

## **BRICS ACADEMIC FORUM**

### **Concept note**

The Academic Forum is a major platform for interaction between experts representing academic communities from BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). The Forum aims to encourage academic exchange, strengthen the dialogue between government and academia, as well as provide policy advice. As the outcome of the Forum, expert society puts forward proposals to BRICS Leaders on cooperation in the fields of trade and finance, health, education, urban development and infrastructure, energy, digitalization, peace, and stability.

The BRICS expert track was launched before the association itself was established. While the first leaders' meeting occurred in the city of Yekaterinburg (Russia) in 2009, the first ever meeting of BRIC scholars happened in Moscow in December 2008. This gave a start to the annual Academic Forum conducted by the chair country on the threshold of the Leaders' Summit.

Since the establishment of the Forum, the BRICS expert community played the role of pioneers calling attention to newly emerging problems and drawing attention of the leaders to persistent issues of international agenda. The vast majority of proposed initiatives were endorsed at the top level and helped to turn the association into an institute of global governance with a significant impact. By the third Leaders' Summit, when South Africa had joined the grouping and BRICS was established, the expert track was formally institutionalized by setting up a network of research centers of the five countries. In 2013, within South African BRICS Chairmanship, the heads of the national coordinating centers signed a declaration on the BRICS Think Tank Council (BTTC), which was subsequently endorsed by the leaders at the Durban Summit.

12<sup>th</sup> Academic Forum, to be held within the Russia's BRICS Chairmanship in 2020, is covering topics within the three pillars of priorities announced by the Russian host and offering a new vision to further development of the grouping. One of the other important tasks of the BRICS academic community remains that on monitoring the progress achieved by the five countries on the issues of common concern and looking into ways to enhance pentilateral cooperation of BRICS members at all levels. Thus, as a result of expert track of the Russia's Chairmanship a number of important documents are prepared. Among those are the Assessment of the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2015-2020, Databank of the Best Practices on the Development of Remote Areas in BRICS Countries, BRICS Women Empowerment Toolkit to name but a few.

The Russian BRICS Chairmanship in 2020 with the theme of "Partnership for Global Stability, Common Security and Innovation Growth" features the aim of ensuring sustainable and fair world in the interest of all the countries of the Planet. The Russian National Committee on BRICS Research will host the 12th BRICS Academic Forum and BTTC meeting in Moscow, Russia on October 22-24 under the theme

“BRICS New Vision for a Better World”. The BRICS Academic community will provide policy proposals for strengthening the cooperation within the grouping and increasing its further role in the global governance system. As a result, a set of recommendations for the five leaders is expected to emerge.

The Forum will continue serving as a platform for debating solutions on the pressing global governance issues, generating proposals for strengthening the BRICS cooperation and its role in global governance by our countries’ scholars, further strengthening ties between the BRICS academic communities. It is expected that about 200 participants from the BRICS and the “outreach” countries will participate in the Forum’s deliberations.

**12TH BRICS ACADEMIC FORUM**  
**“BRICS NEW VISION FOR A BETTER WORLD”**  
**Program**

*Moscow, October 22-24, 2020*

Geopolitical tensions and the pressures of rising protectionism exacerbate existing risks to sustainable development and inclusive economic growth: high level of public and private debts, persistent current accounts imbalances, and volatility of financial flows. That is in addition to mounting anthropogenic strain on the ecosystem, increasing competition on energy and technological markets, economic inequality, and the digital divide.

The international community continues facing challenges to sustaining peace and security. These challenges encompass intense rivalries between global and regional powers, terrorist threats, interference into the domestic affairs of states, including military intervention, the militarization of outer space, and other threats. Global governance institutions do not cope with the challenges, and the multilateralism in international relations is unprecedentedly challenged.

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic turned on the “test mode” for the global governance institutions to respond to crises. Despite the commitment of the international community to tackle the novel coronavirus, the global governance system experienced multiple challenges in meeting the needs of COVID-19 reality. The healthcare crisis increased political turbulence, caused a new wave of protectionist measures, and undermined efforts to build a more resilient and sustainable world.

The BRICS came together a decade ago to build a strong, sustainable, balanced, inclusive, and more equitable global governance system. Over the years the grouping has been deepening intra-BRICS cooperation and engaging with other global players to shape a more democratic multilateral order. However, the efforts of BRICS to make globalization work for all are likely to be tested by the pressures of isolationism and increasing imbalances between globally integrating markets and still fragmented policymaking. New geopolitical and economic realities require BRICS to recommit to their founding mission and enhance the “strategic partnership for the benefit of our people through the promotion of peace, a fairer international order, sustainable development, and inclusive growth”.

