

ADVANCING BRICS PEOPLE2PEOPLE COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Civil BRICS Forum
Yaroslavl, 8-11 June 2020

Background

The BRICS Civil Society Forum is a discussion platform for civil society of the BRICS countries. It serves to consolidate the citizens' priorities for the BRICS agenda as well as to present civic initiatives with the prospective to include them into the Agenda of the BRICS Leaders' Summit. The BRICS civil society proposals provide the leaders with an opportunity to look at the problems from the viewpoints of different groups of the population, put the peoples' needs at the heart of the BRICS agenda and make the decisions more legitimate.

Civic BRICS as an innovative political process *was launched in 2015, the year of the Russian Presidency*. As its main objective, the Civil BRICS aimed to ensure a constructive dialogue between the representatives of the civil society of the BRICS Member States and the guest countries with the decision-makers on the most important social issues - healthcare, education, culture, development, urban problems, finance, conflicts resolution and economy. The *First Civil Society Forum* took place in Moscow June 17-19, 2015. The Forum hosted 400 participants, of which 200 came to the Forum through the Fellowship Programme supported by the Russian Government.

The Indian edition of the BRICS Civil Forum, held in Delhi in 2016 continued the efforts of building a space for civil society engagement with the BRICS. The New Delhi 2016 Forum deliberated on effective implementation of SDGs and the need to develop a robust monitoring and evaluation framework as well as follow-up and review. It called for deepening and widening of South-South cooperation in achieving these global goals. Issues such as global governance and development finance; inclusive multilateralism; quality of economic growth; health and malnutrition; youth livelihood, skills and education; human security, peace and justice; sustainable urbanization; and climate change and vulnerability were deliberated. The Forum strongly advocated for institutionalizing mechanisms for civil society engagement.

The Chinese Presidency hosted the third Civil BRICS Forum in Fuzhou on 10-12 June, 2017. The theme of BRICS Summit was "BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a

Brighter Future”. In keeping with this theme, the Civil BRICS Forum was convened to “pool wisdom and strength for common development and a brighter future”. Civil Society discussed the “guiding role of political parties in promoting cooperation”, new ideas for cooperation and “stronger people-to-people bond for better cooperation”. The recognition and support from the Chinese leadership in 2017 was undoubtedly a step further in inclusion of civil society organizations in BRICS dialogue and engagement.

The Civil Society Organizations held the *Civil BRICS Peoples’ Forum on 25-27 June 2018 in Johannesburg*. The aim of the forum was to present diverse Civil Society voices, including those of communities to the South African government to feed into the deliberations at this 10th Heads of State BRICS Summit. The Civil BRICS put forward policy proposals in areas such as Land, Mining, Agriculture; Inclusive Economic Development, Climate Change, Gender and Inequality, Peace and Security, Youth as well as the New Development Bank - with an emphasis on the everyday realities and challenges faced by the ordinary community members at grassroots level in all the BRICS countries.

Proposal for the Civic BRICS 2020 Engagement

The 2020 Engagement will seek to achieve the following goals:

- a. Consolidation of a permanent platform of the civil society within BRICS in order to entrench the past achievements and to promote BRICS values and principles;
- b. Large-scale involvement of the civil society representatives from the member and outreach states into BRICS civil process;
- c. Generation of the civil society result-oriented consensus-based recommendations on the agenda of the Forum and their submission to the leaders of the BRICS countries;
- d. Providing constructive dialogue between the civil society organizations and the expert community, businesses and governments within the BRICS activities.

Civic BRICS interaction formats will include:

- a. *www.civilbrics.ru* The website will provide information and news on Civil BRICS’s activities in Russian and English languages;
- b. *On-line consultations* within the international working groups moderated both by the Russian co-chair and national co-chairs;
- c. *Face-to-face consultations* for national representatives of the working groups in round tables, workshops, and international teleconferences;

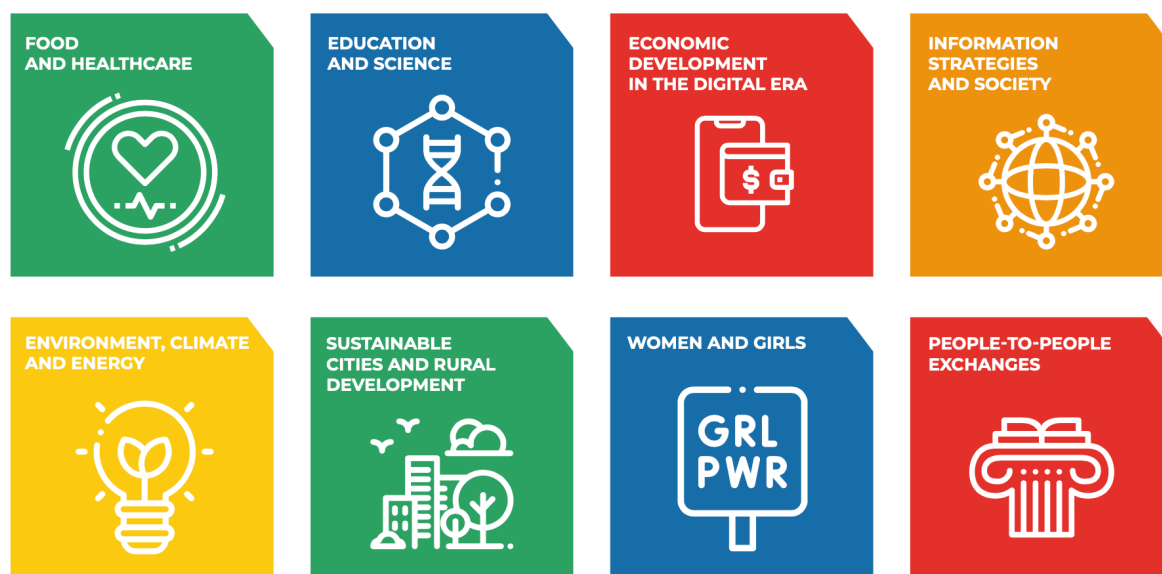
- d. *Civil BRICS Forum*. The Civic BRICS Forum will bring together up to 200 representatives of the civil society of the BRICS member states and guest countries. The Forum will accommodate an exhibition of civil initiatives, open discussion forums, working groups meetings, expert panel discussions and plenary sessions.

