



**ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA  
ON OUTCOMES OF THE 15<sup>TH</sup> BRICS SUMMIT**

**UNION BUILDINGS, TSHWANE  
3 SEPTEMBER 2023**

Fellow South Africans,

Just over a week ago, the leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa concluded the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg.

It was a historic Summit that heralded a new chapter for BRICS.

I would like to report back to you this evening on the outcomes of the 15th BRICS Summit and what they mean for our progress as a nation.

In addition, I would like to inform you about the report of the independent panel appointed in May to enquire into the circumstances of the docking of a Russian vessel, known as Lady R, at the Simonstown Naval Base.

First about the BRICS summit.

The summit was attended by the five BRICS member countries along with representatives of 61 other countries. Forty-six of the countries that attended were from our continent Africa. This included 20 heads of state and government.

We were also honoured by the attendance of the United Nations Secretary-General Mr Antonio Guterres.

I want to thank the people of South Africa for welcoming these guests from across the African continent and the world. Delegations from some countries consisted of up to 600 people.

All our visitors were warmly received and were able to experience the best of South African hospitality.

We thank the many people involved in organising the Summit events, including the Deputy President, our ministers, officials, law enforcement agencies and our security services, who ensured that the Summit proceeded without incident.

We thank all the staff at airports and border posts, those who worked through the night to set up the venues, protocol officers and ushers, food and beverage staff at our various hotels and guest houses, volunteers, sponsors and partners, musicians and artists, drivers and messengers.

We must also thank the members of the media, from South Africa and from around the world, who ensured that the work of the Summit received wide coverage.

The success of the Summit is a credit to our country and its people. It is another demonstration of our ability to host major international gatherings that have a significant impact on the conduct of international affairs far beyond our borders.

Overall, many people have said that this was a most successful BRICS summit.

Quite often, as South Africans we go about our daily lives, without paying much attention to our relations with other countries and to our membership of global organisations or forums such as the UN, AU, BRICS, the G20, the G77 + China, the Non Aligned Movement and others.

And yet, our country's relations with other countries and the conduct of our foreign policy affects our lives as South Africans in many ways, such as in trade and investment, sport, peace and security, technology, education, and many other areas.

As we have said before, our international work cannot be separated from our efforts to end poverty, to create jobs and to reduce inequality in South Africa.

Through stronger investment and trade relations with other countries, we are able to grow our economy, create more opportunities for new businesses and reduce unemployment.

By supporting peace and stability on our continent, and by promoting Africa's development, we are able to improve social cohesion in our own country.

By encouraging greater cooperation between countries in areas such as investment, financing for development, international crime, fighting terrorism, climate change and vaccine production, we are able to strengthen our efforts to tackle these challenges in our own country.

The BRICS Summit made several decisions to take forward the struggle for a fairer and more inclusive world order that is focused on the equal development of all peoples.

One of the key decisions taken by the BRICS member countries was to support the call for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more democratic, representative, effective and efficient.

The Summit said that there should be greater representation of developing economy countries in the UN Security Council's membership. This is so that countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America, including Brazil, India and South Africa, can play a greater role in international affairs.

This was a most significant decision in view of the fact that it was supported by two BRICS members who are permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The reform of the United Nations is important for South Africa and our continent Africa because we stand to benefit from a world that is more fair and from international institutions that are more democratic and more representative.

In taking this position, the BRICS leaders recognised the desire of many other countries to contribute to redefining the terms of international relations.

The other significant outcome of the summit was the decision to expand the membership of BRICS to include Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

BRICS leaders agreed that the value of BRICS extends beyond the interests of its current members. They agreed that BRICS could be more effective and have a greater impact by building partnerships with other countries that share its aspirations and perspectives.

Through an expanded BRICS, we will be able to better align the voices of those countries that seek a fairer global governance, financial, investment and trading system based on clear rules that apply equally to all countries.

An expanded BRICS also means that we will be able to export more of our products to major markets and, as a result, we will be able to produce more and create more jobs.

While an expanded BRICS will be an important champion for the Global South, South Africa stands to benefit from its relationship with these countries.

Together, these countries make up nearly a third of the global economy and are together home to 46 per cent of the world's population.

Already we have achieved great benefit from our relations with Brazil, Russia, India and China.

These countries are important destinations for South Africa's products and services. They are important sources of investment and are becoming even more important as tourism markets.

These economic ties have been strengthened by the BRICS Business Council and the BRICS Women's Business Alliance, both of whom presented encouraging reports on their work.

We have regular interaction at many levels, among our business people, our scientists, our professionals, our cultural workers, our sports men and women, our academic, our public servants and our young people. This extends to interactions between political parties in BRICS countries.

We have agreed to the establishment of a BRICS Youth Council, which will play an important role in defining the direction of these relationships into the future.

Through these interactions, we exchange information, skills, technology and experience. The engagements between our respective business people at this Summit has resulted in several opportunities for the export of South African products to large countries with big markets.

All this enhances our progress as a country.

