

BRICS+ SABC NEWS Interview – 23 October 2024

A. How we engage with BRICS+ should be informed by our broader foreign policy doctrine and objectives.

South Africa's foreign policy doctrine should be guided by two overarching principles: *Maximise Jobs and Trade and Talk with Principle.*

1. Align our foreign policy with our economic interests in order to boost SA employment, growth, investment and exports, such as in:
 - Agriculture – expansion of exports – beef to middle east, overcome trade barriers in Europe and China, boost our citrus exports to all parts of the world.
 - Automotive and other Manufacturing exports to Europe and the US via AGOA
 - SA is an open economy and trade is key to our growth and job creation strategies – ensure that we are competitive with skills and security and also that our infrastructure investment – rail, ports electricity keeps pace so as to facilitate and not retard growth.
2. When we talk with principle South African should continue to be a leading international voice calling for multilateralism, the rule of law and peace in international affairs:
 - Arguing case of genocide in the ICJ
 - Enforcing ICC rules
 - Peace missions Africa, Russia Ukraine
 - Calls for fairer governance in bodies like the UN to ensure that African countries and other historically colonised countries can play an effective role and take up their place in global governance.

SA participation in BRICS should be guided by these objectives – expanded trade and fairer and improved global governance. Sometimes this will align with our BRICS+ partners at other time we will need to manage contradictions so that we can continue to pursue our objectives and not be side-tracked or distracted.

B. On the back of last year's expansion there is a push from some in the bloc – China and Russia – for further expansion at this summit. Does a further expansion make sense and

The ongoing expansion of BRICS Plus makes sense from a geopolitical perspective as a growing number of countries wish to strengthen the bloc and expand its influence in global affairs.

In expanding it would be most useful if BRICS+ should focus mainly on increased economic, trade and investment opportunities. There are significant mutual gains that can be made between BRICS+ partners through increased trade and investment and we change inherited historical and colonial trade patterns. Also, an economic focus will be important so that BRICS+ members are not distracted by the many and sometimes significant political differences that exist between them.

In this expansion process, it will be important to ensure that the forces of democracy and the international rule of law, of which South Africa is clearly a part, retain a key influence in the overall direction of the BRICS bloc and that the process does not get overwhelmed by more authoritarian voices. SA should continue to talk with principle and be a leading international voice calling for multilateralism, the rule of law and peace in international affairs. There is significant diversity among BRICS+ partners on such matters, but SA will have natural allies with other democracies in the BRICS+ grouping such as Brazil.

C. Is there still enough appetite to push for a payment system independent of the dollar – seems not much work has been done on this since the last summit – and should it still be a priority?

In past months, a number of BRICS countries have conducted parts of their mutual international trade in their own currencies, independently of the US Dollar system, and this is likely to continue in future. However, it is unlikely that BRICS+ countries will seek to fully replace US dollars as a key currency for their international trade relations. One of the practical reasons for this, is because generally exporters and service providers from within BRICS+ countries will continue to prefer receiving payments in US Dollars, rather than in alternative currencies.

The focus should continue to rather be on increased levels of trade and investment among BRICS+ partners, as well expanded operation of the BRICS New Development Bank particularly on the concessional funding of African infrastructure projects.