



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

BRICS+ YOUTH COUNCIL - INDIA COUNTRY STATEMENT



**SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE
OCCASION OF THE BRICS YOUTH COUNCIL – *Country Statement* | ±5 minutes**

19 August 2026

Chairperson,

Honourable Minister,

Distinguished representatives of BRICS Member States,

Fellow youth leaders, colleagues and friends,

South Africa is honoured to participate in the 2026 BRICS Youth Summit and Youth Council under India's Chairship. We thank the Government of India for convening us under the theme, *“Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability.”*

For South Africa, this theme speaks directly to the realities confronting young people across our countries.

Our national contexts may differ, but young people continue to navigate unemployment and inequality, rapid technological change, environmental pressures and barriers to meaningful participation. At the same time, they remain among the most resilient and innovative contributors to solutions within their communities and societies.

Our responsibility, therefore, is not simply to speak about young people, but to create the conditions in which their potential can become meaningful opportunity and participation.

South Africa's approach to youth development is grounded in this principle. We continue to focus on expanding pathways into skills, employment, entrepreneurship and economic participation, while ensuring that young people are able to participate meaningfully in the social and developmental life of their country.

Our experience has taught us that opportunity is rarely created through one intervention alone. A young person may need relevant skills before accessing employment. An entrepreneur may require finance, mentorship, markets and networks before an enterprise can become sustainable. An innovator may have an idea but require an ecosystem in which that idea can become a viable solution.



This is where BRICS cooperation can add real value.

We should look beyond what our countries are doing independently and ask where our institutions, young people, knowledge and innovation ecosystems can connect. This is particularly important as artificial intelligence, automation and digital technologies transform the world of work.

South Africa welcomes the emphasis on education, training and skills, entrepreneurship, science, technology and innovation. But future readiness must also mean equitable access to the future.

A young person cannot participate meaningfully in the digital economy without connectivity, relevant skills, infrastructure and opportunities to apply those skills. If access remains unequal, technological advancement can reproduce existing inequalities.

For this reason, inclusion must remain central to our understanding of youth development.

South Africa continues to place particular emphasis on young women, rural youth, young persons with disabilities and other young people who experience barriers to participation. We believe that inclusion is not simply a social imperative; it strengthens the resilience, cohesion and developmental potential of our societies.

Chairperson, South Africa also attaches particular importance to the people-to-people dimension of BRICS cooperation.

Youth exchange, cultural cooperation, volunteering, social participation and dialogue allow young people from our countries to build relationships based on understanding, shared experience and mutual learning.

We particularly welcome the inclusion of Social and Cultural Participation, Social Work and Volunteering, Youth Exchange and Interfaith Youth Dialogue within the Youth Council's people-to-people pillar.

This is an area where South Africa has a particular contribution to make. The BRICS Youth Cooperation Framework identifies South Africa in relation to Social and Cultural Participation, Social Work and Volunteering.

We see volunteering not simply as service, but as an opportunity for young people to develop leadership, practical experience, social responsibility and stronger connections with their communities.



There is therefore value in sharing our experiences and exploring how youth service and volunteering can become vehicles for stronger cooperation across BRICS.

Chairperson, we must also recognise the institutional journey that has brought us here.

The BRICS Youth Council was established during South Africa's 2023 Chairship, and subsequent Chairships have continued to broaden the scope of youth cooperation. India's Chairship has taken this work forward through its thematic engagements and the development of a Youth Cooperation Framework.

We should not begin again with every Chairship. We should build.

For South Africa, this means strengthening institutional memory, carrying forward what has worked, learning from what has not, and creating practical initiatives that can survive beyond the Chairship that introduces them.

We therefore support a Youth Cooperation Framework that provides continuity and coherence while remaining voluntary and non-binding, and that respects the national laws, priorities, capacities and circumstances of Member States.

Ultimately, the success of our cooperation should be measured by what young people experience because of it.

Can a young person acquire a relevant skill? Can an entrepreneur access new knowledge, networks or markets? Can a young person participate in an exchange, volunteer in another community or build a relationship across borders? Can a young person who has historically faced barriers access an opportunity that was previously beyond reach?

If our cooperation can answer these questions positively, then we would have moved beyond dialogue into meaningful impact.

South Africa comes to this Summit ready to contribute, to listen and to learn.

We look forward to working with India and all BRICS Member States to build a Youth Track that is resilient in its institutions, innovative in its solutions, cooperative in its approach, inclusive in its reach and sustainable in its impact.

I thank you.

