



## **Valedictory Address by Shri Sanjay Bhattacharyya, Secretary (CPV & OIA) & BRICS Sherpa at the BRICS Academic Forum 2021**

**6 August 2021**

**Dr. Samir Saran, Dr. Sachin Chaturvedi, Academics and Analysts from the BRICS Community,**

**Namaskar!**

1. It has been my pleasure to have followed the journey of the BRICS Academic Forum through the last few months. Some of you may recall that in April, at the launch of the BRICS Academic Forum process 2021, I had conveyed that we (i.e. the BRICS Sherpas) would lean on you for innovative ideas to carry forward the BRICS aspirations and to strengthen its global impact and relevance. The Minister for External Affairs also referred to it in his inaugural address to the Forum.

2. BRICS Academic Forum, since its inception in 2009, has been instrumental in enhancing cooperation in research and capacity building among academic communities of BRICS countries. The Forum has deliberated on the most pressing development issues faced by BRICS countries- issues of economic growth, investment and infrastructure, cooperation and sustainable development; challenges of technology, digitalisation and big data; emerging opportunities in food and health security and education. You always came up with useful recommendations for the BRICS leadership. The BRICS Think Tank Council, established in 2013, helped in bringing continuity in the deliberations.

3. BRICS finds its roots in the meeting of Foreign Ministers in 2006, held on the margins of UNGA. This is therefore a milestone year for BRICS, we have completed 15 years. It is a moment for celebration and reflection. There have been numerous achievements in BRICS: we are the only plurilateral grouping with a Bank of our own, we have a financial safety net in the Contingent Reserve Arrangement and we are creating a Vaccine R&D Virtual Centre. Tangible intra-BRICS cooperation exists in various sectors, however, cooperation in some areas could have been stronger. 15th anniversary of BRICS is therefore an opportune time to reflect on the achievements and missed opportunities and to visualize the direction we would like BRICS to take, in coming years. The calls for diversity and pluralism are louder, the demands for reform of global governance and multipolarity are stronger and BRICS is at the heart of it.

4. I understand that BRICS Academic Process, through the last few months, has delved on various issues of importance for BRICS cooperation including multilateralism, international security, digitalization, climate change, gender and SDGs. I have listened very carefully to all your



suggestions. We strongly value your insights as we take forward intra-BRICS cooperation.

5. During our Chairship in 2021, we have tried to strengthen intra-BRICS cooperation under the overall theme of BRICS@15: Intra BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation and Consensus with 4 priorities -reform of the multilateral system, counter terrorism cooperation, technological and digital solutions to SDGs and people-to-people cooperation.

6. In June, this year, our Foreign Ministers issued a Joint Statement on Reforming and Strengthening of the Multilateral System. We have reached agreement, at experts level, on concluding a BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan to enhance practical BRICS cooperation in this area.

7. During this year we have tried to assimilate digital and technological solutions for the achievement of SDGs in the context of various BRICS mechanisms. We hope to come up with a BRICS portal for Digital Public Goods. The BRICS Agriculture Research Platform, another digital platform, will address issues related to sustainable agricultural development, hunger, poverty, nutrition, climate resilience, etc.

8. Some other important outcomes that are expected to be achieved in the coming weeks include the BRICS Agricultural Cooperation Action Plan 2021-24; Innovation Action Plan 2021-24; Cooperation on Disaster Resilience; and Cooperation in Digital Health and Traditional Medicine. Agreement among BRICS Space Agencies for BRICS Satellite Constellation is expected to be signed and the Mutual Customs Assistance Agreement is also likely to be concluded. Hence, we have had an active and fruitful year thus far in the BRICS pillars of Political and Security and Economic and Financial cooperation.

9. It has always been India's endeavor to enhance People-to-People and Cultural exchanges, which constitutes the third pillar of BRICS cooperation. This pillar not only adds flavour and vitality to the movement but also deepens the quality of our relations and interactions. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had especially called for strengthening of this pillar of BRICS cooperation. BRICS Games, Youth meetings, Film Festivals, Business Council & Forum, Women's Business Alliance, Academic Forum, Think-Tank Council, Civil Forum, Young Scientist Forum, Parliamentarians meetings, etc are now regular P2P mechanisms. BRICS Ministers for Culture, Youth Affairs, Sports, Tourism also meet regularly to strengthen cooperation in the areas.

10. As I mentioned, we have used the opportunity of our Chairship to embark on an exercise to consolidate intra-BRICS cooperation and to streamline processes. As part of this exercise we have revisited the Terms of Reference of BRICS mechanisms and agreed to update the document. We had requested the Indian representatives at the Academic Forum to review the major decisions taken in BRICS, including the MoUs and Agreements signed, and to prepare a report on their implementation status. I am told that work on that document is presently ongoing and we can expect a detailed report in coming weeks.

11. This will be a good beginning. Unlike many other plurilateral groupings, BRICS does not have a dedicated secretariat. While each rotating Chairship takes upon itself the responsibility of



secretariat functions, availability of historical data relating to BRICS decisions, under its numerous tracks, remains a challenge for all BRICS partners. As we have a vibrant academic community in BRICS, it may be useful to have our Academic Process act as a repository of documents, reports and information on BRICS, perhaps in the form of a BRICS portal.

12. The BRICS Academic Forum has provided a stage for deliberations and discussions among the leading academic institutions of BRICS countries on issues of common interest. I am glad that the forum continues to strengthen dialogue, floats new ideas and proposes solutions on numerous issues of global significance.

13. This year's deliberations, at the BRICS Academic Track, have provided interesting perspectives on these issues. These issues are critical for the future of mankind and the responsibility that BRICS countries bear in this regard. We are at a unique crossroad and the Covid pandemic has brought these issues into sharper focus. The deliberations in the academic circles have laid the groundwork and set the aspirational levels for agreement that we governments can expect to achieve in coming times.

14. I believe we need to challenge ourselves continuously and work together, towards expanding common ground while reducing differences, for making real progress in intra-BRICS cooperation. This will send a strong message to the global community and will boost the standing of BRICS in international affairs. I am confident that with the support of our BRICS academic partners, we will be able to achieve this goal through dialogue and consensus.

15. I thank you all for your participation and would like to use this opportunity to thank Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) for their masterly steering of the BRICS Academic Process in 2021.

16. I will make sure your valuable suggestions are circulated to fellow BRICS Sherpas and is also brought to the knowledge of BRICS Leadership.

**I thank you.**

[https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/34144/Valedictory Address by Shri Sanjay Bhattacharyya Secretary CPV OIA BRICS Sherpa at the BRICS Academic Forum 2021](https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/34144/Valedictory_Address_by_Shri_Sanjay_Bhattacharyya_Secretary_CPV_OIA_BRICS_Sherpa_at_the_BRICS_Academic_Forum_2021)

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