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Newsletter

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BRICS unwrapped – “it’s in your hands”



South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, addresses a media briefing at the conclusion of a successful 10th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa

BRICS leaders affirm unity in Joburg declaration

BRICS Member States have expressed satisfaction with the achievements of the bloc over the last 10 years and have affirmed their commitment to navigate development imperatives as a united front.

“We, the Heads of State and Government, express satisfaction regarding the achievements of BRICS over the last 10 years as a strong demonstration of BRICS cooperation toward the attainment of peace, harmony and shared development and prosperity, and deliberated on ways to consolidate them further,” said the Heads of State in the Johannesburg Declaration.”

The declaration was made on the second day of the 10th BRICS Summit, which came to an end at the Sandton Convention Centre on 27 July 2018.

The five major emerging national economies that form the BRICS grouping reaffirmed their commitment to the principles of mutual respect, sovereign equality, democracy, inclusiveness and strengthened collaboration.

In the declaration, the leaders -- South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Michel Temer -- further committed themselves to enhancing strategic partnerships for the benefit of their people.

This would be done through the promotion of peace, a fairer international order, sustainable development and inclusive growth. This would also be done through strengthening the three-pillar-driven cooperation in the areas of the economy, peace and security and people-to-people exchanges.

The 23-page declaration, which includes several annexes, comes a day after the BRICS Business Forum aired its concerns around the global economy, which is currently facing challenges with the onslaught of trade wars and the move from multilateralism to unilateralism.



Maintaining role of WTO

In the declaration, the leaders of BRICS countries, which account for more than a third of the world's population, recommitted their support for multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations in international affairs and uphold fair, just and equitable international order.

“We recognise that the multilateral trading system is facing unprecedented challenges. We underscore the importance of an open world economy, enabling all countries and peoples to share the benefits of globalisation, which should be inclusive and support sustainable development and prosperity of all countries.”

“We call on all WTO members to abide by WTO rules and honour their commitments in the multilateral trading system,” noted the declaration. The declaration states that the WTO Dispute Settlement System is the cornerstone of the multilateral trading system and is designed to enhance security and predictability in international trade.

The declaration acknowledges the need to preserve the WTO's negotiating function. “We, therefore, agree to constructively engage in further developing the current legal framework of the multilateral trading system within the WTO, taking into

consideration the concerns and interests of all WTO members, including in particular the developing members.”

The bloc also recommitted their support to address common traditional and non-traditional security challenges.

The leaders welcomed the hosting of the BRICS-Africa Outreach and second BRICS Plus Cooperation with Emerging Markets and Developing Countries (EMDCs) during the Johannesburg Summit.

In terms of developments in the energy space, the leaders acknowledged that the bloc's Ministers of Energy are working to establish the BRICS Energy Research Cooperation Platform and to develop its Terms of Reference. The leaders noted the ongoing discussions for that purpose.

The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to develop people-to-people contact across various sectors.

The five countries have for the past 10 years put special focus on people-to-people relations, with several programmes and exchanges in the fields of sports, youth, films, culture, education and tourism. – SAnews.gov.za

BRICS leaders reach out to Africa and the broader South



BRICS Leaders, BRICS Plus leaders and BRICS Africa Outreach leaders gather in Johannesburg, South Africa

The 10th BRICS Summit entered its third and final day this morning which saw the five leaders engaging in dialogue with non-BRICS states.

This engagement is per the 2011 Sanya Declaration that stated: “We are open to increasing engagement and cooperation with non-BRICS countries, in particular, emerging and developing countries, and relevant international and regional organisations”.

As such, the last day of the summit saw a BRICS Outreach Dialogue between President Cyril Ramaphosa, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President, Michel Temer.

The following countries participated in the discussions:

- Rwanda as Chair of the African Union (AU);
- Senegal as Chair of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC);
- Gabon as Chair of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS);
- Uganda as Chair of the East African Community (EAC); Ethiopia as Chair of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD);
- Togo as Chair of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS); Zambia as incoming Chair of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA);
- Namibia as incoming Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and
- Angola as Chair of the SADC Organ.

Some of the SADC member states had the opportunity to interact with the BRICS leaders:

- Mauritius
- Lesotho
- Botswana
- Zimbabwe
- Seychelles
- Mozambique
- Malawi, and
- Madagascar.

The Outreach Dialogue also included the BRICS Plus countries.

The rationale behind the BRICS Plus concept is to create a platform for greater interaction and partnerships amongst countries of the Global South to shape the agenda to effect changes in the global economy.

This, notably for the development and economic growth through trade and investment integration, and cooperation in global governance financial, economic and political institutions.

For this session the following countries participated:

- Argentina as Chair of the G20 and influential Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) member
 - Egypt as Chair of the Group of 77 (G77)+China
 - Jamaica as incoming Chair of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and
 - Turkey - as Chair of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).
- SAnews.gov.za**



In pictures: BRICS Outreach



BRICS leaders get a taste of the Cradle of Humankind

BRICS leaders on 26 July 2018, virtually explored the rich history of the Cradle of Humankind, which boasts some of the most world-renowned discoveries of humankind's hominin ancestors.