## October 22, Thursday

<b>Time</b> <i>(Moscow local, GMT+3)</i>	<b>Event</b>
<b>12.30 AM – 3.00 PM</b>	<b>Registration</b>
<b>12.30 AM – 1.00 PM</b>	Welcome coffee
<b>1.00-2.30 PM</b>	<b>BRICS Think Tank Council (BTTC) meeting</b> (by invitation)
<b>2.30-3.00 PM</b>	Lunch
<b>Opening ceremony and Plenary session</b>	
<b>3.00-6.00 PM</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Shifting World Order and Global Recovery: BRICS in a New Governance Paradigm</b></p> <p>For over ten years the BRICS grouping has been fostering a sustainable, balanced, inclusive, and more democratic multilateral order. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic offered both challenges and opportunities for the global governance institutions to respond to crises. The healthcare collapse increased political turbulence, caused a new wave of protectionist measures, and undermined efforts to build a resilient and sustainable world. What are the persistent and emerging challenges and the priorities for the BRICS countries within the framework of the current international order? Should BRICS transform its role in global governance due to the threats posed by the COVID-19 outbreak and crises of the global healthcare system? What solutions could BRICS offer to the international community in shaping a new multilateral global governance system?</p>
<b>6.00-8.00 PM</b>	Reception

## October 23, Friday

Time <i>(Moscow local, GMT+3)</i>	Event
<b>12.30 AM – 1.00 PM</b>	Welcome coffee
<b>Panel sessions</b>	
<b>1.00-2.30 PM</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Anatomy of Peace and Security: BRICS as a Global Crisis Manager</b></p> <p>Inter-state conflicts, terrorist threats, cyber-attacks, weakening of the multilateral system of strategic stability, and geopolitical rivalry between the great powers have grown to become sources of major risks to peace and security around the world. Another notion of the global security landscape is raising mistrust among the world powers and a lack of trust in relation to governance in global multilateral institutions. What is the hierarchy of global security threats for the BRICS countries? What are the near-future trends that will affect global security and how should BRICS respond to these trends? As a global player, what is the potential of BRICS in conflict resolution and maintaining international peace and stability? Is BRICS capable of determining the rules of the game that would meet the interests of all?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q&amp;A and debates to follow</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Retracing Determinants of Partnership: Governing Trade, Finance, and Investment Within BRICS</b></p> <p>In 2019, the share of BRICS countries in the global GDP by PPP exceeded one third. The New Developing Bank allocated loans to reinforce BRICS economies for the period of coming out of the crisis, appearing among the best practices to tackle the COVID-19 in the world. The year of 2020 will also give a start to a new five-year Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership and take the stock of the implementation of the 2015-2020 Strategy. What are existing gaps and relevant focus areas for the upcoming five-year term to reinforce BRICS economic partnership? What is the estimated potential for the advancement of intra-BRICS trade and investment? What are the prospects for the BRICS countries to coordinate the new initiatives on e-commerce, accelerate mutual investments, and strengthen the engagement into the multilateral trading system within the WTO?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q&amp;A and debates to follow</p>
<b>2.30-3.00 PM</b>	Lunch

	<p><b>Quality Infrastructure: Towards Inclusive Growth of BRICS</b></p> <p>In the context of industrialization and technological change, ensuring high-quality inclusive infrastructure is one of the key conditions for sustainable development and the economic growth of the BRICS countries. By encouraging industries to master innovations and technologies, quality infrastructure may accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and contribute to meeting the needs of BRICS citizens. What are the challenges for financing sustainable infrastructure in the BRICS countries? What are the possibilities of mobilizing private finance, including through the development of infrastructure as an asset class? What are the current infrastructure development needs and priorities for the BRICS cooperation in the area of building quality infrastructure? How to advance the impact of the New Development Bank in building inclusive infrastructure in the BRICS countries?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q&amp;A and debates to follow</p>
<p><b>3.00-4.30 PM</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mapping Out the Nexus Between Energy and Development: Case of BRICS</b></p> <p>Playing a crucial role as a global commodity, energy is a cornerstone of the social and economic development of the BRICS countries. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and global action to slow the spread of the virus, the global energy demand declined dramatically. Besides the global transformation of energy, the BRICS countries seek to formulate the parameters of their sustainable energy systems. In this context, the BRICS countries should take into account economic and demographic processes and determine a promising place and role in global markets. What are the challenges of harnessing technological transformations for energy efficiency, productivity, and economic growth? How to ensure the sustainability of the BRICS energy systems? What is the role of BRICS in promoting energy-efficient growth in the context of the current geopolitical and geo-economic environment?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q&amp;A and debates to follow</p>
<p><b>4.30-4.45 PM</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Coffee break</p>
<p><b>4.45-6.00 PM</b></p>	<p><b>Meeting of the international drafting committee</b> (by invitation)</p>

