

Thank you, Chairperson,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The delegation of the Republic of South Africa is honoured to address the esteemed members of the BRICS Labour and Employment Group today. As we gather here on this significant occasion, we are inspired by the potential of collaborative efforts to shape the future of our countries.

We fully support the idea of a BRICS-wide Productivity Ecosystem Platform, a visionary initiative that holds the promise of addressing some of the most pressing socio-economic challenges that our country, South Africa, and indeed, some BRICS Countries could also be facing.

Our country has been grappling with a myriad of complex issues, including low economic growth, widespread unemployment, informality in the labour market, poverty and a host of other socio-economic ills. These challenges are not unique to South Africa; they are shared by many of our fellow BRICS nations.

In light of this shared struggle, we believe that the concept of a BRICS Productivity Ecosystem Platform presents a unique opportunity to not only solve these pressing challenges but also to pave the way for sustainable and inclusive economic development.

As we deliberate on the importance of this initiative, let us first acknowledge the gravity of the issues we face in South Africa. The persistent low economic growth has not only hindered our progress but has also cast a shadow of uncertainty over the future.

The grim spectre of unemployment, especially among our youth, remains a cause for concern. Informality in the labour market continues to

undermine the rights and well-being of our workers. Poverty, while slowly declining, remains a stark reality for far too many of our citizens.

These challenges are interwoven and deeply entrenched, demanding a comprehensive and coordinated response.

It is against this backdrop that we see the Productivity Ecosystem Platform as a beacon of hope. We further believe that this initiative has the potential to catalyse transformative change, both in South Africa and across the BRICS Member Countries.

Here, we would like to outline some key reasons why we are ardent supporters of this endeavour.

The Productivity Ecosystem Platform represents a holistic approach to addressing economic growth. By focusing on productivity enhancement, innovation and sustainable development, it provides a comprehensive framework that can spur economic growth across various sectors.

This approach aligns with South Africa's goals of achieving higher economic growth rates, which are crucial for reducing poverty and inequality.

One of the most pressing challenges in South Africa is the high unemployment rate, particularly among our youth. The informality of labour markets also exacerbates this issue, leading to precarious working conditions and a lack of job security.

The Productivity Ecosystem Platform has the potential to create a conducive environment for formal job creation by fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and skill development.

It can also promote labour market transitions, helping workers move from informal to formal employment, thereby improving the quality of jobs and the rights of workers.

Poverty remains a persistent issue in South Africa, affecting millions of our citizens. Inclusivity is at the heart of the BRICS Productivity Ecosystem Platform, as it aims to ensure that the benefits of economic growth reach all segments of society. By promoting sustainable development and enhancing productivity, this initiative can contribute significantly to poverty alleviation and the reduction of income inequality.

As we endeavour to address the challenges of low economic growth and unemployment, we must also emphasise the importance of Decent Work. The BRICS Countries share a commitment to promoting decent work for all, ensuring that workers are treated fairly, and their rights are protected.

Therefore, the Productivity Ecosystem Platform can be a vehicle for advancing this commitment by promoting decent work standards, social protection measures and labour market policies that prioritise the well-being of workers.

In today's rapidly changing world, innovation and technology transfer are key drivers of economic growth. The BRICS Productivity Ecosystem Platform has the potential to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, technology and best practices among member countries. This can accelerate technological advancement and enhance our collective capacity to address current and future challenges.

South Africa and fellow BRICS Countries recognise the importance of international collaboration in addressing global challenges. The Productivity Ecosystem Platform provides a platform for member countries to collaborate, share experiences and jointly develop solutions.

By working together, we can amplify our impact and find innovative approaches to common problems.

Sustainability is at the core of the BRICS Productivity Ecosystem Platform. It aligns with South Africa's commitment to the UNSDGs and the Paris Agreement. By promoting sustainable practices and green growth, this initiative can help us achieve our environmental and social objectives while driving economic progress.

In conclusion, the delegation of the Republic of South Africa reiterates its wholehearted support for the BRICS Productivity Ecosystem Platform. We believe that this initiative represents a unique opportunity to address the pressing socio-economic challenges facing our country and our fellow BRICS nations.

Thank you.