** Develop mechanisms to improve the protection of consumers in the data-driven economy, in particular for digital trade and users of cloud services.
5. **Competition** – Endeavor to adopt sound practices on fair competition, in accordance with national legal frameworks, to level the playing field in the global digital economy.
6. **Digital Public Infrastructure** – Encourage the development of digital public infrastructure as a tool for improving the enabling conditions for the data economy and digital transformation of the economy.
7. **Effective, Efficient, Safe, Secure and Trusted Data Transfers** – Develop technological and legal solutions, as well as evidence-based mechanisms to mitigate risks and prevent unauthorized access and transfers of data, cyber threats, and data misuse.
8. **Facilitation of Data-Driven Trade and Innovation** – Subject to national laws and regulations, encourage responsible data sharing to boost technological collaboration, digital skills development and economic growth among BRICS nations.

### **Data Protection, Privacy Standards and Intellectual Property Rights**

1. **Personal Data Protection** – Adopt policies that ensure data subjects' rights.
2. **Intellectual property rights** – Exchange experiences on issues related to copyrights, accountability, and property rights in order to safeguard public interest and international transfer of technology mechanisms without jeopardizing the expansion of the national data economy.



3. **Cybersecurity Measures** – Subject to national laws and regulations, enhance cooperation in preventing cybersecurity threats through sharing information regarding cyber incidents and incident response collaboration.
4. **Public and Private Sector Cooperation** – Encourage partnerships between governments, businesses, and civil society to develop robust data protection frameworks.

### **Implementation and Next Steps**

1. The CGETI will engage in consultations with the other BRICS' cooperation tracks to refine this Understanding and establish common agendas on specific matters related to the data economy.
2. An annual BRICS Data Economy Session will be convened under the Digital Economy Working Group (DEWG) calendar to assess progress, address challenges, and explore emerging opportunities in the data economy. The rotating Presidency of BRICS may invite other relevant BRICS' cooperation tracks, to attend this special session.
3. In order to advance the cooperation under the different policy areas outlined in this document, and taking into account the cross-agency nature of the topics, each rotating Presidency of BRICS may organize time-limited task forces to further develop specific action plans for the implementation of the commitments.

This Understanding serves as a foundational framework for ongoing dialogue and cooperation in the data economy. It shall remain open to future enhancements based on mutual consensus and the evolving global digital governance scenario.



### ANNEX III

#### **BRICS Trade and Sustainable Development Framework**

*Supporting the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring that international trade functions as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, contributing to the promotion of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development,*

*Voicing serious concerns about the rise of unilateral tariff and non-tariff measures which distort trade and are inconsistent with WTO rules,*

*Reaffirming our support for an open, fair, transparent, predictable, equitable, non-discriminatory, inclusive, consensus-based and rules-based multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its core, and recalling the first paragraph of the Marrakesh Agreement, whereby WTO Members have recognized that relations in the field of trade and economic endeavour should be conducted with a view to raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and a large and steadily growing volume of real income and effective demand, and expanding the production of and trade in goods and services, while allowing for the optimal use of the world's resources in accordance with the objective of sustainable development, seeking both to protect and preserve the environment and to enhance the means for doing so in a manner consistent with their respective needs and concerns at different levels of economic development,*

*Recalling relevant multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement, including their principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities,*



*Reaffirming article 3.5 of the UNFCCC, according to which countries should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to sustainable economic growth and development in all countries, particularly developing countries, thus enabling them better to address the problems of climate change, and that measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade,*

*Concerned that sustainability standards and conformity assessment requirements with extraterritorial reach tend to put a disproportionate burden on producers in low-income countries lacking resources for conformity,*

*Stressing that trade measures used to enhance the effectiveness of environmental regulations should address the root causes of environmental degradation so as not to result in unjustified restrictions on trade and that such measures should be applied in full conformity with trade rules and obligations and should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade or serve as a pretext for introducing these measures under the WTO and the Multilateral Environment Agreements,*

*Reiterating that, in view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities,*

*Recalling the 2024 BRICS Statement on Environmental and Climate-Related Trade Measures and reiterating our endorsement of its provisions,*

The Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues (CGETI) may hold discussions on trade and sustainable development in separate sessions. The Sessions shall provide a dedicated platform for members to implement relevant



mandates set forth in the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership, as well as to cooperate on a framework comprising:

- (i) Exchange views, best practices and national experiences on approaches that promote a mutually supportive relationship between trade and environmental policy, with the aim of enabling the development of environmental policies that contribute to national sustainable development and exploring appropriate improvements to existing measures applied by BRICS and other States, which would maintain or enhance their positive contribution to sustainable development without infringing multilateral rules or unduly harming trade for developing countries, including least developed countries;
- (ii) Identify barriers and gaps hindering the ability of BRICS countries to harness international trade as a means to achieve sustainable development and environmental goals, such as unilateral trade-restrictive measures and limitations to access to technology, as well as capacity constraints;
- (iii) Explore opportunities for possible collective approaches benefiting sustainable development and providing trade opportunities; and
- (iv) Exchange views and coordinate positions to advance relevant shared interests at the WTO, the UNFCCC and other relevant fora, with a view to strengthening the voice of BRICS in global trade governance and fostering sustainable development, including by enhancing dialogue through the BRICS Informal Consultative Framework.

2. Participation shall be open to officials appointed by members. Participation by relevant national authorities is encouraged, particularly those involved in international negotiations concerning trade and environmental issues. This



guidance is presented on a suggestive basis and does not restrict members' prerogative to determine their delegations.

3. The draft agenda of each meeting and, as appropriate, a list of proposed participants from relevant international organizations will be circulated by the Chairship prior to that meeting, to be approved on the basis of consensus by BRICS members.

4. Meetings may include mutual exchanges of briefings and expertise with other relevant BRICS working groups, such as the Environmental Working Group and the Contact Group on Climate Change and Sustainable Development, BRICS Informal Consultative Framework, among others, exploring synergies and strengthening coordination of their respective activities.

5. The BRICS Chairship shall compile a factual report, under its own responsibility, summarizing discussions. Upon consensus by BRICS members, this report may be submitted, as appropriate, to the Meeting of Ministers of Trade, to the Meeting of Ministers of Industry, to the Meeting of Ministers of Environment and to the High-Level Meeting on Climate Change and Sustainable Development, for consideration and guidance on further BRICS cooperation.

6. This document is presented and will be implemented in a non-binding, non-prejudicial and non-prescriptive basis, without creating obligations on BRICS members under relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements or changing their rights and obligations under the WTO agreements, and shall in no way be read or understood to have implications for the interpretation of provisions within WTO Agreements or any other relevant international instruments.

Adopted on 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2025, under the auspices of the BRICS Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues.