

# South Africa's FM: BRICS synergy is growing

August 24, 2016, 8:44 pm



South Africa's collaboration in BRICS is aimed at contributing in a positive manner to the formation of global solutions to global challenges, says Nkoana-Mashabane [Xinhua]

*The BRICS Post (TBP) editor-in-chief Zeenat Saberin recently interviewed South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Maite Nkoana-Mashabane about the challenges of violence the continent faces, and the prospects of regional and global cooperation.*

**The BRICS Post: There are rising fears of a return to full-scale civil war in South Sudan. The United Nations authorised the deployment of 4,000 additional UN troops to bolster a UN mission there. The US has threatened to impose an arms embargo if the transitional government does not cooperate.**

**What is Pretoria's stand on the situation?**

**Nkoana-Mashabane:** South Africa's position on the situation in South Sudan is both informed by and aligned to the decisions of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) of which South Africa is a member, and that of regional arrangements such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

South Africa remains highly invested in ensuring that lasting peace and security is achieved in South Sudan, and will continue to play a key role through the mediation of President Jacob Zuma's special Envoy, Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, in support of peace-building efforts underway in the country. South Africa's approach has consistently focused on complementing AU and IGAD processes.

President Jacob Zuma in his capacity as Chairperson of the AU High-Level Committee of South Sudan will continue supporting IGAD initiatives towards resolving the crisis.

It is against the background of serious instability that South Africa supports the adoption by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on August 12 of a Resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to extend the UNMISS mandate until December 15, 2016, increasing the force levels from its current 12,000 up to a ceiling of 17,000 troops, including 4,000 soldiers for a Regional Protection Force to be deployed largely in Juba.

South Africa supports the decision of the Council authorising the force to use all necessary means, including undertaking robust and active steps and engaging in direct operations where necessary to accomplish its mission, in order to promote the well-being of the people of South Sudan, and to create an enabling environment for the implementation of the ARCSS.

Significantly, the UNSC Resolution notes the decisions in the communiqués adopted by the AUPSC and the IGAD Plus Member States on July 11 and 16 in Kigali, Rwanda and in particular, the August 5 communiqué of the Second IGAD Plus Extra-Ordinary Summit, calling on the Council to urgently extend the mission of UNMISS with a revised mandate, including the deployment of the Regional Protection Force, with distinct priority tasks and responsibilities under a commander to be based in Juba, who will report directly to the overall UNMISS Force Commander.

The Council Resolution specifically notes the consent of the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) to the deployment of such a force in principle, welcoming also the readiness expressed by member states in the region to increase their contribution of troops to UNMISS for this purpose.

South Africa will in the context of the AU and the IGAD Plus processes continue to support the engagement by regional role-players and actors to assist the TGoNU to fully implement the ARCSS and to restore stability and constitutional order to South Sudan.

A key aspect will be to encourage the Transitional Government to comply with the provisions of the Council Resolution, calling for the provision of unrestricted access and other support to the Regional Protection Force in the fulfilment of its mission, so as to avoid the imposition of an arms embargo and sanctions regime by the Council, on the basis of reported political or operational impediments to the operationalisation of the force.



Nkoana-Mashabane, seen here with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, says a multilateral approach should not be imposed for finding a lasting solution to a bilateral issue [Xinhua]

**China has recently dismissed an international tribunal’s ruling on the South China Sea dispute saying it is a “farce”. Beijing claims it has support of its partners on the issue. Many countries including India have urged for parties to follow the tenets of the UN sea treaty, the UNCLOS. What does South Africa think?**

South Africa supports the position that the sovereign states that are directly concerned should resolve their relevant disputes through direct consultations and negotiations, on the basis of respecting historical facts and in accordance with international law, as well as to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.

South Africa is of the view that [a] multilateral approach should not be imposed for finding a lasting solution to a bilateral issue. It further believes that regional issues must not be politicised.

South Africa believes that the international community should support all efforts aimed at safeguarding peace and stability in the region.

**Critics of the BRICS group say the bloc has not been able to translate its camaraderie into concrete cooperation. They point to the BRICS’s failure to nominate a common candidate for the IMF top job, the next UN chief etc among others. What would you say to these concerns?**

Since the formation of the BRICS group, BRICS has developed strategic cooperation mechanisms on numerous issues, some of which have been implemented already while others are deemed as ongoing issues for dialogue. The flagship initiative is obviously the New Development Bank, which was operationalised on July 21, 2015.

When one considers this proposal was only endorsed by the Leaders at the Fifth Summit that South Africa hosted in 2013, and has now become a reality with functional offices in a record time, the political will underpinning this intergovernmental forum is evident.

The NDB has already announced its first tranche of funding for green and sustainable projects for all five BRICS members. We have numerous other sectoral areas of

cooperation, which has enhanced BRICS intra-trade as well security and social areas especially in the sectors of health, population matters and education.

BRICS countries continue to exchange views, consult each other and coordinate positions as appropriate and feasible on issues related to the United Nations (UN) as well as in the context of other fora, notably the Group of 20 where our Leaders also meet prior to the G20 Summit. The appropriate context in which we conduct our international relations and cooperation policy should be recalled – South Africa, as do our BRICS as well as all other partners, also has other membership affiliations to global and regional fora, constituencies and related positions in these formations, as is the case in conducting any country's foreign policy.

Therefore, we also coordinate our positions in such fora as appropriate, and BRICS is an important caucus where issues of pertinent importance to the developing world, or Global South, can be discussed, notably the reform of global economic and financial architectures, including its leadership. Our Finance Ministers meet on the margins of the annual and other meetings of the Bretton Woods Institutions and remain seized with all issues pertaining.

Likewise, the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations meet on an annual basis on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to deliberate on pertinent issues of mutual interest and to coordinate and prepare our engagement as appropriate. In respect of the position for the UN Secretary-General, there is a very specific process that informs such deliberations.

A first straw poll was just conducted. All Member States will be consulting each other in this regard as a matter of principle. We will obviously exchange views with our various partners, including BRICS, obviously considering that there are two permanent members we would wish to exchange views with notably to ensure that an appropriate candidate will be elected that will promote the African Union's continental agenda.

We are heartened by the fact that our levels of synergy in assuming major positions in the BRICS context is strengthening annually, as can be seen in the annual Summit Declarations that the BRICS Leaders issue.

### **What role would South Africa play in the coming years to further boost intra-BRICS cooperation?**

The core of the BRICS agenda is to enhance intra-cooperation amongst its members. Every Summit Declaration has an Action Plan, which is the most transparent work programme of any such forum and where the existing tracks of cooperation are highlighted, as well as new areas identified for exploration. Every Summit chair also publishes the outcome documents after sectoral meetings on its website.

South Africa will continue to play its part by organising the government to cooperate in all the working groups agreed to at BRICS Summits, in order to respond to its national, regional and global developmental agenda and to ensure synergy of such engagements to the extent possible.

We have contributed in the past to creating the track 2 structures, notably the BRICS Business Council and BRICS Think Tanks Council, which were Summit deliverables in 2013 and we strongly advocated for and supported the inclusion of track 3 and civil society structures in BRICS architecture. South Africa has and continues to play an important role through the enhancement of, as well as functioning of, the numerous BRICS structures and sectoral areas of cooperation.

Our pro-active contributions in respect of the forum's institution building is appreciated by the partners. We will continue to see together with our partners how to strengthen this partnership in support of our domestic socio-economic priorities, so that we can demonstrate tangible deliverables to the peoples of BRICS, which constitute 43 per cent of the global population.

**When would the African regional branch of the BRICS New Development Bank be operational and how do you think this would help SA and the continent?**



Nkoana-Mashabane: South Africa is the only G20 African member, and supports the interests of the African continent in respect of the agenda setting and deliberation [Xinhua]

The BRICS New Development Bank African Regional Centre is expected to be operational in this quarter. I recently met with the President of the NDB, Mr Kamath, as a special envoy of the President to deliberate on final preparations in this regard and I can gladly share that all the preparations are at an advanced stage, and a formal announcement can be expected soon.

It is important to appreciate that the African Regional Centre is not just a “branch” of the NDB. It is a regional centre that is expected to carry out strategic projects for both South Africa and the continent.

