



## **Keynote Address by Secretary (CPV & OIA) at launch of BRICS Academic Process 2021**

**14 April 2021**

### **Friends from the BRICS Community, Namaskar**

Greetings on the occasion of the Lunar new year, which is being celebrated across my country. It gives me immense pleasure to join you at the launch of the BRICS Academic Process in 2021. I look forward to hear your perspectives on initiatives and priorities for BRICS as we look to the future. They say investment in knowledge pays the best interest. We shall lean on you for your brilliant ideas which could blossom as BRICS initiatives. I am told the idea of the New Development Bank, a shining example of our endeavours, was germinated in the portals of the BRICS Academic Process.

The year 2021, coming after dark Covid clouds, offers promise in the form of vaccines, economic recovery and hopes of return to a new normal. We are at unique cross roads of history, with the deadly pandemic having introduced new modes of thinking, working and living, for each of us, individually and collectively. This is an important year to reflect where we are and how we would like the world to be for our children. I am optimistic by nature and would wish to look through the tunnel at the opportunities ahead.

India, has dealt with the Covid pandemic with science and humanity both for her own citizens and also for the global community. Through the vaccine "Maitri" initiative we have delivered 64 million doses of made in India Covid vaccines to more than 80 countries, demonstrating our willingness and capability to shoulder greater responsibility as a first responder in crisis. India is not only a "pharmacy of the world" for production of essential drugs but also a reliable provider to the world. We do believe that the global community must work together in such situations.

As India assumes the BRICS Chair in this eventful year, we take note that BRICS is expansive in its agenda, cutting across the three pillars of cooperation- Political and Security, Economic and Finance and Cultural and People to People. We have made great progress as is evident from the number of meetings and formats of interaction that have developed over the years. Many of the initiatives have reached the grassroots and touched the lives of BRICS citizens. What makes the BRICS format of engagement unique is the member driven and yet consensus-based character of the group. The absence of a Secretariat adds responsibility on member states and the Chair to ensure robust functioning and coordination of various BRICS mechanisms and institutions. Therefore, consolidation and stocktaking exercise is an important priority for India as BRICS commemorates its 15th Anniversary.

We are carrying on the traditions of past Chairs of BRICS and their efforts on this issue. Our approach is reflected in the theme we have selected for our **Chairship- BRICS@15: Intra BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation and Consensus.**



We have identified four broad priority areas for our Chairship:

- (i) Reform of the Multilateral System
- (ii) Counter Terrorism Cooperation
- (iii) Using Digital and Technological Solutions for the achievement of SDGs and
- (iv) Enhancing People to People exchanges.

In order to flush out these priorities and to provide tangible benefits, we have jointly identified the major deliverable we hope to achieve this year:

- Adoption of a Joint Statement on the Reform of the Multilateral System at the Foreign Ministerial level
- Adoption of the BRICS Counter Terrorism Strategy Action Plan
- Adoption of the BRICS Economic Partnership Strategy Action Plan 2021-25
- Adoption of the BRICS Agricultural Cooperation Action Plan 2021-24
- Adoption of the Innovation Action Plan 2021-24
- Cooperation on Disaster Resilience
- Cooperation in Digital Health and Traditional Medicine
- Cooperation on Digital Public Goods

As the world emerges from the Pandemic we proceed on the decade focussed on implementation of SDGs. The experiences, especially in the past year, tell us that use of technology and digital means enables us to reach out to more people and enhances efficiency of delivery and depth of impact. These should be harnessed effectively to aid in our efforts in this endeavour.

We have seen that the current multilateral system is rooted too much in the past. The pandemic has exposed, what recent decades had also revealed, the fault lines inherent in the multilateral architecture. It is undergoing a crisis of credibility stemming from questions regarding its efficacy and representative nature. As five of the largest countries on our continents, representing almost half of humanity, we must rise to the occasion for a meaningful contribution for humanity and the future. Together, we have 41% of the world population, almost 30% of the land area and generate 24% of global GDP and 16% of world trade. Together we have the responsibility to reshape our global institutions and how we look to the future. Those resisting reforms are clinging to an image of the past that is not the reality of the present and certainly not the hope of the future.

I am pleased that all BRICS members have been engaged in discussion regarding the importance of reform in the UN system, Bretton Wood Institutions, WTO, WHO and others. In that context and especially for BRICS, which is a grouping of major countries with global impact, the objective of Reform of the Multilateral System is of highest significance.

India has always given importance to tackling of global issues, such as the menace of terrorism and the perils of climate change; which are also a priority on the BRICS agenda. The Academic Process is one such mechanism. BRICS has always thrived on people-to-people exchanges. This pillar not only adds flavour and vitality to the movement but also deepens the quality of our relations and interactions. Our organization has indeed come a long way since the first meeting of our Foreign Ministers on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York back in 2006. We look forward to giving it new momentum and focus. I convey my best wished



to the academic process and its interactions this year, such that you debate, deliberate and arrive at innovative ideas to carry forward the BRICS dreams and to strengthen its global impact and relevance.

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[https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/33808/Inaugural Address at BRICS Civil Forum 2021 by Secretary CPVOIA and BRICS Sherpa](https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/33808/Inaugural%20Address%20at%20BRICS%20Civil%20Forum%202021%20by%20Secretary%20CPVOIA%20and%20BRICS%20Sherpa)