



# URBANISATION FORUM

**DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA  
26 - 27 JULY 2023**

*"Advancing urban resilience for  
sustainable cities and towns for  
future generations"*

# REPORT



Cooperative Governance  
Traditional Affairs  
Human Settlements



KWAZULU-NATAL  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**8 SALGA**  
SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL  
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# BRICS

**2023**

**SOUTH AFRICA**



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# PREFACE

South Africa's term as BRICS Chair commenced on 1 January 2023 under the theme: BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Multilateralism.

South Africa's Chairship aims to reflect on the country's national interests, as well as the needs and aspirations of Africa and the Global South. South Africa aims to consolidate the gains made during the preceding Chairs and to strengthen the partnership between BRICS countries and Africa.

The Cabinet approved the following five priorities:

1. Developing a partnership toward an equitable, Just Transition,
2. Transforming education and skills development for the future,
3. Unlocking opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement,
4. Strengthening post-pandemic socio-economic recovery and the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and
5. Strengthening multilateralism, including working toward real reform of global governance institutions and strengthening the meaningful participation of women in peace processes.

The BRICS Urbanisation Forum 2023 focused on contributing towards these key priorities adopted by the Cabinet through developing partnerships towards an equitable just transition for sustainable urban development.



# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

*RESILIENCE: The capability of individuals, social groups, or social-ecological systems, including towns and cities, not only to live with changes, disturbances, adversities or disasters but also to adapt, innovate and transform into new, more desirable configurations (Harrison et al, 2014)*

The BRICS Urbanisation Forum, a collaborative platform that brings together Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) to address key urban development issues, was this year hosted under the Chairship of the Republic of South Africa by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA). Held over two days, from **26 - 27 July 2023**, in Durban, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, the theme of the BRICS Urbanisation Forum 2023 was **"Advancing Urban Resilience for Sustainable Cities and Towns for Future Generations"**. It brought together representatives from the five countries to deliberate on the pressing and complex issues of advancing, strengthening, and building urban resilience while ensuring a just transition. The Forum facilitated insightful discussions, knowledge sharing on innovative solutions and collaborative efforts to address the challenges and opportunities presented by rapidly urbanising regions.

The first BRICS Urbanisation Forum was launched in New Delhi, India, in February 2013 to address the growing trend of urbanisation worldwide. Over the years, the Forum has provided a platform for government representatives, policymakers, local authorities, and experts to engage on pressing and complex urban development issues.

This year's BRICS Urbanisation Forum continues in that vein and anchors the role of cities in advancing, strengthening and building resilience by promoting sustainable development; improving the quality of life and well-being of communities; providing access to better education, healthcare, and social services; promoting inclusive growth; and putting in place effective governance systems, while improving institutional capacity. By so doing, the BRICS Urbanisation Forum serves as a platform for constructive dialogue and impactful urban transformation for the collective benefit of all member nations.



# OPENING SESSION

To allow ample time for constructive dialogue, the Forum was convened over two days and structured to have an Opening Session on Day 1, three thematic sessions per day, as well as a Closing Session on Day 2. Each day had a specific overarching theme to which the thematic sessions were aligned. Punctuating the various panel discussions were showcases of best practices from BRICS countries in the form of videos, complimented by cultural performances, all sequenced to provide pause moments of reflection, learning and inspiration, in-between the engaging panel discussions.

# OPENING SESSION

The Opening session of the BRICS Urbanisation Forum was marked by a tapestry of insightful perspectives and high-level addresses, setting the stage for a varied exploration of urban resilience and sustainable development from the perspectives of the BRICS country representatives.



## Welcome by eThekweni Municipality Deputy Mayor: Councillor Zandile Myeni

Welcoming, dignitaries, distinguished delegates, and guests from across the BRICS nations, the Deputy Mayor of eThekweni, Councillor Zandile Myeni, extended a warm embrace to all participants and set the tone for collaborative engagement in the critical discussions that lay ahead. She noted that the BRICS gathering presents an opportunity to lay the foundation for constructing resilient cities and foregrounded the importance of collaborative efforts that include community involvement in development. The Deputy Mayor stressed the necessity of identifying areas of collaboration with both international and local stakeholders to address urbanisation challenges.

