



Declaration of the 7th BRICS Communications Ministers' Meeting (22 October 2021, Republic of India)

1. We, the Ministers of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of South Africa met virtually under the Chairship of the Republic of India at the 7th BRICS Communications Ministers' Meeting, on 22nd October, 2021.
2. We note with great pleasure that India's Chairship of BRICS coincides with the 15th anniversary of BRICS. We are guided by overall theme of India's Chairship of BRICS 2021- "**BRICS@15: Intra-BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation and Consensus**". We will strive to use Digital and Technological Solutions including innovative and inclusive solutions to promote sustainable development and facilitate affordable and equitable access to global public goods for all.
3. We recall decisions made during the previous BRICS Communications Ministers' meetings, and commit to strengthen joint activities amongst BRICS countries, create new cooperation opportunities and intensify partnerships already in progress.

ICTs' ROLE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

4. We express deep concern over the loss of millions of lives and livelihood and the tremendous challenges that emerged in the aftermath of COVID-19, namely, different levels of emergency preparedness and sustainability of health system and infrastructure upgrading, need for online education facilities and reverting job losses across sectors. While the impact of the COVID-19 is ubiquitous, its effect is more pronounced on the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.
5. We recognize the importance of maintaining the security and stability of supply chain, in line with the national security considerations. We recognise the significant role of digital technologies, products and services in increasing the effectiveness of BRICS countries' response to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and assisting in recovery of economies, business continuity, and transition to the digital economy. We have noticed increased use of ICTs for accessing services of education, health, government, banking and other services.

DIGITAL PUBLIC GOODS: DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT

6. We recall decision by our leaders in the BRICS New Delhi Declaration of 2021 on further discussing the Indian proposal on creation of a BRICS Platform on Digital Public Goods, which could act as a repository for all Open-Source Technology applications created by BRICS members towards achieving SDGs for the benefit of BRICS and other countries.

7. We note with appreciation India's initiative to share its experience on Digital Public Goods architecture innovation and welcome the sharing of its Digital Public Goods (DPGs) as shared national resources with a citizen-centric approach for targeted growth in areas of digital and financial inclusion, healthcare, education etc., through India's demonstrated platform for Digital Public Goods. We agree to the proposal of the Working Group on ICTs Cooperation to set up a Focus Group on DPGs to formulate further collaboration and suggest the way forward.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE USE

8. We recall the declaration of the 6th BRICS Communications Ministers meeting recognizing the rapid developments and huge potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies and its value to economic growth. We acknowledge the need to cooperate with each other to build trust, confidence and security, as well as transparency and accountability in promoting trustworthy AI to maximize its potential for the benefit of society and humanity as whole with specific emphasis on marginalized and vulnerable groups of population.

9. We express our concerns on the risks and ethical dilemma related to Artificial Intelligence, such as privacy, manipulation, bias, human-robot interaction, employment, effects of autonomy, and singularity among others. We encourage BRICS members to work together to deal with such concerns, sharing of best practices, conduct comparative study on the subject toward developing a common governance approach which would guide BRICS members on Ethical and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence while facilitating the development of AI. We note with appreciation the views shared by experts on 'Ethical Concerns of Artificial Intelligence' during the seminar held on the margins of the 7th Meeting of BRICS Working Group on ICT Cooperation, and encourage BRICS members to take forward the collaboration on cutting-edge research and development of AI, including through the work of BIFN.

DIGITAL INCLUSION: AFFORDABLE AND EQUITABLE ACCESS OF COMMUNICATION SERVICES AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

10. We recall our Leaders decision to encourage affordable access of our citizens to Telecommunications/ Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and digital platforms, and stress the need to establish modalities and approaches to promote equitable and inclusive access to digital resources for all people.

11. We acknowledge that people are increasingly relying on use of Telecommunications /ICT services and digital technologies for accessing education, health services, banking services, e-Governance services and other important activities. We also note that with ever-increasing use of Telecommunications /ICT services and digital technologies, it is very crucial to make available affordable and equitable access to information and Telecommunications /ICT services and technologies for all, particularly common & poor people.

