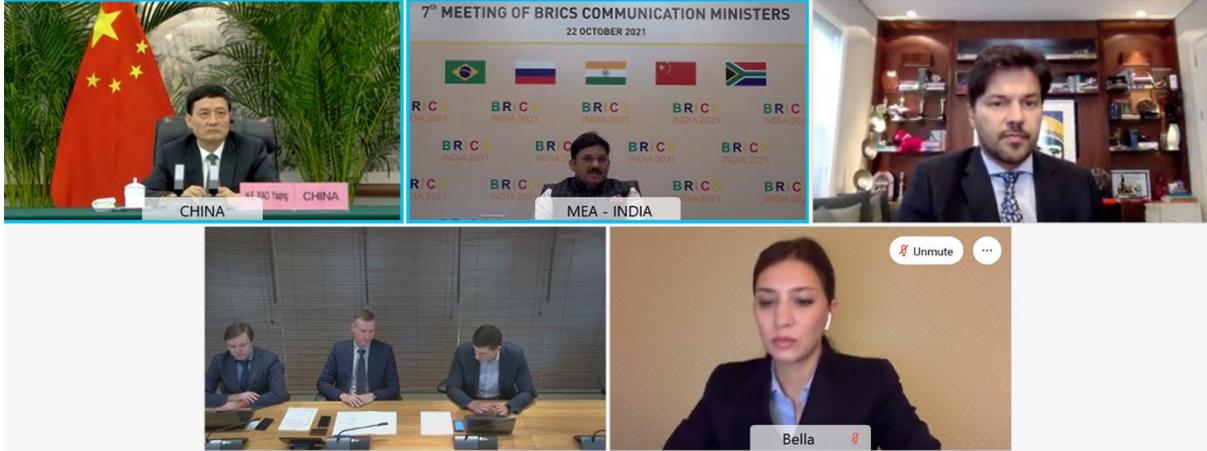




**7th Meeting of BRICS Communications Ministers
22 October 2021
(Virtual)**



India as the current BRICS Chair convened the 7th Meeting of BRICS Communications Ministers on 22nd October 2021. Minister of State for Communications of the Republic of India, Shri Devusinh Chauhan, chaired the 7th meeting of BRICS Communications Ministers through video conferencing on 22 October 2021.

Mr. Fábio Salustino Mesquita De Faria, Minister of Communications of the Federative Republic of BRAZIL, Ms. Bella Cherkesova, Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation, Mr. Xiao Yaqing, Minister of Industry and Information Technologies of the People's Republic of CHINA, and Ms. Khumbudzo Phophi Silence Ntshavheni, Minister of Communications & Digital Technologies of the Republic of SOUTH AFRICA led their respective delegations.

Shri Devusinh Chauhan while speaking during the meeting stated that the Hon'ble Prime Minister is committed to bridging the digital divide in India. To achieve the same, the Government of India has recently launched historical telecom reforms which will unleash the true potential of the telecom industry besides providing much-needed support to the telecom service providers. He also stated that the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India has launched a flagship scheme of extending optical fibers to all six lakh villages of India which will bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas.

The Ministers recognized the significant role of ICTs in increasing the effectiveness of BRICS countries' response to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and assisting in the recovery of economies, business continuity, and minimizing the social and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.



The Ministers discussed the need to work together to develop multi-pronged approaches and reference models for affordable access to communications services and digital technologies for benefitting people, thereby achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ministers expressed concerns on the risks and ethical dilemmas related to Artificial Intelligence and encouraged members to work together to deal with such concerns and risks of Artificial Intelligence and its ethical and responsible uses.

Ministers adopted the Terms of References of Digital BRICS Task Force and supported the advancement in work of the BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR) across several Working Groups meeting in 2021. Ministers also appreciated the discussion on the "360-degree approach on New Industrial Revolution" in a seminar during Working Group on ICTs Cooperation and recognized the need of BRICS members to work together for a comprehensive understanding of the New Industrial Revolution, its advantages & disadvantages, and its impacts on the industrial workers, job market among others.

Ministers encouraged continuous cooperation in ICTs activities in international organizations and multilateral forums such as the International Telecommunications Union and other organizations.

Ministers adopted the proposal to host the Digital BRICS Forum annually to facilitate sharing of information and knowledge, practices, initiatives, etc. on agreed cooperation areas. BRICS Ministers appreciated India's efforts in keeping up the momentum of BRICS cooperation in ICTs. The Ministers looked forward to greater cooperation in these areas.

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