BTTC RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEADERS AT THE XVII BRICS SUMMIT (2025)

The XVII BRICS Summit, scheduled for July 6-7 in Brazil, takes place amid great changes of the era. Protectionism seriously impacts the multilateral system. The tendency towards using unilateral measures and the rise of extremism in various regions threaten global stability and deepen inequalities, disproportionately affecting the world's most vulnerable populations. In response, President Lula da Silva has underscored BRICS as a pivotal platform for advancing global solutions. Championing diplomacy and conflict resolution, the group prioritizes dialogue and leads efforts to advocate for multilateralism.

Under the theme **"Strengthening Global South Cooperation for More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance,"** Brazil's 2025 BRICS Chairship focuses on two key areas: (i) Global South Cooperation, and (ii) BRICS Partnership for Social, Economic, and Environmental Development. Reaffirming its commitment to fostering a more equitable, just, democratic, and balanced multipolar world order—and guided by the overarching theme of this year's rotating presidency—the BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC) has formulated the following recommendations for consideration by the BRICS leaders. The Recommendations are clustered in the BTTC five thematic pillars, which are (a) Peace and Security, (b) Political and Economic Governance, (c) Promoting Cooperation for Economic Growth and Development, (d) Progress Through Knowledge and Innovation Sharing, and (e) Social Justice, Sustainable Development and Quality of Life.

Peace and Security

1. BRICS should call for: (1) Recognizing the *2023 Johannesburg II Declaration*, we reaffirm our support for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more democratic, representative, effective and efficient, and to increase the representation of developing countries in the Council's memberships so that it can adequately respond to prevailing global challenges and support the legitimate aspirations of emerging and developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America, including BRICS countries, to play a greater role in international affairs, in particular in the United Nations, including its Security Council. We recognize the legitimate aspirations of African countries, reflected in the *Ezulwini Consensus* and *Sirte Declaration*; (2) Strengthening the Economic and Social Council by fostering greater synergy with UN agencies, in order to accelerate progress in fulfilling the SDGs; (3) Implementing progressive steps in transforming the UN Secretariat through transparent, equitable geographical distribution, rotation of nationalities, and merit-based representation at all levels across the UN systems.
2. Implement steps to ensure that cooperation among BRICS nations is beneficial with the aim to promote and support interoperability between national, regional and international data policy frameworks, in areas such as open data, cross-border data privacy, and data protection. Strengthening collaboration in these fields will contribute to innovation, inclusion, and responsible decision-making. BRICS could consider collaborating on frameworks to guarantee a more cohesive and secure digital ecosystem. This approach may also support the responsible use of open data while ensuring data protection in alignment with *UNESCO Recommendations on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence 2021*. Additionally, BRICS should promote open and interoperable solutions that provide opportunities for BRICS to advance technologically while maintaining cyber sovereignty and establishing joint initiatives by encouraging best practices in privacy protection. Fostering a shared commitment to data policies while balancing innovation, security, and economic growth. Furthermore, foster collaboration in artificial intelligence and digital health solutions to support alignment with UNESCO recommendations.

Enhancing risk mitigation strategies can help promote universal, equitable, and comprehensive access to healthcare development.

3. BRICS members should also consider expanding cooperation to reinforce their digital infrastructure. Such efforts could help strengthen technological sovereignty and reduce external dependencies. Establishing shared digital platforms and interoperable systems would facilitate deeper digital cooperation among member countries to foster innovation and sustainable socio-economic development. Exploring coordinated approaches to developing regional cloud infrastructure and national data storage solutions could be instrumental in reducing reliance on external providers, reinforcing cyber sovereignty, and securing critical national data assets. Given the evolving digital landscape, cybersecurity, particularly in maintaining an open, secure and stable supply chain of global Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) products and services, remains an important area of focus that helps to protect critical networks and enhance the resilience of digital infrastructures. Encouraging the use of open technologies can further support technological progress while maintaining security and national competitiveness. BRICS shall continue joint efforts in this sphere in new projects such as the New Technological Platform under the umbrella of the BRICS Business Council.

Political and Economic Governance

4. BRICS should further enhance its governance and transparency through mechanisms that promote equitable participation of members and partner countries, as outlined in the *BRICS Membership Expansion - Guiding Principles, Standards, Criteria and Procedures* (Johannesburg, 2023). BRICS will support the engagement of new members and partner countries into the BRICS cooperative mechanisms. The expansion process can be strengthened by well-defined and transparent rules, ensuring predictability and legitimacy in admitting new members. At the same time, principles of inclusion and equal participation should be preserved, avoiding rigid hierarchies or mechanisms that can affect fairness.

