

SPEAKING GUIDE FOR THE CHAIRPERSON



Ensuring decent work, dignity, and respect for all

BRICS Employment Working Group (BEWG) Meeting

26 – 27 September 2023

[Note: *This guide provides a detailed script for the Chairperson of the BRICS Employment Working Group (EWG) meeting. Please ensure that the chairperson has access to this script well in advance of the meeting for review and preparation. The guide includes specific timings for each agenda item.*]

BEWG DAY 1 (26 September 2023)

09:00-09:10 Housekeeping issues and introductions

Pre-meeting Protocols

Mr Sipho Ndebele, ADDG: LP&IR: Good morning, everyone. We would like to begin by addressing some housekeeping issues and introductions.

Mr Ndebele: First, I would like to welcome all our esteemed guests to the Fifth edition of the Technical Meeting of Senior Officials from BRICS Partner Countries.

Mr Ndebele: Furthermore, I invite the representative of the hotel, **Mr XXXX**, to provide health and safety instructions regarding the venue and other necessary logistical information.

ITEM: **Mr XXXX** speaks.

Mr Ndebele: Thank you, **Mr XXXX** for the information.

Mr Ndebele: Now, it is a great pleasure to introduce our chairperson for the BRICS Employment Working Group (EWG) and the Director-General of the Department of Employment and Labour (Republic of South Africa), Mr Thobile Lamati.

ITEM: *Mr Lamati* speaks.

Opening Remarks by Mr Thobile Lamati

Good morning, and Thank you, Mr Ndebele.

Delegates and representatives of BRICS Member Countries and Guest Countries.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour, Hon. Ms Boitumelo Moloi, KZN MEC for Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs, Hon. Mr Siboniso Duma, and The Mayor of the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, His Worship Mr Thomas Mxolisi Kaunda.

I also want to recognise representatives of Social Partners, the International Labour Organization, International Social Security, the African Union, the Pan African Productivity Association (PAPA), the African Regional Labour Administration Centre (ARLAC) as well as the development financial institutions.

Ladies and gentlemen, as the Chairperson of the BRICS Employment Working Group (BEWG), I am deeply honoured to welcome you all to the Fourth and Final BEWG meeting here in the beautiful city of Durban. The meeting will take place today and tomorrow. We are gathered here to prepare for the Meeting of Ministers of Labour and Employment, which will take place on Thursday and

Friday. We need to prepare and finalise the discussions within the set timeframe. I, therefore, beg for your indulgence and cooperation as we move forward.

This journey began several months ago, starting in Misty Hills, Johannesburg, in February, and took us to Port Alfred in May, followed by a meeting in Geneva in June on the sidelines of the International Labour Conference. This amazing trip has taken us to a final stop, the Fourth BEWG.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for your unwavering dedication and determination in seeing this journey through. We anticipate the forthcoming meeting with our Ministers will mark the conclusion of this significant effort before we hand over the reigns to the Russian Federation.

A special acknowledgement is due to the distinguished representatives of the BRICS Partners and our esteemed guests who have travelled from afar to be with us today. We particularly note the presence of the Cuban and Kenyan delegations that are joining our collective for the first time. Everyone's presence signifies our commitment and diligence to addressing the challenges and opportunities in the World of Work. We are deeply appreciative of your support.

I must also recognise and extend a warm welcome to the political leaders who grace us with their presence here today. Your support is instrumental in achieving our goals.

Furthermore, we extend our warmest welcome to the representatives of workers and employers. Your perspectives and input are invaluable as we strive to ensure decent work for all. We are also honoured to have distinguished organizations and international partners with us today, who have been vital to our efforts during all our meetings.

Our meeting and Presidency are guided by a theme that aligns with the aspirations of the global community: “Ensuring Decent Work, Dignity, and Respect for All”. In pursuit of this noble goal, we have identified and deliberated on four overarching priorities that form the foundation of our discussions.

Firstly, we have focused on respecting, promoting and realising fundamental principles and rights at work, with the aim of creating an enabling environment for freedom of association, collective bargaining and enhancing tripartism.

Secondly, we have addressed the crucial issue of access to social protection, recognizing it as a fundamental human right, and committing to integrating universal access to social protection within our national frameworks.

Thirdly, we have discussed strategies to bridge the skills gap for informally employed workers through investments in skills development systems

Lastly, we have explored ways to promote sustainable enterprises, and innovation as well as enhancing productivity.

