



**SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
DR SUNSHINE MYENDE**

**BRICS+ YOUTH COUNCIL OFFICIALS MEETING
ON THEMATIC AREAS**



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

**SOUTH AFRICA'S INPUT ON THE THEMATIC PILLARS AND AREAS OF
COOPERATION**

Chairperson,

Distinguished colleagues,

Fellow members of the BRICS Youth Council,

South Africa welcomes the opportunity to deliberate on the ten areas of cooperation that have been organised under the four thematic pillars before us.

I believe the value of this discussion lies not in restating what each of these areas means, but in asking a more important question: what can BRICS do together that will enable each of our countries to move further and faster in responding to the aspirations of our young people?

The four pillars before us are not separate policy areas. They are interconnected parts of the same youth-development journey.

A young person needs quality education and relevant skills, but also an opportunity to use those skills. They need access to economic opportunity, but also health, inclusion and a safe environment in which to participate. They need to be future-ready, but they must also have a voice in determining what that future looks like.

Our cooperation should therefore be designed around the young person, rather than around the institutions that serve them.

First, on Education, Entrepreneurship and Future Readiness.

South Africa believes that we need to strengthen the pathway from education, to skills, to economic opportunity.

Education and training must increasingly equip young people with digital literacy, critical thinking, problem-solving, technical and vocational capabilities, and the ability to adapt to changing economies.

The rapid development of artificial intelligence and other technologies makes this particularly urgent. South Africa is already expanding work around digital literacy, coding, robotics and technology-driven entrepreneurship, including through partnerships such as I AM THE CODE. Our experience reinforces the importance of



connecting education, industry, innovation ecosystems and opportunities for young people to apply what they learn.

At BRICS level, we should connect these ecosystems across borders.

Let us explore a BRICS skills and innovation exchange through which young people can access mentorship, technical knowledge, innovation challenges, research networks and exposure to emerging industries in other Member Countries.

On entrepreneurship, we should go beyond simply sharing information about funding programmes. Young entrepreneurs need markets, mentorship, networks, technology and opportunities to scale.

We could therefore create practical BRICS pathways that connect youth enterprises to one another, innovation hubs, business-support institutions and potential markets across our countries.

Second, on Inclusive Development and Youth Wellbeing.

Economic growth cannot be considered successful if large numbers of young people remain excluded from it.

South Africa's experience through initiatives such as the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention, alongside the NYDA's work on youth inclusion, reinforces the importance of creating multiple pathways into opportunity.

At BRICS level, I would encourage us to develop a shared repository of practical youth-development solutions - not simply a collection of policies, but evidence of what has worked, the communities it has benefited, and what other countries may be able to adapt.

We should also ensure that inclusion is designed into our cooperation from the beginning, particularly for young women, rural youth, LGBTQIA+ youth and young persons with disabilities. South Africa's Rural Strategy and Youth with Disabilities Strategy reflect our own commitment to making participation and opportunity more accessible.

Third, on Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility.

Our young people will inherit the consequences of today's environmental decisions, but they should not only inherit the problem. They should be part of developing the solutions.

BRICS can strengthen cooperation around green skills, youth-led environmental innovation, sustainable enterprise and the future jobs of the green economy.

We should create opportunities for young innovators and entrepreneurs to share solutions across our countries, particularly where environmental challenges are shared but solutions can be adapted locally.



Finally, on People-to-People Cooperation and Youth Engagement.

This pillar is fundamental because BRICS cannot become stronger through government-to-government relations alone. Our young people must know one another.

Youth exchange, cultural participation, volunteering and interfaith dialogue create relationships that can outlast individual programmes and Chairships.

South Africa has a particular responsibility here. The BRICS Youth Cooperation Framework maps Social and Cultural Participation, Social Work and Volunteering to South Africa, building on the role South Africa played in establishing the Youth Council during its 2023 Chairship.

We should use this position to advance practical youth service and volunteering exchanges across BRICS - allowing young people to share skills, serve communities, develop leadership and learn from one another.

Chairperson,

If we are serious about the four pillars before us, then our ambition should be to move from dialogue to delivery, from exchange to implementation, and from isolated national programmes to connected BRICS opportunities.

The Framework before us already calls for practical and collaborative initiatives, meaningful youth participation, mutual benefit, innovation and sustainability, while respecting the different national priorities and capacities of Member States.

South Africa therefore proposes that every BRICS youth initiative should answer three questions:

What problem are we solving?

What can we do together that we cannot do as effectively alone?

And what tangible opportunity will a young person experience as a result?

If we keep those questions at the centre of our work, the ten areas before us will not remain a list of priorities.

They can become a practical architecture for moving the young people of BRICS from potential to participation, from participation to opportunity, and from opportunity to leadership.

South Africa stands ready to work with all Member Countries to make that ambition a reality.

I thank you.

