



agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES, MR S ZOKWANA ON
THE HOSTING OF THE 8TH MEETING OF THE BRICS MINISTERS OF
AGRICULTURE AND AGRARIAN DEVELOPMENT HELD IN
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.**

22 June 2018

Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply of Brazil,

Honourable Blairro Maggi

Deputy Minister of Agriculture of China,

Honourable Yu Khangzhen

Deputy Minister of Russia,

Honourable Sergy Levin

Deputy Minister of South Africa,

Honourable Sifiso Buthelezi

The Delegation of India

Officials of government from all our BRICS member countries.

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with great honour that South Africa is a host country for the 8th Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Agriculture and Agrarian Development. It is not just about hosting but about the important resolutions that we are going to ratify arising out of the work done by our technical teams. Important forward-looking decisions were taken last

year in Nanjing, China for which this 8th meeting of Ministers must build on. As BRICS Agriculture Ministers we are racing against time in making meaningful impact against hunger, food security and climate change phenomena. Whilst our pace is commendable in this regard, but we must not rest into our laurels and be complacent about the mammoth tasks lying ahead.

As BRICS, we are an emerging block that carries with it the aspirations of more than 40% of the World population. Within this population lies challenges of poverty, food insecurity and the effects brought about by climate change as it affects production levels. United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) made an interesting observation that: *“With the clock ticking toward the 2030 deadline for meeting the international goals to eradicate hunger and poverty, Ministries of Agriculture in five of the World’s most important emerging economies are well positioned to take a leading role in helping to achieve these objectives....”*

In his address to the 7th BRICS meeting of Ministers in China last year, Assistant Director General and FAO’s Regional Representatives for Asia and the Pacific, Kundhavi Kadiresan made the interesting remarks: *“Despite the trends towards urbanisation, poverty in the World today is primarily rural. As a result, accelerating rural development will be key to achieving the SDGs. The question is how to do it? Our experiences in countries in different parts of the World have shown that it can best be done through a combination of agricultural growth and targeted social protection, but also through growth in the rural non-farm economy..... Agriculture can be a driver of sustained and inclusive rural growth. In low-income countries, growth originating from agriculture is twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth originating from other sectors of the economy”*

Economic indicators shows that agriculture in many parts of the World, no less in our own country, carries a potential of being a larger contributor (than it is) to

national GDPs thereby representing a sunshine economic sector that we must nurture for prosperity of our nations. In South Africa, despite the effects of drought to the sector, agricultural sector displayed resilient and extricated this country from technical recession in the third quarter of 2017 when other sectors faced sluggish growth.

We must embrace the technological take over that is replacing old agricultural methods of doing agricultural business. These are necessary disruptions that puts us on a hi-tech competitive edge with younger generations becoming the masters of the new technological revolution in the sector. Through our collegiality as BRICS countries, I plead that lets hand-hold each other; lets share information and experiences in our scientific and technological advances that each one of us has. As BRICS block, we must be driven by the great sense of solidarity than competition, brotherhood than enmity and increased intra-trade.

Like many other countries which are affected extreme weather events and vulnerable to the effects of climate change, South Africa has been affected by meteorological hazards such as drought which has negatively affected our economy.

South African agriculture, forestry and fisheries is highly vulnerable and exposed to the impacts of climate change due, on the one hand, to our socio-economic context (e.g. the many land-dependent rural poor) and, on the other hand, to an already high risk natural environment (including high season to season climate variability, extreme weather events, times of severe water stress).

The impact of climate change is felt on both food security and livelihood perspectives particularly by poor smallholder and emerging farmers, as they are especially vulnerable as they have little means or no resources to cope with the increasing climate variability and frequencies of extreme weather events. Extreme weather events and their impacts are increasing at an alarming rate. The frequency and

intensity of extreme weather events are expected to increase as a result of increasing climate variability and climate change and this will negatively affect agricultural productivity and food security. Recent model projections for South Africa generally indicate an increase in temperature and rainfall variability.

Adaptation to climate change remains a top priority for the developing countries like South Africa. Smallholder farmers represent about 80 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's farming population, and suffer disproportionately in the face of droughts, floods and other weather-related events.

Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more severe, threatening the reliability and productivity of agriculture. This state of affairs contributes negatively to the already extreme levels of poverty, and is reinforcing inequity and chronic under-nutrition. These problems can only be solved through the widespread adoption of a more resilient, productive, sustainable, equitable and increasingly efficient farming practices. It is important to increase the capacity in the risk reduction of disasters, the prioritisation of training and awareness. These interventions will ensure that knowledge about potential hazards and usage of climate information become widespread.

We also have to promote and adopt climate smart agroforestry/fisheries approaches to mitigate and adapt to the climate change impact as well as to increase adaptive capacity of producers especially small growers in the forestry and producers in fisheries sectors.

But this climate change threat calls for all of us as BRICS countries to become climate change patrons by playing more meaningful role in the fight against global warming. Global warming in large measure, is man-made through selfish chasing of profits by excessive industry heavy machine polluters that produces greenhouse gas emissions that affect our ozone, and in turn affect our climate and agricultural land for food production.

We are excited that a significant progress has been made to implement the BRICS Action Plan: *2017 – 2020 for Agricultural Cooperation of BRICS Countries*, and this includes the achievement of broader aims such as:

- Supporting the United Nations (UN) efforts in fighting poverty and eradicating hunger at the global level, exchange information and experiences, policies, ensuring food security, enhance food supply capacities of BRICS, and reduce food crises.
- Implementing national programmes of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, exchange and share basic agricultural information and technologies adaptive to climate change, strengthen resilience of agricultural productive systems and their adaptability to natural and climate disasters, and deepen cooperative research.
- Improving the livelihoods of farmers especially through capacity building and participation of smallholder farmers in the global agricultural value chains and help smallholders of BRICS to increase food productivity and improve food security through meetings, technical cooperation, technology demonstration and training as well as holding BRICS seminars to share experiences of agricultural resilience and adaptation to climate change.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the participants (both local and BRICS member states) who shared valuable information and experiences and also provided their valued contributions at BRICS climate smart approaches seminar held here in South Africa in the last two days ago (19 - 20 June 2018). The outcomes of the successful BRICS Seminar will encourage all of us to deepen cooperation under the theme: *“Promoting cooperation and exchange on climate change for stronger agricultural resilience to natural risks”*. We propose that BRICS member states continue to engage on matters that will enable us to achieve our common objectives

and ensure priorities are met. We should focus more on increasing agricultural research cooperation amongst the academic and research institutions within BRICS and tapping into international funding mechanisms.

Once again I want to welcome all the Ministers and Deputy Ministers to this beautiful country of the African continent. I am confident that significant progress will be achieved today which will mark a revolutionary continuum from Nanjing decisions so that we surmount the enormity of the challenges confronting our nation states.

I therefore wish you well and good deliberations!

Thank you.