Referring to recent floods and disasters in eThekweni as reminders of the need for lasting solutions and interventions, she specified challenges arising from migration, including the strain on services, housing, and infrastructure in the city. She mentioned that the housing and infrastructure backlog is a moving target in eThekweni and that there is great urgency for building sustainable human settlements. She expressed hope that the discussions of the BRICS Urbanisation Forum will:

- Influence the meeting of the Heads of State in August to foster amicable relations between the countries;
- Be a catalyst for global solidarity at all levels;
- Foster creative ways to empower communities to play a meaningful role in building their own resilience;
- Help develop solutions and share successes among the countries and
- Identify the areas of cooperation to strengthen existing partnerships.

The Deputy Mayor also encouraged delegates to visit the eThekweni pavilion in the exhibition space that had been set up for the Forum.

The keynote addresses that followed were a testament to the relevance of the BRICS Urbanisation Forum's theme, *"Advancing Urban Resilience for Sustainable Cities and Towns for Future Generations."*



## Address by the Premier of KwaZulu Natal, Ms Nomusa Dube-Ncube

The Premier of KwaZulu Natal, Ms Nomusa Dube-Ncube, welcomed delegates from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and other African countries, celebrating South Africa's role as BRICS Chair for 2023. She proceeded to deliver a thought-provoking address, highlighting rapid urbanisation and projected urban growth in Africa, stressing the need for proper planning and addressing challenges like informal settlements and inadequate infrastructure.

The Premier noted that South Africa's history had led to racially based planning and emphasised the importance of smart and spatially integrated human settlement planning. She also shared the province's challenges, such as housing backlogs and service delivery constraints.

The Premier noted the relevance of the Forum's theme, urban resilience, and the visible impacts of climate change, citing the devastating floods that overwhelmed KwaZulu Natal, and in particular, Durban, in the past year. Calling for global partnerships, climate-smart agriculture, and investment in sustainable sectors, she urged attendees to explore investment opportunities in KwaZulu-Natal.

The Premier concluded her address by inviting delegates to explore the province's unique heritage sites.



## Address by The President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA): Councillor Bheke Stofile

In his address, the President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Councillor Bheke Stofile, underscored the significance of local government in driving effective urban development, emphasising the vital role of municipalities in achieving resilient and sustainable urban futures. He, however, lamented the absence of local government representatives from other BRICS nations in the programme and expressed hope for increased sub-national cooperation. The SALGA President underlined the crucial role of platforms like the BRICS Urbanisation Forum for multilateral dialogues to tackle urbanisation issues and strengthen local government voices in global engagements and stressed the need to localise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), indicating that achieving global commitments depends on local efforts.

Councillor Stofile called for collaborative mechanisms among BRICS countries to exchange knowledge and solutions for urban challenges, including sustainable development, climate resilience, and protection of vulnerable citizens. He noted that urbanisation, while irreversible and desirable, brings various challenges and opportunities for different BRICS nations. Pointing out the impact of climate change on local governments, he advocated for the establishment of a BRICS Local Government Climate Change Programme to secure funding for adaptation and mitigation efforts. He also called for innovative funding solutions to support infrastructure development and climate resilience.

In concluding his address, SALGA's President expressed support for the success of the BRICS Urbanisation Forum and conveyed his anticipation of structured and practical programme implementation across member countries based on the Forum's outcomes.





## **Address by the Deputy Minister of Traditional Affairs: Prince Zolile Burns-Ncamashe**

The Deputy Minister of Traditional Affairs, Prince Zolile Burns-Ncamashe, welcomed attendees and asserted the crucial role of traditional leaders in localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting awareness, participation, and resource mobilisation. He brought into focus the interconnectedness between rural and urban areas and outlined actions to realise these interdependencies. The Deputy Minister called for balanced development, infrastructure investments, empowered local governments, and sustainable agriculture to bridge the rural-urban gap. He pressed upon the necessity of equitable access to education and services, digital technologies, and collaboration between neighbouring areas.

The Deputy Minister discussed innovative approaches like sustainable agriculture, circular economy models, digital technologies, green infrastructure, and renewable energy projects to enhance rural and urban livelihoods and community resilience. Stressing the need for climate adaptation strategies, nature-based solutions, and community engagement in development projects, he called on governments to improve education and healthcare access in rural areas, promote collaboration, support sustainable tourism, empower local governments and ensure community participation. He reiterated that these policy practices should be aimed at fostering rural-urban interdependencies, achieving inclusive development and reducing disparities. In concluding his address, the Deputy Minister thanked all attendees and expressed hope for fruitful outcomes from the Forum's deliberations.