## October 24, Saturday

Time ( <i>Moscow local, GMT+3</i> )	Event
12.30 AM – 1.00 PM	Welcome coffee
<b>Panel sessions</b>	
1.00-2.30 PM	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>BRICS Education Agenda: Skills for the Digital Economy</b></p> <p>The enhancement of educational systems and the advancement of skills of the young people are placed among the main priorities of the national development strategies of the BRICS countries. Over recent years, BRICS members have committed themselves to increase the investment at all levels of education to build knowledge economies and prepare human resources for the next Industrial Revolution. What are the current trends in education and human resources development in the BRICS countries? How are the BRICS countries impacted by the global digitalization processes in the field of education, including but not limited to the rapid shift to online learning as in 2020? How to strengthen BRICS instruments and initiatives in the field of education and science, including the BRICS Network University? How to counterbalance decline in international student mobility due to the COVID-19 outbreak? Are BRICS educational systems resilient enough and prepared for the advent of the next “black swans”?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q&amp;A and debates to follow</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>BRICS and Global Healthcare: Common Goals Within and Beyond COVID-19</b></p> <p>Despite efforts to tackle the pandemic, the global governance system has experienced multiple challenges in meeting the needs of COVID-19 reality: the healthcare crisis could persist far beyond the end. At the same time, the BRICS countries are united by the common risks related to epidemiological threats, such as climate change, intensification of migration processes, consumption of contaminated food, antimicrobial resistance, the spread of HIV/AIDS, and other pandemics. BRICS dialogue in public health, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, technology, and research may become the new frontiers of cooperation, opening new opportunities for our planet. What are the current global health threats and what are their implications for the BRICS countries? What are the capacities of the BRICS countries’ health systems to contribute to the global system for a coordinated response to health emergencies? Should BRICS establish its alert and response system for epidemics and other public health emergencies?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Q&amp;A and debates to follow</p>

<b>2.30-3.00 PM</b>	Lunch
<b>3.00-4.30 PM</b>	<p align="center"><b>BRICS Grand Strategy on the Global Stage</b></p> <p>Impacted by digitalization, globalization, political turbulence, and a healthcare crisis the world today faces challenges of a new kind. Within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015, the world requires a particular kind of global governance framework. As a prominent institution of global governance, BRICS contributes to addressing a broad spectrum of challenges, ranging from global trade and official development assistance to energy and countering terrorism. What are the shared interests of the BRICS countries in enhancing the system of global governance? What kind of global institutions do we need to build a more resilient system able to tackle the global crises? What are the prospects for the facilitation of BRICS cooperation with international institutions and strengthening coordination between the five countries in international platforms?</p> <p align="center">Q&amp;A and debates to follow</p>
	<p align="center"><b>Human After All. BRICS Regulating Digitalization and AI Development</b></p> <p>Driven by breakthroughs in machine learning and big data studies, the growing interest in technologies of artificial intelligence (AI), brings the issue of AI development initiatives to the BRICS agenda. Cooperation of the BRICS countries in this field could contribute to standard-setting and ensure synergy in the advancement of AI technologies. At the same time, the BRICS countries face the fragmentation of the national science and research systems, lack of access to technologies, and the need for the rapid development of competencies in the field of AI. What are the trends and approaches to digitalization in the BRICS countries? What challenges to governing digital transformation, including the use of AI do BRICS countries face? What should be the new regulation instruments for ensuring trust and cybersecurity within the BRICS and beyond? How to ensure the benefit of digitalization for inclusive growth and sustainable development for all?</p> <p align="center">Q&amp;A and debates to follow</p>
<b>4.30-4.45 PM</b>	Coffee break
<b>Closing session</b>	
<b>4.45-6.00 PM</b>	<p align="center"><b>BRICS New Vision for a Better World</b></p> <p>BTTC heads concluding interventions and adoption of Recommendations of the BRICS Academic Forum.</p>
<b>7.00-9.30 PM</b>	Cultural program (by invitation)