The Cradle of Humankind, which is one of eight World Heritage Sites in the country, offers a world-class exhibition centre focusing on the development of humans and their ancestors over the past few million years.

It's the world's richest hominin site, home to around 40% of the world's human ancestor fossils. Situated in the West Rand of Gauteng and about 63 kilometres from the Sandton International Convention Centre where the 10th BRICS Summit was held from 25 – 27 July 2018, BRICS leaders got an inside look of the centre via livestream.

The distance between the summit venue and the Cradle of Humankind posed a logistical challenge, which meant that the world leaders could not go to the site in person. They instead experienced the centre remotely via livestream technology.

President Cyril Ramaphosa told his counterparts from Brazil, Russia, India and China before the live crossing that the site symbolised the unity of the people of the world.

“It also profiles our continent of Africa as the birthplace of the human species, and indeed more than 200 million years ago, our continents were all joined in the single continent, Laurasia. We have differences in language, culture and beliefs but we are one species bound together by a single ancient history.”

The livestream from the Cradle of Humankind was led by Higher Education and Training Minister Naledi Pandor, who told the Heads of State that the World Heritage Site was widely recognised as the place from which all of humankind originated.

She said “it was a place that allowed humans to reflect on who they were, where they came from and where they were going to.”

“Our countries all have sites that connect our ancient history. Twelve years prior to the listing of this, the important Peking Man site was listed in the People's Republic of China. Earlier this year, research was published of the discovery of stone tools, dating back to 385 000 years ago in India.”

“In Russia, the Denisova hominin discovery is of immense paleontological importance. Brazil and South Africa share very important ancient reptile fossil species, elucidating the distant ancestry of mammals, which demonstrates that our continents were once linked in the ancient continent Gondwana.”

Exclusive view of fossils

Minister Pandor went on to give the BRICS leaders an exclusive view of three types of specimen hominin fossils that were on display. These were *Homo Naledi*, “Little Foot” (*Australopithecus prometheus*) and “Karabo” (*Australopithecus sediba*).

It was the first time that “Little Foot” was on public display, after having been recovered from the rock in which it has lain buried for the past 3.67 million years at Sterkfontein.

The BRICS leaders were first taken through the origins of *Homo Naledi*, one of the fascinating discoveries in human origins.

Consisting of more than 1 550 numbered fossil elements, the discovery is the single largest fossil hominid find yet made in Africa.

Homo Naledi fossil material was recovered in two expeditions, conducted in November 2013 and March 2014, dubbed the Rising Star Expeditions.



According to scientists, *Homo Naledi* is a bit smaller and a lot older than humans, with curved fingers and a small skull, but in some ways, the species is also strikingly similar to humankind.

Homo Naledi's teeth are described as similar to those of the earliest known members of the human genus, such as *Homo habilis*, as are most features of the skull.

Research shows the average *Homo Naledi* was 1.5 metres tall and weighed about 45kg with a brain the size of an orange and a slender body. The leaders were then taken through see Little Foot, who was discovered by Professor Ron Clarke from the Evolutionary Studies Institute at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

The fossil was given the nickname of Little Foot based on Clarke's initial discovery of four small foot bones.

It is by far the most complete skeleton of a human ancestor older than 1.5 million years ever found. It is also the oldest fossil hominid in southern Africa, dating back 3.67 million years.

Prof. Clarke told **SAnews** at the Cradle of Humankind that it had taken him and his team 20 years since the discovery to excavate, clean and prepare the fossil.

Even though Little Foot had a divergent big toe, which enabled it to climb trees, Clarke said researchers are certain that this early *Australopithecus* walked upright on the ground for much of the time.

But more information is yet to emerge about Little Foot as Clarke, together with a team of international experts, is currently conducting a full set of scientific studies on it.

"The results of these studies are expected to be published in a series of scientific papers in high impact, peer-reviewed international journals in the near future," he said, noting that this was expected to add a wealth of knowledge about human's early ancestral relatives.

The last fossil they viewed was that of an adolescent boy nicknamed Karabo. Karabo, who was discovered by Professor Lee Berger, is a 195-million-year-old partial hominid skeleton, who would have been between nine and 13-years-old when he died.

One human race

Minister Pandor told **SAnews** after the tour that it was important for the leaders to see the origins of humankind.

"Part of the objectives of the BRICS countries is peace globally and unity of humanity. We thought it is important that we share and open up access to the Cradle of Humankind to leaders who are concerned about humanity."

Minister Pandor hoped that the visit would also help to promote opportunities that are offered by tourism to this important historic site.

"We hope that this visual tour introduced the five leaders to what we believe conceptualises this notion of human beings as one. We all originate from the same ancestry, hence we should all be working towards uniting humanity."

After the visual tour, the five BRICS leaders were invited to make hand imprints and share a message of commitment to safeguarding the future of humanity -- from their countries to the world.

The handprints will be displayed alongside those of the later former President Nelson Mandela, which is housed at the centre. - **SAnews.gov.za**



A special thanks to the media for spreading the #BRICS message.
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