## Address by the Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance: Mr. Parks Tau

The Deputy Minister for Cooperative Governance, Mr. Parks Tau's introduction of the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, was a precursor to a crucial juncture in the opening session which underscored the role of governance in shaping urban landscapes. This introduction served to reaffirm the Forum's commitment to fostering inclusive and collaborative decision-making processes.

He noted that urbanisation is gaining momentum within the BRICS nations due to their significant global population share, leading to increased pressure on urban areas to provide critical infrastructure, economic opportunities, and housing. Deputy Minister Tau spotlighted the challenge of developing urban areas sustainably, inclusively, and productively, inviting conference attendees to collaborate and partner in forging new pathways for better urban futures. He reiterated the need for shared innovations, learning from one another and exploring opportunities for collaboration, resource sharing and testing new practices within unique global contexts.

The Deputy Minister made clear the fact that South Africa has witnessed extensive urbanisation, with nearly 70% of its population residing in cities and towns. He underlined the historical context of colonialism and apartheid, noting the critical nature of innovations that have driven spatial transformation and delivered infrastructure, affordable housing, services and economic opportunities.

The Deputy Minister then introduced the Honourable Minister Thembi Nkadimeng, acknowledging her critical role in democratic South Africa's development. He noted her extensive experience in local government, including her tenure as the former Executive Mayor of Polokwane Municipality and former President of SALGA. Deputy Minister Tau lauded Minister Nkadimeng's strategic support for sustainable and inclusive urbanisation and welcomed her as an inspirational voice both locally and globally.

The Department of Cooperative Governance, under Deputy Minister Tau's purview, plays a pivotal role in driving national urban policies, legislation, and frameworks for territorial development. He reaffirmed the Department's custodianship of the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) and Small-Town Regeneration Strategy, working cooperatively to prioritise urbanisation practices and resources, thereby guiding inclusive urban growth at the national level.





# OFFICIAL OPENING



The South African Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Minister Thembi Nkadimeng, and Chair of the BRICS Urbanisation Forum welcomed dignitaries from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, distinguished guests, and attendees. She referred to eThekweni Municipality's significance as a symbol of resilience and unity and reinforced the importance of urban resilience in facing the challenges of rapid urbanisation and climate change.

The Minister elevated the strengthening of effective governance and policy frameworks as essential for advancing urban resilience, mentioning collaboration among governments, civil society, and the private sector as vital. She pointed to South Africa's District Development Model (DDM) as an approach aimed at promoting inclusivity and resilience in tackling urban challenges and noted the crucial need to invest in resilient infrastructure, such as water supply, energy, and transportation systems.



Minister Nkadimeng encouraged countries to embrace innovative technologies and nature-based solutions to enhance adaptability and climate resilience, in addition to localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through customised approaches, informed by data and engaging communities, as demonstrated in examples from BRICS countries, including China's "sponge cities" and Brazil's favela upgrading programmes. She spotlighted urban data intelligence and advocated for data-driven approaches to identify vulnerabilities and optimise resilience strategies. The Minister concluded by urging collective action, innovation and commitment to building resilient cities and communities for current and future generations.

With the official opening of the BRICS Urbanisation Forum by Minister Thembi Nkadimeng, the stage was set for an in-depth exploration of policies and practices that would drive urban resilience and sustainable urbanisation. This further underlined the unity and purpose of the BRICS nations in addressing common urban challenges.

The subsequent keynote addresses by representatives from Brazil, Russia, India, and China were powerful articulations of each nation's unique experiences, challenges, and aspirations in the realm of urbanisation. These addresses provided a panoramic view of urban development across diverse contexts, offering valuable insights into strategies for advancing resilience and ensuring sustainable urban progress.





# KEYNOTE ADDRESS



**MR JADER  
BARBALHO FILHO**  
**Minister of Cities**  
**(via video link)**

In his opening remarks, **Mr. Jader Barbalho Filho**, the Minister of Cities from Brazil, extended greetings to the delegates and expressed regret for not being able to attend the forum in person. Referring to the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he emphasised their usefulness as a foundation for collaboration with other nations. Mr. Barbalho Filho added that Brazil's priorities are aligned with the objective of BRICS to enhance collaboration.

He noted that urban settlements have emerged as a primary focus for Brazil, with the country striving to improve policies that align with BRICS commitments. Mr Barbalho Filho stressed the benefit of working alongside partner nations facing similar challenges. He referred to the historic nature of urban planning in Brazil, which has contributed to the many challenges the country faces today, but affirmed the dedication to improving the living conditions of communities, particularly in urban areas. He reiterated that urban resilience has emerged as a central theme, reflecting both challenges and Brazil's priority of enhancing living conditions and sustainable urban settlements.

