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South Africa receives BRIC invite

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South Africa has received a formal invitation from the economic coalition that includes Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) to become a full member of a new emerging markets bloc dubbed BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

On 23 December, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi informed International Relations Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane that China, in its capacity as the rotating chair of the BRIC group, had reached an agreement with the other BRIC members to invite South Africa to be a full member of the new coalition.

Yang further said that Chinese President Hu Jintao had invited President Jacob Zuma to attend the 3rd BRIC Leaders' Summit, to be held in China this year.

"Minister Yang conveyed that China believed that South Africa's accession would promote the development of BRICS and enhance cooperation among emerging market economies," the Department of International Relations and Cooperation said in a statement last month.

SA 'ready to step up'

Nkoana-Mashabane first wrote to her BRIC counterparts in 2009 to raise the possibility of South Africa's membership the grouping, while Zuma subsequently met with all the BRIC leaders in the course of 2010.

During the call with Yang, Nkoana-Mashabane emphasised that South Africa was ready to step up communication and coordination with China and other BRIC member states for mutually beneficial cooperation.

"The rationale for South Africa's approach was in consideration of a matter of crucial importance to BRICS member states, namely the role of emerging economies in advancing the restructuring of the global political, economic and financial architecture into one that is more equitable, balanced and rests on the important pillar of multilateralism," she said.

"Our approach to intensifying our relations with emerging powers and other countries of the South is, of course, through active and strong bilateral engagement.

"In addition, however, we also see the Non Aligned Movement and the G-77 as important for South-South interaction, especially within the framework of the United Nations."

Enhanced cooperation between members

South Africa and the BRIC member states already collaborate and will continue to collaborate closely in various international organisations and formations such as the United Nations, the G-20 and the IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) Dialogue Forum.

All BRICS countries will serve on the United Nations Security Council in 2011 as permanent (China, Russia) or non-permanent members (Brazil, India and South Africa), which augurs positively for enhanced cooperation.

"We believe that the IBSA will get a better balance, and become even stronger, with South Africa now as a member of BRICS," said Nkoana-Mashabane. "We remain convinced that South Africa's diversified foreign policy objectives and interests allow for both groupings to co-exist.

"It is our belief that the mandates of BRICS and IBSA are highly complementary."

SAinfo reporter



South African President Jacob Zuma and Chinese President Hu Jintao shake hands after signing the Beijing Declaration on the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership between SA and China, Beijing, 24 August 2010 (Photo: GCIS)

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