From these discussions, the South African Presidency has put forth several key proposals. We have suggested the establishment of the BRICS Productivity Ecosystem for Decent Work Platform. This initiative aims to foster economic growth, sustainable enterprises, and productive employment creation through collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and monitoring and evaluation.

We are pleased that the BRICS Partners have welcomed this idea and allowed us to formalize it through the Leaders' Summit. The BRICS Productivity Ecosystem for Decent Work is on today's agenda, and we look forward to the host country and the ILO leading this discussion.

Additionally, we have proposed strengthening social dialogue and cooperation not only among BRICS member states but also with social partners. We value the contributions of our social partners in addressing the challenges facing the world of work. Our aim is to formally recognise their meetings as part of the BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting and to elevate this relationship on various platforms while retaining their independent streams. The BRICS Trade Union Forum is taking place in one of the venues nearby and at least 50 people are participating in the workers' meeting.

Linked to this proposal is the idea of leveraging our collective strength to enhance our global influence. This is particularly relevant given the inclusion of new members in our coalition. Following the BRICS Leaders' Summit last August, we duly note the admission of Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Therefore, our proposal calls for intensified engagement within international organizations and platforms to shape global labour market policies and agendas.

The outcomes of our BEWG meetings will include a Ministerial declaration, a Joint Political Statement, the adoption of the report from the BRICS Research Network, and preliminary ideas on how to proceed with the BRICS Productivity Ecosystem for Decent Work, in alignment with the instructions from our leaders.

Once again, I extend my warmest welcome to all participants, and I am confident that our collective efforts will pave the way for a brighter future in the world of work.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to fruitful deliberations over the next two days.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we now commence with the Political Session that will start now and end at Tea Break around 11h00. Your cooperation and attentiveness to the allocated time will be extremely important to enable us to go through our programme.

Political Session

Mr Lamati: Now, I would His Worship, Mr Thomas M. Kaunda: Mayor of eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality to take the floor and welcome us to his city.

09:10-09:30 Welcome Address by Mayor Kaunda (Mayor of eThekweni)

Mayor Kaunda speaks

Mr Lamati: Thank you, Sir, much appreciated.

09:30-10:00 Messages of Support

Mr Lamati: We now turn to different individuals who represent several organisations and entities for them to provide their messages of support.

Mr Lamati: Ladies and Gentlemen, I will call each one of you to take the floor, in the following order

- **Ms Riefdah Ajam, representing Organised Labour**
<<Ms Ajam provides the message.>>
- **Mr Kaizer Moyane, representing Employers**
<<Mr Moyane provides the message.>>
- **Ms Susan Hayter: International Labour Organisation (ILO)**
<<Ms Hayter provides the message.>>
- **Mr Yukun Zhu, from the International Social Security Association**
<<Mr Zhu provides the message.>>
- Then, **Dr Locary Hlabanu, representing the African Regional Labour Administration Centre**
<<Dr. Hlabanu provides the message.>>

10:00-10:15 Cultural event/ video

Mr Lamati: Ladies and gentlemen, before we proceed further, let us immerse ourselves in the rich cultural diversity of our host nation, South Africa. Please enjoy this cultural presentation.

Cultural event/ video plays.

10:15-11:30 Keynote address by Hon Mr Siboniso Duma: (MPL) MEC for Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs

Now, let us move on to the next agenda item. Mr Ndebele will introduce the Honourable MEC.

MEC Duma speaks.

Mr Lamati: Thank you, Sir, much appreciated.

11:00-11:30 Tea Break

Mr Lamati: Ladies and gentlemen, please take this opportunity to refresh yourselves. We will resume our proceedings shortly.

Technical Session

11:30-12:00 BRICS Productivity Ecosystem Platform

Mr Lamati: We now move to a presentation on the BRICS Productivity Ecosystem Platform by Mr Jens Dyring-Christensen (Senior Enterprise Specialist), ILO.

Mr Jens Dyring-Christensen speaks.

12:00-12:05 Questions for clarity

Mr Lamati: Following the presentation, I invite questions from the floor to ensure a comprehensive understanding.

12:05-13:00 Discussion and adoption of the BRICS Productivity Ecosystem Platform

Mr Lamati: It is now time for us to engage in a substantive discussion and consider the adoption of the BRICS Productivity Ecosystem Platform.

Mr Lamati: I invite the representatives of BRICS Member Countries in alphabetical order. The Republic of Zimbabwe will speak on behalf of Guest Countries and as an observer.