We are looking forward to establishing similar links and strengthening the political and economic ties with the countries that will soon be joining BRICS.

The summit also decided that the finance ministers or central bank governors of BRICS countries, as appropriate, should consider the use of our various countries' local currencies, payment instruments and platforms in international trade and financial transactions between BRICS and their respective trading partners.

They are expected to report back at the next summit.

As BRICS chair, South Africa has always stressed the value of the BRICS alliance to advancing Africa's developmental agenda.

The Summit deliberated on the opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Area and its potential to shift Africa from an exporter of raw materials to a producer of manufactured goods.

South Africa's participation in BRICS and its support for the expansion of BRICS does not detract from the good and strategic relations we have with many other countries around the world.

From the advent of our democracy, we have always sought to develop ties of friendship, cooperation and respect with all countries.

We have never aligned ourselves with any one global power or bloc of countries.

Our non-aligned approach has enabled us to pursue an independent foreign policy and to forge our own developmental path.

We have consistently advanced the articles of the United Nations Charter, including the principle that all members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means.

The second matter I wish to report back to you on is about allegations that were levelled against our country earlier this year regarding a Russian ship that docked in Simonstown late last year, where it was alleged that South Africa had supplied weapons to Russia during the current Ukraine-Russia conflict.

In recent months, statements from several quarters have used these allegations to call into question South Africa's commitment to its position on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The allegations levelled against our country had a damaging effect on our currency, economy and our standing in the world.

To ensure that the docking of the Russian ship in Simonstown was thoroughly investigated, I appointed a three-member independent panel in May to enquire into the circumstances of the docking of this Russian vessel, known as Lady R.

The panel was chaired by Judge Phineas Mojapelo. The other members of the panel were Adv Leah Gcabashe SC and Mr Enver Surty.

I wish to thank the panel for the considerable amount of work it undertook in a relatively short period of time.

During the course of its work, the panel visited Simonstown naval base and obtained evidence under oath from nearly 50 people in every relevant component of government. More than 100 documents were submitted to the panel for examination.

A number of entities and persons that had publicly claimed to have information on this matter were invited to make submissions to the panel. Many of those invited either failed to do so or said they had no independent knowledge of the relevant facts.

From its investigation, the panel found no evidence that any cargo of weapons was loaded for export onto the ship Lady R.

The panel found that there was no evidence to support the claim that the ship transported weapons from South Africa destined for Russia.

The panel established that the ship docked at Simonstown to deliver equipment that had been ordered for the South African National Defence Force in 2018 by Armscor, the country's arms procurement company.

In terms of the contract for the supply of the arms, neither Armscor nor the South African National Defence Force had any control over the means through which the supplier of the ordered equipment would transport them to South Africa.

In its report, the panel outlined the circumstances that led to the docking of the vessel in Simonstown, as well as the type of goods supplied and the reasons why the goods were unloaded at the time they were offloaded.

South Africa has clear laws that regulate the issuing of permits regarding the importation and exportation of conventional arms. All relevant permits had been obtained for the importation of the equipment that were delivered by the ship. No permit was issued for the export of arms and no arms were exported.

The panel did not find any evidence of criminal conduct by any persons involved. However, the panel made findings and recommendations with respect to the functioning of the National Conventional Arms Control Committee. It also made recommendations about the improvement of communication between Ministers and government officials, including the adequacy of the relevant administrative processes.

Given the fact that the evidence given to the panel was classified and the fact that revealing the details of the equipment offloaded could jeopardise the work and safety of South Africa's forces in various deployments on the continent, I have decided not to release the report.

In deciding not to release the report, I have taken account of the laws that both mandate openness and transparency and require that certain information that may be prejudicial to the defence and security of the Republic be kept classified and confidential.

To reveal the details of the equipment offloaded would compromise important military operations and put our soldiers' lives at risk.

Under these circumstances, when lives would be at risk due to the revelation of the type of equipment that is utilised by our armed forces, the need for confidentiality is both necessary and justified.

When all matters are considered, none of the allegations made about the supply of weapons to Russia have been proven to be true, and none of the persons who made these allegations could provide any evidence to support the claims that had been levelled against our country.

I have noted the panel's findings and recommendations with respect to the efficiency and efficacy of the relevant administrative and maritime transport processes and have directed that an implementation plan be developed to address these.

The panel has given me an executive summary of the report, which I have decided to release publicly.

Both of the matters on which I have reported this evening – the 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit and the investigation into the Russian ship that docked at Simonstown – are relevant to the principles that inform our relations with the rest of the world.

Our policy of non-alignment and our efforts to build friendly relations with all countries is driven by a commitment to a world that is peaceful and stable.

That is why we will continue to pursue a foreign policy that advances the interests of our country and the progress of our people, and that promotes human rights, peace, justice and equal development across the world.

May God continue to bless South Africa and its people.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika.

Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso.

God seën Suid-Afrika.

Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afrika Tshipembe.

Hosi katekisa Afrika.

Good Night.