5. To ensure administrative continuity and operational efficiency, we recommend that BRICS' members consider the possibility of establishing an adaptable institutional structure that integrates technical management with organizational flexibility. A permanent technical and administrative support unit, or a Secretariat, can ensure organizational cohesion, effectiveness and efficiency, supporting BRICS with monitoring agreements, implementation of declarations, promoting practical cooperation and ensuring document preservation. This entity could function through a hybrid model, like a Virtual Secretariat for administrative tasks. As BRICS expands, the feasibility of physical headquarters or regional centers can be assessed, aiming to balance institutional stability with operational flexibility. This model can enhance coordination, governance, and efficiency while preserving the decentralized nature of BRICS.

6. Continuing to strengthen strategic planning, monitoring, and impact assessment could help BRICS refine its governance approach, ensuring that priorities are well defined, actions structured, and outcomes effectively tracked. An implementation framework that balances flexibility with predictability can allow for necessary adjustments without disrupting the continuity of initiatives. Policy implementation can benefit from structured planning (e.g. BRICS Economic Partnership Strategy ten-year plans), aligned with member priorities and supported by existing monitoring mechanisms that promote transparency and effectiveness. This approach would foster coordination, adaptation, and compliance, leading to tangible impact, institutional stability, and greater operational efficiency. To reinforce institutional sustainability and transparency, BRICS should explore structures and mechanisms that strengthen long-term cooperation, balancing physical infrastructure, digitalization, and operational resilience. A governance structure that is adaptable and less susceptible to political shifts may contribute to more stable cooperation and well-coordinated initiatives. The

integration of physical and digital infrastructures would enhance BRICS communication and operational capacity. By improving existing mechanisms while incorporating new institutional tools, BRICS can further consolidate its ability to organize, monitor, and sustain its actions. Ensuring adaptability and accessibility for its members would help establish a solid foundation for long-term institutional resilience.

Promoting Cooperation for Economic Growth and Development

7. Considering the rapid rise of digital transactions and the intra-BRICS digital divide, strengthening BRICS cooperation in digital trade can offer significant benefits. This may include exchanging information on best practices, capacity-building programs, and knowledge-sharing initiatives, particularly in digital trade regulation and digital public infrastructure. Encouraging engagement with the expert community within BRICS could support strengthening of cooperation elaborating common approaches on ensuring consumer protection in e-commerce across member countries.

8. Strengthening trade linkages among BRICS members can be best facilitated by reducing trade barriers, streamlining customs procedures, advancing Smart Customs partnerships, encouraging paperless trade, and promoting the exchange of best practices in trade and customs administration. A commitment to reinforcing the multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, can provide a stable foundation for economic cooperation. At the same time, recognizing the growing importance of regional and mega-regional trade agreements, BRICS could explore ways to leverage trade frameworks that deepen economic engagement among members and with global partners. All trade cooperation formats should remain committed to fostering a rules-based, non-discriminatory, transparent, inclusive, fair, and equitable trading system and acknowledge the concerns about unilateral, coercive trade measures (as mentioned in the *Kazan Declaration*) which hinder the achievement of the SDGs and disrupt free trade. BRICS should explore measures to improve collaboration to diversify critical mineral supply chains and to stabilize supply chains related to their exploration and use. Productive development can be promoted through trade and fostering economic cooperation while addressing social and environmental responsibilities and avoiding green protectionism.

9. In the interest of trade facilitation and the need for developing international transport infrastructure and logistics corridors that are resilient, safe, secure, and cost effective, BRICS should encourage the establishment and support the activities of the logistics platform announced in the *Kazan Declaration*. The platform should be used to discuss issues of multi-modal connectivity to make recommendations regarding infrastructure investments, keeping in mind the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all member states and recalling the need to leverage the African Continental Free Trade Area and foster better trade relations with the continent.

10. Given the main role of BRICS economies in the recovery of international investment flows, a range of measures can be explored to create a more favorable investment climate at domestic, intra-BRICS, and international levels. These efforts may contribute to advancing international trade, sustainable development, and inclusive growth. Considering the increasing concerns regarding the traditional format of investment protection agreements, as well as the initiatives already undertaken individually by members in dealing with these issues, the BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC) can support research into investment protection mechanisms and expand the role of the New Development Bank (NDB) in facilitating investment opportunities for BRICS members. It should also study investments in domains that may not have perceptible economic returns but present a high social rate of return, like climate-resilient infrastructure or adaptation projects. We recommend further cooperation between the New Development Bank and development banks within all BRICS member states to expand the financing of development projects in partner countries. Further efforts are required to create a New

Investment Platform to leverage the existing institutional infrastructure of the NDB to boost the investment flow into the countries of BRICS and the Global South.

A framework for improving support to the micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) within BRICS for their maximal contribution to member countries' economies should be explored. In particular, leveraging digital tools to integrate MSMEs into the global market could be an area of focus. BRICS economies should facilitate the flow of foreign investment, prioritizing productive investment, technology transfer, and the creation of skilled jobs. Cooperation should include the exchange of information on reciprocal investment opportunities, regulatory frameworks, tax regimes, labor and environmental legislation, public-private partnerships, and investment protection treaties.

11. Strengthening cooperation in the international monetary system should be a key area of engagement for BRICS. The BRICS expansion presents an opportunity to enhance the interconnectivity of supply chains and payment systems to promote trade and investment flows. Sharing experiences and best practices in payment infrastructure can help develop faster, low-cost, more efficient, transparent, safe and inclusive cross-border payment instruments, such as local currency payment systems, built upon the principle of minimizing trade barriers and non-discriminatory access. With a view to increase the operational flexibility of the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), BRICS could expedite the process of amending the CRA Treaty and related documents to incorporate alternative eligible currencies, including CRA's parties national currencies, into the CRA mechanism.

12. Enhancing financial governance and resource mobilization may be key to supporting a just transition, in line with country circumstances, approaches and pathways. This could involve reforms in the international financial architecture, strengthening multilateral financing mechanisms and ensuring greater access to concessional funding for the Global South. Aligning fiscal and regulatory policies with sustainability objectives could also help reinforce BRICS leadership in this space. Additionally, recognizing the framework agreement to establish the BRICS Tax Authorities Forum, BRICS may consider promoting fairer global taxation structures while respecting the sovereignty of each country, particularly within the *United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation*. Considering the 1.5°C climate goal, strengthening financial flows to move forward the individual climate goals of members could be an area of focus. BRICS members could further enhance the role of the New Development Bank (NDB) in promoting sustainability by sharing experiences on green taxonomy to standardize investment criteria, issuing green financial instruments, and directing resources toward sustainable infrastructure and climate resilience projects. Through these measures, BRICS could lead in sustainable finance, influencing policies that balance economic growth with ecological responsibility, including climate resilience, adaptation, mitigation and biodiversity conservation, thus promoting sustainable and inclusive development. BRICS should also develop an adaptation financing taxonomy.

Progress through Knowledge and Innovation Sharing

13. BRICS should further expand technological cooperation to promote an innovation model centered on knowledge exchange and joint development of digital solutions. Cooperation in fostering innovation, particularly in artificial intelligence, may enhance the competitiveness of businesses, improve inclusive public services, and create opportunities for MSMEs, comprising startups. Strengthening collaboration in this field can contribute to developing more effective solutions to developmental, environmental and societal challenges. By facilitating knowledge transfer, fostering public-private partnerships, and formulating common public policies that support technological progress, BRICS can establish a more pro-innovation ecosystem. This environment may provide MSMEs and startups with better access to funding, specialized expertise and new markets. Investment in BRICS research centers and networks, along with

greater intra-BRICS trade and investment in AI-driven solutions, can further accelerate digital transformation across member states.

14. Cooperation in technological innovation may also serve broader environmental and societal objectives, promoting digital inclusion, strengthening local economies, and ensuring that the benefits of the digital revolution reach all populations. Exploring the possibility of establishing a multilateral platform for exchange and cooperation in the engineering field and a Network of Engineering Research Institutions of BRICS could facilitate the sharing of technological innovation resources, exchange of experiences, and substantive collaboration. Collaborative initiatives can prioritize support for less developed countries by improving their access to technology, infrastructure, and expertise, enabling them to leverage AI for addressing critical developmental, environmental, social and economic challenges. A collective approach to innovation, joint research and development (R&D) projects, and AI-driven entrepreneurship can help position BRICS as a global leader in fostering democratic, transparent, ethical, responsible and inclusive technological progress. Additionally, technology transfer should be structured to avoid discriminatory barriers, allowing each country to adapt innovations to its national needs. By consolidating its position in the global digital landscape, BRICS can act as a reference for democratic, transparent, inclusive and sustainable governance models, ensuring that technological progress benefits all and drives digital transformation fairly and equitably.