- Federal Republic of Brazil
- People's Republic of China
- Republic of India
- Russian Federation
- Republic of South Africa << Productivity SA >>
- Guest country: Republic of Zimbabwe

13:00-14:00 Lunch Break

Mr Lamati: Ladies and gentlemen, please enjoy your lunch. We will reconvene at 2:00 p.m. for the continuation of our proceedings.

14:00-14:15 Presentation of the Declaration by Mr Siphon Ndebele, ADDG: LP & IR

Mr Lamati: Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you enjoyed your lunch.

Mr Lamati: We welcome a presentation of the Declaration by Mr Ndebele that will facilitate our discussion. In addition, I wish to bring to your attention that the Draft Copy of the Declaration was developed and inputted by the BRICS Countries. Thus, we hope the discussion will not be contended since we have all seen the document.

Mr Lamati: We will now proceed with the presentation of the Declaration by Mr Ndebele.

Mr Ndebele speaks.

14:15-15:00 Comments by the BRICS Member States and the adoption of the Declaration

We will now open the floor for comments from our BRICS Member States, in alphabetical order, and subsequently consider the adoption of the Declaration.

- Federal Republic of Brazil
- People's Republic of China
- Republic of India
- Russian Federation
- Republic of South Africa

Mr Lamati: We thank the Member States for accepting the text and I, as the EWG Chair, will hand over the document for its consideration by the Ministers on Friday. We appreciate everyone's contribution.

15:00-15:30 Tea break

Mr Lamati: Before we move on to the summary and closing of today's session, let us take a short break of 30 minutes.

15:30-16:00 Summary by Mr Siyabonga Hadebe, Labour Attaché

Mr Lamati: Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome back to the final item of today.

Mr Lamati: We call on Mr Hadebe to provide a summary of our discussions today.

Mr Hadebe speaks.

Mr Lamati: Thank you Mr Hadebe.

Mr Lamati: One last announcement for the day. We invite all of you to a cocktail on behalf of the South African Presidency. The Daruma Restaurant, The Pearls of Umhlanga, is just opposite the main entrance of this building but across the street. Please join us for a delightful evening, see you at 18:00.

18:00-20:00 Welcoming cocktail evening hosted by Mr Thobile Lamati, Director-General and BEWG Chair

Venue: Daruma Restaurant, The Pearls Of Umhlanga

BEWG DAY 2 (27 September 2023)

09:00-09:05 Remarks by Mr Thobile Lamati, Director General

Mr Lamati: Good morning, everyone. Let us begin the second day of our BRICS Employment Working Group meeting.

Mr Lamati: Yesterday, the meeting the event commenced with a high-level session where the social partners shared the platform and provided us with encouraging messages to open the BEWG. The concept of the BRICS Productivity Ecosystem for Decent Work Platform was introduced. It is our great wish that the platform receives as much support from the BRICS Partners as some of our economies struggle to generate the necessary growth and jobs to improve lives and reduce many socioeconomic ills. It was encouraging to see all of us work together to get the Declaration over the line. As announced, the document is going to be presented to the Ministers for consideration and endorsement on the last day. We also tried to capture the day's discussions. It must be recalled that we are establishing the building blocks as we move steadily towards the LEMM.

Mr Lamati: Today will consider only three items and will close off the day with an address by Honourable Ms Boitumelo Moloi, Deputy Minister of Employment & Labour.

09:05-10:05 Social Partners & Cooperation on Multilateral Platforms by Mr Ndebele, Acting DDG: LP & IR

Mr Lamati: First in this morning's line-up is Mr Ndebele who will present the Presidency's proposal on strengthening collaboration with the BRICS Family that is slowly expanding.

Mr Ndebele presents.

Mr Lamati: Thank you Mr Ndebele for an incisive presentation.

Mr Lamati: We now invite the BRICS countries to make inputs, in alphabetical order.

- Federal Republic of Brazil
- People's Republic of China
- Republic of India
- Russian Federation
- Republic of South Africa

10:05-10:30 Tea break

Mr Lamati: We will take a short break.

10:30-11:30 Presentation of a Joint Political Statement by Mr Siyabonga Hadebe, Labour Attaché

Mr Lamati: Building upon the above, we now introduce the draft Joint Political Statement. Mr Hadebe will take us through the document, which was also sent to member states for comments and inputs. We hope to have a discussion on this item, which the Presidency believes is critical in announcing our intention to emerge as a formidable bloc in the ILO, G20 and similar platforms.

Mr Lamati: Mr Hadebe the floor is yours.

Mr Hadebe presents.

Mr Lamati: Thank you Mr Hadebe for taking us through the Joint Political Statement.

Mr Lamati: Now, we call upon the BRICS countries to make inputs, again in alphabetical order.

