

Declaration of the 6th BRICS Communication Ministers Meeting 17 September 2020, Russian Federation

1. We, the Ministers of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of South Africa, met virtually under the chairmanship of the Russian Federation at the 6th BRICS Communication Ministers Meeting, on 17 September 2020.

2. It is with great pleasure that we note that Russia's chairmanship of BRICS coincides with the celebrations to mark the 75th Commemoration of the End of the World War II and the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations.

3. Recalling decisions made during the previous BRICS Communication Ministers meetings, we substantially discussed the topic "Global Digitalization: New Opportunities and New Challenges" and agreed as follows:

THE ROLE OF ICTs IN COMBATTING COVID-19 CONSEQUENCES

4. We express deep concerns over the latest challenges caused by COVID-19 and BRICS countries have taken urgent measures to battle the consequences of coronavirus. The current crisis has dramatically accelerated the overall transition to the digital economy, as the world has faced a turning point in deploying these technologies and an increase in the use of ICTs for accessing services of education, health, government, banking and other services.

5. We acknowledge the critical role played by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as an essential tool during and after the pandemic, especially for the recovery of our economies under the present conditions, i.e. the use of digital technology to effectively support the epidemic monitoring, the distribution of medical material, the prevention of COVID-19, the large-scale application of the existing ICT infrastructure and implementation of new digital products facilitating the seamless transition to remote mode of working, learning and other applications; high quality of education process and leisure activities for children and students, as well as for the persons with disabilities and health limitations.

DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

6. We acknowledge the importance of digital governance in the era of global digitalization and reaffirm our commitment to cooperate with each other in the area of digital governance as agreed at the 5th BRICS Communications Ministers Meeting.

7. BRICS countries encourage continued development of holistic, secure, open and reliable Internet, preserving its integrity, stability and security. We acknowledge the importance of leveraging new and effective forms of interactions among governments,

businesses, technical community of BRICS countries and other relevant international organizations in the interest of building the Internet ecosystem.

8. We encourage relevant public institutions and private sectors of BRICS countries to undertake awareness and prevention campaigns to increase public awareness on risks and threats caused by the misuse of ICTs.

9. We encourage the effective protection of personal data on the Internet by addressing the challenges related to cross border data flow in accordance with relevant applicable legal frameworks. The increased use of ICTs also led to increased awareness of the need for personal data protection and other confidential information. We recognize the importance of privacy and data protection in the digital identification systems. It is in our interest that digital identification systems become trustworthy, bring real benefit and are used for good of each individual.

10. We express our concern that the issue of child protection from online content harmful for their health and development still exists. It is our intention to cooperate with each other to develop initiatives aimed at ensuring safety of the minors on the Internet, to share best practices, organize preventive activities, strengthen interaction among public and other non-public organizations, information dissemination promoters and web hosting providers.

11. We note the work of the International Telecommunication Union aimed at confidence building and security in the use of ICTs and results of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). We encourage BRICS countries to organize contests among interested group experts, students in order to increase readiness in the use of ICTs.

12. In the era of globalization and digitalization we encourage efforts to support and preserve the national socio-cultural heritage, traditions as well as multilingualism in the digital environment, by making use of advanced information technologies.

13. We invite the Digital BRICS Task Force (DBTF) to include in its work program the subject of digital governance, sharing experiences and best practices for the benefit of all BRICS countries.

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL ECONOMY IN ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

14. We recognize the role of digital economy as an important tool for modernization and transformation of the industry, promotion of inclusive economic growth, facilitation of the decision-making process and stimulation of the national economies to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

15. We recognize that the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, 2003 – Switzerland; 2005 – Tunis) are closely linked to the SDGs and consider it timely to take stock of WSIS to identify the necessary actions to achieve the SDGs around the world.

16. We believe that it is necessary to lay special stress on improving the access and connectivity of people living in rural areas, as well as groups of persons with disabilities, to the Internet.

17. We also believe that it is necessary to develop an infrastructure providing wide penetration of broadband access, including paying special attention to the last mile

connection, based on the principles of openness, fairness and non-discrimination. We also acknowledge that one of the key factors is the adaptation of the population to the changes of the digital age in terms of acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge, building trust in new technologies.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

18. We recognize the rapid developments and huge potential of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and its value to economic growth. We also recognize the need to cooperate with each other to build trust and accountability in AI, to maximize its potential for the benefit of society and humanity.

19. We recognize the potential of AI technologies in helping accelerate an inclusive economic growth and realize the SDGs at the global stage, and its potential to bring great benefits to marginalized societies of BRICS countries.

20. We encourage the BIFN to contribute to the cutting-edge research and development of AI technologies and to spur AI innovation and development in BRICS countries.

INTERNATIONAL ELECTROMAGNETIC SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT

21. We note the concerns on electromagnetic field (EMF) exposure due to expansion and densification of mobile radio access networks with the continuous advancement of telecom technologies, and the need to address these concerns by comprehensive study of EMF exposures, with the participation of regulatory bodies, public sector, scientific institutes, academia, telecom industry and civil society of BRICS countries.

22. We encourage the BIFN to include the study of EMF exposures in its work program, aiming at, promoting sharing of best practices and proposing other methods that would provide consumers with sufficient information to have a better understanding of these technological advancements.

STOCKTAKING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION AND THE WAY FORWARD

23. We recall the decision at the 4th BRICS Communication Ministers Meeting to strengthen the commitment in previous BRICS Communications Ministers Meeting, and further recognize the need for improving the Working Group on ICT cooperation to hold regular interaction to take stock of the decisions taken and the status of their implementation.

24. We are committed to improving continuous cooperation between BRICS members in ICT activities in international organizations and multilateral forums, such as the International Telecommunications Union and other organizations.

25. We support for the advancement of the BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR), and commend the work done by the 2nd PartNIR Advisory Group Meeting held in Brasilia in September 2019, which approved the Terms

of Reference of Advisory Group and Work Plan of the PartNIR, focusing on promoting the implementation of the BRICS ICT programs and initiatives.

26. Recalling the decision of the 4th BRICS Communication Ministers Meeting to establish the DBTF for strengthening BRICS cooperation in digitalization, the decision of the 11th BRICS Summit and the 5th BRICS Communication Ministers Meeting to take necessary steps for early setting up of the DBTF, we encourage further work toward the finalization of its Terms of Reference.

27. Recalling the Declaration of the 5th BRICS Communication Ministers Meeting, we reaffirm the decision about establishment of BRICS ICT Regulators Forum (BRF).

28. We note with appreciation the outcome of the second meeting of the BIFN Council, which finalized the Terms of Reference of the BIFN. We reiterate our full support to the actions to be developed by the BIFN, in order to promote cooperation on research and innovation in emerging and new technologies, we urge Working Group on ICT Cooperation to take steps for early operationalization of this institute.

29. We note with appreciation the establishment of BIFN Branches in Brazil (CPQD), China (China Branch of BIFN), South Africa, India, and encourage the Branches to take initiatives to actively implement the work programs agreed by the BIFN Council, and to cooperate with each other in the interest of development of ICTs in BRICS countries.

30. We recognize the need to avoid duplication among the new mechanisms of BIFN, DBTF, BRF, and to focus on their main objectives.

31. Brazil, India, China, and South Africa express their gratitude to Russia for its chairmanship in 2020 and for organizing the 6th BRICS Communications Ministers Meeting.

32. Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa are ready to support India in hosting the 7th BRICS Communications Ministers Meeting in 2021.