15. Promoting shared guidelines for AI governance and digital ecosystems may help BRICS ensure that technological development and use remain democratic, transparent, responsible, open, ethical, accessible, secure, sustainable, and without discrimination. Regulations should aim to balance innovation with rights protection, ensuring that AI contributes to sustainable development, economic growth, innovation, social inclusion, and the public good. Stronger cooperation in this domain can help achieve interoperability, reinforce respect for cyber sovereignty, and ensure equitable participation in the global technological landscape. A commitment to just governance may also involve mitigating risks, addressing technological inequalities, and ensuring broad, non-discriminatory access to innovation, while respecting intellectual property rights. Beyond coordinating internal policies, BRICS can strategically engage in international AI governance discussions, advocating for a global framework that reflects the interests of developing countries. Considering the *Governing AI for humanity: final report* proposed by the UN Secretariat, strengthening multilateral collaboration in this area shall ensure that artificial intelligence is developed for good and benefits all of humanity, fostering a more democratic, responsible, inclusive and ethical global AI landscape.

16. Cooperation in education, science and technology development can be essential for advancing AI-related knowledge and expertise across BRICS nations. This collaboration should extend beyond AI developers to include managers, who need to understand AI-driven decision-making; workers, who may require reskilling for evolving job markets; and citizens, who would benefit from digital literacy to engage with emerging technologies effectively. Joint initiatives such as research partnerships, student and researcher exchanges, shared educational platforms, and funding programs can accelerate AI adoption while ensuring ethical and context-sensitive applications. Scientific collaboration, particularly through shared data, joint research institutions, and technology transfer, may lead to groundbreaking discoveries, strengthening global competitiveness and socio-economic development across member states. Supporting the implementation of a capacity-building program for BRICS digital education and explore establishing learning centers in BRICS countries for the training of education administrators, teachers and students. Additionally, researching cooperative mechanisms to enhance national AI capabilities—including investments in research and specialized education—could ensure that BRICS countries maintain control over their strategic digital systems while fostering technological resilience.

17. BRICS could position science and technology development at the core of its sustainability agenda, promoting collaboration in research and development of green technologies and nature-based solutions. Leveraging digitalization and responsible AI use may optimize climate

governance, improve resource efficiency, and support climate adaptation efforts in both urban and rural areas. Strengthening partnerships between research institutions, academia, businesses, and government agencies may create a dynamic ecosystem that fosters climate-friendly economic development, enhances energy efficiency, and expands technological capabilities in the Global South.

Social Justice, Sustainable Development, and Quality of Life

18. We recommend that BRICS advocate for just transition, ensuring that environmental commitments are balanced with social and economic considerations to promote economic and social rights. BRICS members strive to balance energy security, affordability, and equitable access, alongside broader social protections for communities affected by transition policies. Based on their national capacities and taking into account local socio-economic contexts, BRICS members can choose suitable energy transition pathways and gradually reduce emissions. Strengthening clean energy capacity, modernizing energy grids, and investing in sustainable infrastructure that integrates clean technologies while ensuring climate and biodiversity protection may support a just transition. The BRICS Business Council's proposal for a Clean Energy Fund under the New Development Bank (NDB) could be carried out in order to support renewable energy investments, ensuring that economic development aligns with sustainability and equity goals.

19. BRICS can adopt an integrated approach to environmental restoration, food security and nutrition, biodiversity conservation, and bioeconomy. Strengthening mechanisms for reforestation, afforestation, regenerative agriculture, and land rehabilitation may enhance climate resilience while supporting sustainable economies. Expanding economic instruments—including new funds and financial facilities, regulated carbon markets, payments for ecosystem services, thematic bonds (e.g., Amazon Bonds, Blue Bonds, and Green Debt Swaps), Tropical Forests Funds Forever (TFFF), and bioeconomy initiatives—could help attract investments in nature-based solutions. BRICS members may also reinforce cooperation in sustainable agricultural practices, ensuring a sustainable transition in which climate adaptation strategies do not exacerbate social inequalities or threaten food security and nutrition. Prioritizing policies and economic instruments that align conservation efforts with economic development, in a way that respects local and indigenous communities and their territories, contributes to a sustainable global transition. This approach may also foster a bioeconomy model that leverages the sustainable use of biodiversity assets to promote long-term resilience in food production and resource management.