Management Structure proposed for the Civic BRICS 2020 process

National Steering Committee will be assembled from representatives of the national CSO. National Steering Committee will set up the working groups agendas, invite partners from the BRICS and will develop the programme of the Forum.

Secretariat of the Forum is an executive body appointed by the Co-chairs. Its competences will include: taking decisions related to the Forum's organization, coordination of the working groups' activities and ensuring efficient communication between all stakeholders.

Working groups. Eight international working groups will be set up to prepare civic recommendations for the following areas:



International drafting committee plays an important role in harmonizing the various viewpoints and working out consensus-based recommendations.

Tentative Agenda

The Forum debate will be organized through two plenaries, eight panels, opening and closing ceremonies. The proposed agenda includes:

Plenary session 1: Pooling efforts and resources for maximizing BRICS progress on SDGs. Role of the civil society.

In 2015, all UN member states accepted the new global strategy: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda includes 17 goals. Those goals are a universal call to action to achieve well-being for all by 2030.

It is the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSO) to connect fragmented human potential. Civic activity should help to accumulate all the resources available to the BRICS countries to face social, economic and environmental challenges in achieving sustainable development. Since 2020 is the milestone in first five-year period of implementation of SDGs Agenda, there is a need to evaluate the work done and to set priorities for further CSO actions to help Governments to achieve SDGs in BRICS countries.

Plenary session 2: Beyond 2020: what could and should be the role of the BRICS Civil Society in international development cooperation

Engagement of CSO within BRICS with governmental institutions is crucial for influencing policy, decision-making and BRICS governments accountability . The plenary will discuss effectiveness of the BRICS civil societies, their influence on international development cooperation (IDC) programmes and priorities for the BRICS Civil Society cooperation for achieving SDGs in the BRICS countries and beyond.

Panel 1: Public Health response to epidemiological threats in BRICS

An outbreak of COVID-19 caused by the 2019 novel coronavirus began in China in December 2019, and has spread to more that 100 countries. The pandemic reveals that global strengthening of capacities and public health emergency preparedness is needed to ensure coordinated and effective response when faced with cross-border health threats. The panel will discuss preparedness planning and essentials in order to respond effectively to epidemics, including development of international medical and sanitary procedures to prevent biological threats within BRICS and to reduce the risks of drug-resistant infections.

Panel 2: Role of education and science in the human capital development

One of the major factors of economic development today is human capital. Education is one of the most effective forms of investing in human capital. The panel will focus on the important trends in education and science and next steps in educational and scientific cooperation among the BRICS nations.

Panel 3: Digital economy: The BRICS's readiness to transition

The digital revolution has transformed not only the BRICS societies, but also economies. The panel will discuss how the BRICS can bridge the global digital divide through inclusive governance structures and digital co-operation, how the BRICS members can develop their own digital infrastructures and capacities to compete with the advanced economies.

Panel 4: Post-truth politics in the BRICS media landscape

In 2016, the Oxford English Dictionary declared «post-truth» as the word of the year and defined it as «relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief». In 2018, political commentators have identified post-truth politics as ascendant in many nations, notably Brazil, Russia, India, China, the UK and the USA, among others. The panel will review this trend in the BRICS media landscape and will discuss how the BRICS nations can adapt to this form of political discourse.

Panel 5: Key issues for the BRICS on transition to the Green Economy

The Green Economy is the concept that improves human wellbeing and builds social equity while reducing environmental risks and resources shortage. Over the past decade, this concept has emerged as a strategic priority for many governments. The panel will discuss the BRICS countries capabilities to develop green technologies and environmental projects for transition to Green Economy.

Panel 6: Big ideas to achieve sustainable cities and sustainable rural development

Implementation of both concepts, sustainable cities and sustainable rural development, are vital to the economic, social and environmental viability of the BRICS nations. The panel will discuss civic initiatives (urban planning and management as well as rural development initiatives) allowing to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Panel 7: Women's employment, entrepreneurship and social protection

The role of women and their contribution to economic development is more and more recognized by the global community. Governments of the BRICS alliance should take more actions to achieve equal economic and social rights for women. The panel will highlight key issues that the BRICS countries have to face with regarding woman empowerment. These include women's economic participation in both public and private sectors, support of women-owned enterprises and adequate social protection and improvement of women's working conditions.

Panel 8: People-to-people exchanges to strengthen the unity of the BRICS

The BRICS countries recognized the importance of people-to-people exchanges and cooperation in culture, arts, sport, youth and tourism since the Forum inception. The panel will review best practices and mechanisms to promote greater inclusivity, knowledge sharing and cultural understanding to strengthen the unity of the BRICS.

Proposal for the Civil BRICS outcomes

Contribution of civil society is expected to enrich the discussions among the BRICS leaders. It is proposed that each working group will come up with a two pages policy paper. The Civic BRICS recommendations to the leaders will stem from the policy papers.