

Labour and Employment

ISSUES NOTE

BRICS 2025



1. Background Information

Brazil's BRICS chairmanship in 2025 presents a valuable opportunity to continue promoting cooperation for a sustainable and inclusive Global South. At their annual meetings, the BRICS Ministers of Labour and Employment discussed the impact of Industry 4.0 and technological changes on the future of work, focusing on automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the need to promote education and skills to prepare the workforce for the new digital economy.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, BRICS intensified discussions about the future of work, particularly regarding teleworking and changes in the work environment, emphasizing accelerated digitalization. AI was viewed as a tool to optimize public services and improve quality of life, but also as a contributor to inequality in employment.

The effects of climate change on employment and the transition to a more sustainable economy have become increasingly relevant in BRICS discussions due to the growing awareness of environmental issues. Discussions were held on the commitment to the Paris Agreement and strategies to promote sustainable and inclusive development. The just transition to a low-carbon economy and its implications for jobs in developing economies were highlighted. Discussions also emphasized that a just transition is essential to ensure that workers in more polluting industries are not left behind, with a need for policies that encourage retraining and green jobs.

Seeking collective, inclusive, and responsive solutions, the BRICS Ministers of Labour and Employment, during their meetings, adopted nine Declarations and agreed on the following:

- "BRICS Common Position on Governance in the Future of Work";
- "BRICS Action Plan for Poverty Alleviation and Reduction through Skills";
- "BRICS Social Security Cooperation Framework";
- "BRICS Guidance on Protecting Workers' Rights in New Forms of Employment."

The BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes and the BRICS Occupational Health and Safety Network were also established.

The 11th meeting of BRICS Ministers of Labour and Employment will continue to discuss actions needed to promote decent work and labour market development.

2. Priorities

In this context, the Brazilian chairship has set two main priorities for the BRICS Employment Working Group (EWG) regarding the latest technological advancements, changes in labour relations, and the evolving situation in the labour market.

These topics address emerging issues directly affecting BRICS labour markets, emphasizing the importance of labour and employment policies promoting inclusive and equitable governance.

2.1 Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work

The transformation of the world of work, driven by digital technologies, brings both challenges and opportunities. New occupations and forms of employment, such as platform work, are emerging. AI is reshaping labour markets by automating processes and replacing tasks traditionally performed by humans. While AI can enhance productivity and create new markets, it also carries the risk of labour market disruptions, exacerbating inequalities within and between countries and reducing worker income.

In discussions within the Employment Working Group (EWG), the potential impacts of generative AI on the future of work are a significant focus. Furthermore, new work arrangements are becoming more familiar with the increase of workers employed by digital platforms. Topics such as formalizing labour relations and ensuring social protection for platform workers are gaining visibility.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) highlights that if AI is not implemented responsibly, it may lead to job losses, particularly in cognitively intensive roles. In this context, ensuring workers are protected from potential harm is crucial.

Key issues suggested for discussion by EWG on how to strengthen BRICS countries' response to upcoming challenges include:

- The impact of AI, including generative AI, on job markets.
- Digital transformation and the promotion of emerging industries with the potential to generate new job opportunities.
- The development of social protection policies and support for displaced workers, particularly older workers, women, and vulnerable groups.
- Adopting a workplace culture of continuous learning so that workers can update their skills.

2.2 Impacts of Climate Change on Work and a Just Transition

Climate change poses risks to workers, mainly through disruptions to infrastructure, business activities, and job losses. However, transitioning to low-carbon economies presents an opportunity to create green jobs, improve skills, and foster inclusive development. The transition to a green economy will impact industries such as fossil fuels, steel, and transportation, requiring policies for workforce retraining and redeployment to green jobs.

The ILO emphasizes that a just transition must be inclusive and protect vulnerable groups such as low-skilled workers and women. The global shift to a green economy must prioritize policies that create decent work and address the specific needs of affected workers. In addition, the ILO's focus on occupational safety and health (OSH) in the context of climate change highlights the importance of creating safe working conditions in industries impacted by environmental changes.

Key issues for discussion under this priority include:

- Mitigating climate impacts: Addressing the specific effects of climate change and climate policies on employment.
- Promoting a just transition: Developing policies and strategies for an inclusive transition that generates decent work opportunities.
- Engaging key partners and promoting social dialogue to create decent jobs.

- Integrating occupational health and safety concerns into public policies to address the impacts of climate change.



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COOPERATING FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD