

Record of Discussion of the BRICS Employment Working Group Meeting held under Indian Presidency on 27-28 July, 2016 at Hyderabad.

The First BRICS Employment Working Group (BEWG) under Indian Presidency took place at Hyderabad. The EWG has been established following the recommendations of BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers in the first BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting at Ufa in 2016 under Russian Presidency underscoring the centrality of employment and labour market challenges to the inclusive development. Agenda and issue notes are placed at Annex I and Annex II-IV. The meeting deliberated on the possible areas on collaboration including the proposal regrading 'Possibility of Social Security Agreements amongst BRICS' and 'Networking of Labour Institutes of BRICS'. EWG in its first meeting also finalized the Terms of Reference for EWG and discussed the preliminary version of BRICS Ministerial Declaration.

Day 1: 27 July, 2016

1. Finalization of BEWG TOR

- The EWG decided that TOR should be so drafted that they could continue to be applicable for successive presidencies. It was also agreed that incumbent presidency may annex its priorities to the TORs.
- EWG deliberated on the format of engagement with the social partners. Ufa Labour and Employment Ministers' Declaration has recommended taking social partners on board, however, it was agreed that the forum would have limited engagement with social partners while primarily keeping it at inter-governmental forum. It was agreed that the engagement with social partners would essentially be at the level of national social partners.
- It was agreed that the TOR should be broad based for establishing different priorities of the BRICS nations that would change from time to time depending on the national context.
- The TORs so adopted are placed at Annex V

2. Technical Session II: Employment Generation and Inclusive Growth

ILO made a presentation on "Boosting Growth and Employment in the BRICS" highlighting the macro economic situation and labour market characteristics in the BRICS countries. The following points were raised/ discussed following the presentation:

- Country interventions were made regarding the policies and programmes implemented by BRICS countries to boost employment, training and skilling. There were suggestions for ILO and IOs to study the aspect of qualification of labour force, skill mobility and youth aspirations in BRICS countries; wage policies and clarity regarding the term ‘minimum wage’. Using internet platform for information sharing was discussed with reference to the initiatives taken and agreed upon during the Russian Presidency. EWG, while agreeing to the idea of sharing information through internet also expressed concerns about exchanging of tacit knowledge of the group over internet.
- For evaluation of policies, ILO said that while it was important to study the group/individuals impacted by these policies but also explained the difficulties involved in the scientific evaluation of policies ILO could assist BRICS countries do their own broad assessments. It was agreed that the Issue Note I would be further refined for use by BRICS EWG.

3. Technical Session III: Promoting Social Security Agreements amongst BRICS Nations.

India made a presentation on “Promoting Social Security Agreements amongst BRICS Nations”. Social Security Agreement, a bi-lateral instrument, aims to protect the interests of the workers in the host country. It being a reciprocal arrangement generally provides for avoidance of no coverage or double coverage and equality of treatment with the host country workers. Recognising the importance of promoting labour mobility and the significance of ensuring fair migration conditions therein, India proposed signing of Bilateral Social Security Agreements amongst BRICS nations.

- The proposal was agreed to in principle. It was decided that besides encouraging Bilateral SSAs, a technical committee be established for discussing the modalities of the agreement and for preparing a model/template agreement unique to BRICS countries.

4. Session IV: Networking of Labour Institutes of the BRICS countries.

India made a presentation on ‘Networking of Labour Institutes of the BRICS countries’ highlighting the rationale and objectives of forming such a network.

- The delegates felt that this issue needed further discussions on two aspects; first, finding the nodal institution in their countries and second, ways of funding this initiative.
- It was concluded that the proposal would be fine-tuned to cover the above mentioned issues.

Day 2: 28th July, 2016

Session V: Draft BRICS Ministerial Declaration

- It was suggested that for attaining Sustainable Development Goals of ‘Alleviating Poverty and Ensuring Decent Work’ priorities and approach would have to be listed. It was felt that actions for promoting formalization of labour markets and social protection should be included in the document. It was also suggested that the BRICS nations have to think about the next step in the area of ‘Global Supply Chain’.
- It was decided that a revised draft of the Ministerial Declaration would be circulated to the delegates through email for further comments and inputs.