20. To ensure that the global response to the climate crisis and the transition to sustainable economic models are just and inclusive, BRICS can enhance coordination in global climate diplomacy, ensuring that the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) remain central to shaping international agreements that reflect the needs of emerging economies. BRICS could integrate social and economic justice considerations into climate and biodiversity protection policies. BRICS members may advocate for equitable climate commitments in global negotiations, ensuring that the Global South is not disproportionately burdened by decarbonization policies and that climate strategies actively reduce inequalities within and between countries. Considering that cooperation can focus on developing just transition frameworks that protect vulnerable communities, prevent economic exclusion, and foster sustainable livelihoods, we express our support for the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, which is hosted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and wish its activities and objectives great success. Expanding South-South cooperation, knowledge-sharing initiatives, and innovative financial support mechanisms may also assist developing nations in managing the challenges associated with transitioning away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly and equitable manner.

21. BRICS should play a key role in expanding cooperation for the prevention and management of vaccine-preventable, communicable, and chronic diseases, recognizing the central role of the WHO in global health efforts. Strengthening international collaboration in the development, production, and equitable access to vaccines, medicines, and diagnostic tools can enhance healthcare resilience and preparedness across member states. Alongside these efforts, reinforcing regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms may contribute to a more structured and coordinated approach to public health challenges. Given the diverse epidemiological profiles of BRICS countries, healthcare initiatives can be tailored to national capacities, ensuring that responses align with regional disease burden and mortality patterns. Special attention may be given to socially determined diseases and neglected tropical diseases, prioritizing inclusive and equitable healthcare policies that address the needs of populations in vulnerable situations. BRICS could consider strengthening its role in vaccine R&D and increasing manufacturing capacity. Additionally, developing reference public policies to strengthen BRICS health systems can help enhance national healthcare autonomy and capacity-building, fostering cooperation that advances universal, equitable, and high-quality healthcare while respecting local contexts and public health priorities.

22. Improving health surveillance systems and global health crisis preparedness can further strengthen BRICS capacity to respond effectively to public health emergencies. Investing in early detection, integrated response mechanisms, and timely communication may reinforce national and regional capabilities to mitigate health crises. Greater coordination with global health systems, particularly through enhanced collaboration under the WHO's *International Health Regulations (IHR)* framework, can help strengthen public health security. In this context, active BRICS engagement in the ongoing negotiations of the WHO's pandemic agreement at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB/WHO) may ensure that emerging markets and developing countries (EMDC) and their perspectives and needs are reflected in shaping global health governance frameworks. Fostering multilateral cooperation in pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response can contribute to more resilient health systems across BRICS nations and beyond, reinforcing a coordinated, inclusive, and equitable approach to future health challenges. Additionally, BRICS could explore establishing a Permanent Council of BRICS Ministers of Health, which can help coordinate solutions and assist in monitoring recommendations.

23. As suggested in BTTC recommendations to leaders in 2024, BRICS should promote cooperation and coordination in the field of tourism. BRICS, with a land area of nearly 30% of the world and nearly 46% of the world's population, includes countries with amazing tourist attractions. While providing more direct people-to-people contacts and the possibility for better understanding among nations, tourism is considered one of the most important sources for developing economies. Strengthening cooperation and coordination between member countries for the promotion of tourism by facilitating tourist exchanges, especially given its contribution to the services economy, is important while strengthening cultural exchanges. In this regard, the following proposals can be considered by the BRICS tourism ministers': (1) proposing a campaign for sustainable tourism within BRICS; (2) annually selecting a city from the BRICS member countries as a BRICS tourism city and holding special cultural programs in it; (3) creating BRICS tourist register of unique natural wonders and cultural heritage locations of the grouping; (4) formation of a BRICS working group in the World Tourism Organization to pursue joint policies; (5) setting up the BRICS tourism booth in world exhibitions; (6) holding joint professional and specialized training courses for tourism experts; (7) investigating the possibility of visa facilitating, such as exploring the introduction of a BRICS Travel Card initiative (visa-free travel), increasing direct flights, promoting the tourist attractions of the member countries in other members, etc.; (8) promoting cooperation in the field of tourism based on the platform for digital tourism solutions in accordance with the *Roadmap for BRICS Tourism Cooperation* should further facilitate digitalization of tourist services, tourist exchanges, and the promotion of ecotourism and science tourism within BRICS.