The African Regional Centre will be initially responsible for project identification and preparation, but we will also, in consultation with our BRICS partners, respond to the various proposals received from the African leadership when they met the BRICS leadership in 2013 to discuss infrastructure cooperation. One of the core mandates of the ARC will be to mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries.

As you could imagine, the African continent is integral to this vision and mandate of the ARC. Through the ARC, the continent will benefit from funding of its infrastructure projects, and also from the idea that the African Regional Centre will ideally eventually

serve as a Continental Centre of Excellence that specialises in capacity building and technical assistance.

**The African Union has officially launched the AU passport. How would this work and what are the challenges?**

The promised Pan-African passport was launched during the 27th Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of States in Kigali, Rwanda.

The launch of the passport was mostly symbolic, and member states were tasked to work out the logistics of producing these. Individual member-states will have to deal with the frequently asked questions with respect to, who is entitled to receive the African Passport.

Most critical to process of rolling-out the passport, is aligning the passport with national legislation so that there is harmony across member-states and that the usage of the passport is not in contravention of individual national laws and requirements.

African Union member states will issue the Passports to their respective citizens.

Each member state will have country-specific designs, and how soon the passports will be implemented, will depend on each country's readiness to produce them.

The Pan-African passport, which will be delivered symbolically to heads of state, foreign ministers and a few officials of the AU and diplomats first, seeks to allow free movement across national borders.

Remarking during the recently held Summit of Heads of States, Louise Mushikiwabo, Foreign Affairs Minister of Rwanda, explained that although security was a major concern, this would not stop them. "Africa's strategic thinking is that the fear of insecurity should not stop Africans from moving freely from one country to another."

The launching of the passport was a step closer in encouraging free movement of people and trade on the continent.

**BRICS members, India and China, would be hosting important global events this year. Beijing with the G20 Summit and India with the BRICS Leaders Summit – What issues would Pretoria focus on during these summits?**

Indeed, this year is very important as BRICS countries host key international meetings, the G20 and BRICS Summit respectively. South Africa continues to play a critical role in the G20, as the only African member, and supports the interests of the African continent in respect of the agenda setting and deliberations. In the G20, we will continue to strive for a world economy that is inclusive of the developing countries aspirations and interests.

South Africa seeks to use its participation in the G20 to promote and strengthen the interests of Africa and of the South, on the understanding that, if managed carefully, the G20 does present meaningful opportunities for advancing much-needed global governance reforms and orienting the international development agenda. South Africa supports calls for the G20 to show international leadership in helping to achieve

progress in multilateral institutions, on the understanding that the G20 is not a substitute for the UN system, but should support and add value to what is being done within the UN context.

With regards to the BRICS Summit, we warmly welcome the Summit theme that Prime Minister Modi proposed, namely “Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions”. This narrative demonstrates the essence of our collaboration, which is aimed at contributing in a positive manner to the formation of global solutions to global challenges, as we all continue to be seized with addressing the effects of the global economic crisis and, more pertinently, to see how we can maintain or regain our desired growth trajectories.

In this regard, South Africa will continue to partner with BRICS members to address our national development priorities, particularly job creation, with a view to achieving enhanced economic engagement and cooperation through BRICS concerted action, notably in respect of the implementation of the Strategy for Economic Partnership that the Leaders adopted in 2015.

As per agreement with our partners, each country will lead and champion specific areas contained in the Strategy and South Africa will lead on two sectors, namely industrialisation and minerals processing as well as science, technology and innovation.

India has proposed various high-level deliverables for which we are very excited, but which remains the prerogative of the chair to announce. These initiatives are indeed also exciting to us from a continental perspective.

We will obviously discuss the various global issues of common interest and concern and exchange views in this regard. The global agenda has various serious issues to deal with that require concerted action by all nations and especially like-minded partners. Our Leaders will address these matters during their closed as well as plenary sessions.

We will also review the operations of the NDB and to see how we can further support its various activities, including high-level appointments.

*The BRICS Post*

<http://thebricspost.com/south-africas-fm-brics-synergy-is-growing/>