12. We encourage BRICS members to work together to develop multi-pronged approaches and reference models for affordable access to communications services and digital technologies for benefitting people, achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promoting digital inclusion.

DIGITAL GOVERNANCE: FOSTERING AN OPEN, FAIR AND EQUITABLE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

13. We reaffirm our commitment to cooperate with each other in the area of digital governance as agreed at the 5th and 6th BRICS Communications Ministers Meeting.

14. We reiterate the need of a comprehensive and balanced approach to ICTs development and security, including technical advancement, business development, of safeguarding the security of States and public interests, and of respecting the right to privacy of individuals. We are concerned over the increasing challenge to protect children from all types of online exploitation, and from other content harmful for their health and development and look forward to strengthening BRICS cooperation to develop initiatives aimed at ensuring safety of the children on the Internet.

15. BRICS countries encourage continued development of holistic, secure, open and reliable Internet, preserving its integrity, stability and security. We acknowledge the importance of leveraging new and effective forms of interactions among governments, businesses, technical community of BRICS countries and other relevant international organizations in the interest of building the Internet ecosystem.

STOCKTAKING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION AND THE WAY FORWARD

16. We reaffirm the decisions of earlier BRICS Communication Ministers Meeting recognizing the role of the Working Group on ICT cooperation in assisting the implementation of the decisions of the Ministers and reiterate commitment for strengthening and improving the Working Group on ICT cooperation having regular interaction to take stock of the decisions and the status of their implementation.

17. We re-affirm the commitment of previous Communications Ministers' meetings for continuous cooperation in ICTs activities in international organizations and multilateral forums such as the International Telecommunications Union and other organizations.

18. We reiterate the importance of our cooperation on Digital Economy including themes such as Digital Transformation, Digital Inclusion, Digital Governance, Security in the Digital Economy, Digital Connectivity, Data Protection, Artificial Intelligence, Child Online Protection, International interconnection, Building confidence and security in use of Telecommunications/ ICTs; Universal Telecom/Broadband Services, Internet ecosystem and capacity building. We agree to further strengthen our cooperation in these areas including under the DBTF and BIFN.

19. We encourage BRICS members to host the Digital BRICS Forum annual meeting, which could act as a platform to facilitate sharing of information and knowledge, practices and trends, initiatives and results of digital development among others. An outcome report of Digital

BRICS Forum will be prepared and submitted, through the BRICS Working Group on ICT Cooperation to the Communications Ministers Meeting.

20. We support the work undertaken at the DBTF meeting, which finalized the Terms of Reference of DBTF. We support the advancement of the BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR) across several Working Groups, and commend the work done by the PartNIR Advisory Group Meeting in 2021.

21. We note with appreciation the discussion on ‘360-degree approach on New Industrial Revolution- pros and cons’ presented in the DBTF meeting and views shared by experts on the subject during seminars. We recognize the need of BRICS members to work together for a comprehensive understanding of New Industrial Revolution, its advantages & disadvantages and its impacts on the industrial workers, job market among others. We urge the Working Group on ICT Cooperation to further deliberate on this approach.

22. We note with appreciation the deliberations in the 3rd Council meeting of BIFN, and urge for early adoption by BRICS members of the Work Plan of BIFN and reiterate our full support to the actions to be undertaken by the BIFN Council, in order to promote cooperation on research and innovation in emerging and new technologies and network. We encourage the establishment of liaison and communication mechanisms between BIFN branches, under the guidance of BIFN Council, to carry out diverse exchanges and cooperation in the field of ICT.

23. Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa commend India’s BRICS Chairship in 2021 and express their gratitude for organizing a successful seventh BRICS Communications Ministers’ Meeting.

24. Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa extend support to China for hosting the eighth BRICS Communications Ministers’ Meeting in 2022.
