

Dear Chairperson DG Lamati

Distinguished delegates,

Esteemed guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to stand before you this evening as we bring to a close the First BRICS Employment Working Group meeting held here in Johannesburg, South Africa.

I hear that some of the delegations have already left for their countries. Therefore, we also thank them in absentia.

Over the past four days, we have had the privilege of engaging in fruitful discussions and exchanges, exploring ways to work together to create opportunities for our citizens and promote decent work for all.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to each and every one of you for taking the time to attend this important event, which is one of many that our country will be hosting throughout the year until the LEMM in September 2023.

Your presence here has been invaluable, and your contributions have enriched our discussions and helped us to achieve our objectives.

The knowledge, expertise, and diverse perspectives you have brought to the table have been truly remarkable.

I have no doubt that the insights gained here will go a long way in shaping our efforts to tackle the employment challenges that confront our nations.

Furthermore, I would like to extend my appreciation to all of you for your support of the South African presidency of BRICS.

Your commitment to working with us towards our common goals has been unwavering, and your dedication to the BRICS partnership continues to inspire us.

Through our collective efforts, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of our people, particularly in the areas of growing our economies, employment, job creation, and decent work.

As we conclude this gathering, I would like to take this opportunity to announce that South Africa looks forward to welcoming you once again for the Second BRICS Employment Working Group in May 2023.

As the Presidency, we will provide you with the meeting details in due course since we are making the final preparations and arrangements.

DG Lamati and the team have assured me that everything is in order and that we will have a splendid experience again.

We are committed to building on the progress that we have made during this first meeting, and we look forward to continuing our work towards achieving the goals set out in our joint action plan.

In closing, let me once again express my deep appreciation for your participation in this event.

Your presence here has been a testament to the strength and vitality of our partnership, and I am confident that together, we can achieve great things for the benefit of our people.

We wish you a safe journey home. *Au bon voyage!*

Thank you.