- Federal Republic of Brazil
- People's Republic of China
- Republic of India
- Russian Federation
- Republic of South Africa

11:30-12:15 Presentation on the Social Protection Report by the BRICS Research Network (Ms Tendani Ramulongo, Acting Chief Director: Labour Market Policy)

Mr Lamati: Throughout the year, the BRICS Research Network conducted research on social protection in line with one of the priorities we identified for ourselves. We invite the Network to share the findings of their study.

Mr Lamati: Ms Ramulongo, please give us a presentation.

Mr Ramulongo presents.

Mr Lamati: Now, we call upon the BRICS countries to make inputs, in alphabetical order. We may have to allow India more time as per their request. Malawi will speak on behalf of the Guest countries.

- Federal Republic of Brazil
- People's Republic of China
- Republic of India
- Russian Federation
- Republic of South Africa
- **Guest country:** Republic of Malawi

13:00-13:30 Closing session

Mr Lamati: Ladies and Gentlemen, we have done what we had set out to do in these past two days. It is also an honour to have Deputy Minister Moloji present again to help us officially close this gathering by giving words of wisdom.

Address by Ms Boitumelo Moloji, Deputy Minister of Employment & Labour

Mr Lamati: May I give the Deputy Minister the floor?

Deputy Minister Moloji speaks.

Mr Lamati: Thank you Deputy Minister the floor.

Mr Lamati: Before I declare this meeting closed, let me check with both Messrs Hadebe and Ndebele if there are any new announcements as we urge closer to the LEMM tomorrow. Gentlemen, do you have anything urgent from logistical and substance that we need to be aware of before tomorrow morning?

Wrap-up by Mr Thobile Lamati, Director-General

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed delegates and participants,

I stand before you today with a heart filled with gratitude and a deep sense of accomplishment as we reflect upon the Fifth edition of the Technical Meeting of Senior Officials from BRICS Partner Countries. Over the course of the past two days, we have engaged in meaningful discussions, shared insights, and collectively worked towards our shared vision of ‘Ensuring Decent Work, Dignity and Respect for All’.

First and foremost, I want to extend my sincere appreciation to each and every one of you for your unwavering dedication and invaluable contributions. Your active participation has been instrumental in making this event a resounding success. It is your passion and commitment that have driven the progress we have witnessed during this meeting.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of our esteemed guests from the BRICS Partners and our friends from Cuba, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Your presence here underscores our collective commitment to addressing the pressing challenges and opportunities within the world of work. We deeply appreciate your support and engagement.

During our deliberations, we tackled critical priorities that form the bedrock of our discussions. From upholding fundamental principles and rights at work to ensuring access to social protection, bridging the skills gap for informally employed workers and promoting sustainable enterprises and innovation, we have covered a wide spectrum of vital issues.

One of the highlights of our meeting has been the proposal and discussion surrounding the establishment of the BRICS Productivity Ecosystem for Decent Work Platform. This initiative holds immense promise for fostering economic

growth, sustainable enterprises and productive employment creation through collaboration, knowledge-sharing and monitoring and evaluation.

Furthermore, we have put forth proposals to strengthen social dialogue and cooperation, not only among BRICS member states but also with social partners. Recognising the significance of our collective strength, we have discussed strategies to enhance our global influence within international organisations and platforms, thereby shaping global labour market policies and agendas.

As we move forward, let us remain committed to the outcomes of our BEWG meetings, including the Ministerial declaration, a Joint Political Statement, and preliminary ideas on how to proceed with the BRICS Productivity Ecosystem for Decent Work. These outcomes will be presented to our Ministers of Labour and Employment for their consideration and endorsement on Thursday and Friday.

In closing, I wish to express my deepest appreciation for your dedication, your passion, and your commitment to the cause of decent work and respect for all. Your efforts have not only made this meeting successful but have also laid the groundwork for a brighter future in the world of work. We wish the upcoming chair of the BEWG the best of luck.

The Russian Federation will take the baton from us and take our collective vision of a stronger and bigger BRICS amid the addition of Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Our stiffest test to this resolve will be at the ILO's Governing Body and the G20. We look forward to the G20 meetings in Brazil in 2024 and here in 2025.

Let us continue to collaborate, let us continue to innovate, and let us continue to strive for a world where dignity and respect are afforded to all. Our journey is far from over, and we look forward to walking this path with each and every one of you.

Thank you for your attention, and I am confident that our collective efforts will shape a better future.

I declare this meeting officially closed.

Thank you.