The Minister confirmed the fundamental principles that support Brazil's SDGs and welcomed the chance provided by BRICS to put these priorities into action. The overarching focus on enhancing urban resilience in BRICS countries aligns with Brazil's objectives, accentuating urban regions, clean water, and the broader environment.



# KEYNOTE ADDRESS



**MR ALEXANDER  
LOMAKIN**

First Deputy Minister of  
Construction, Housing and Utilities  
of the Russian Federation

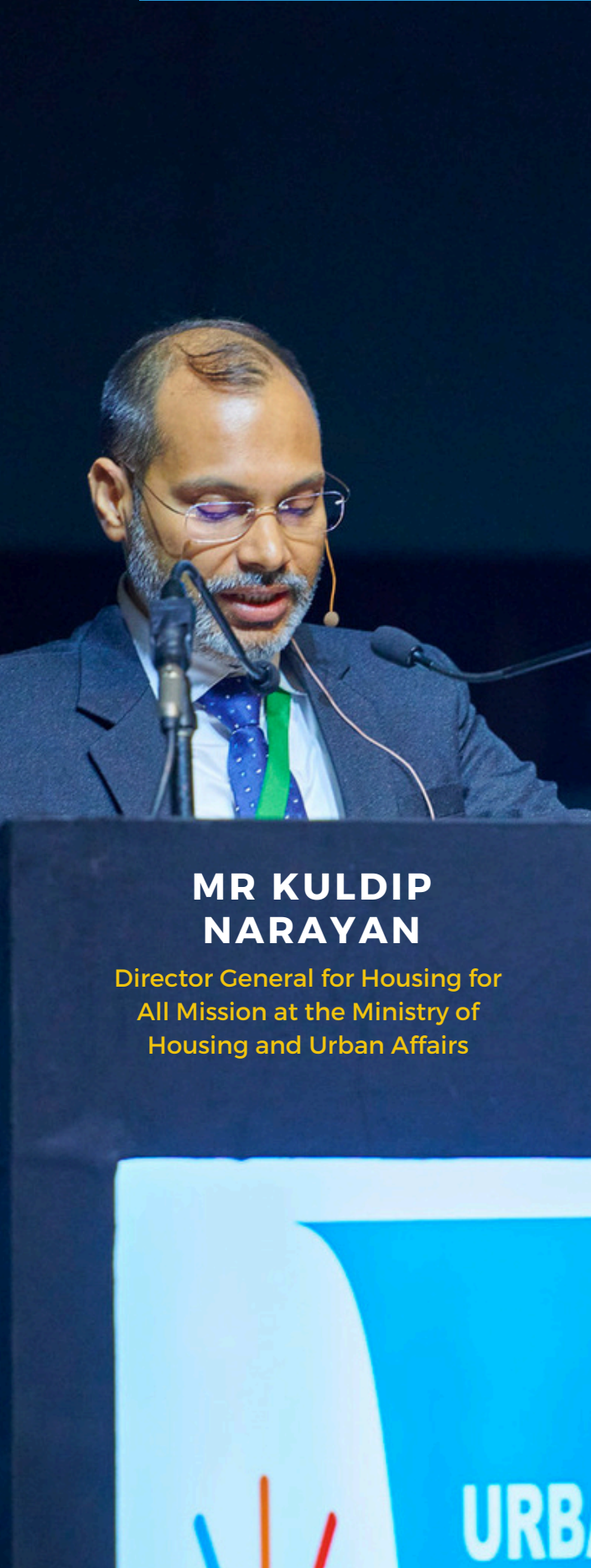


**Russia: First Deputy Minister of Construction, Housing and Utilities of the Russian Federation (via video link):** In his address, the First Deputy Minister of Construction, Housing and Utilities of the Russian Federation, **Mr. Alexander Lomakin**, mentioned Russia's newly established priorities in city development and the significance of the BRICS Urbanisation Forum in driving urban resilience. He commended the Forum for serving as a valuable platform for the exchange of best practices and collaboration. He expressed support for South Africa's theme of building resilient cities and towns for future generations, pointing out that the theme of urban resilience holds great relevance for the Russian Federation, with improving living conditions being a top priority. Despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and sanctions, Russia has made substantial progress in construction, planning to build 1 billion square meters of housing in 2024. The focus will be on complex planning that combines city development with social improvement to enhance the quality of urban life and address inadequate housing.

He added that Russia seeks investment from BRICS countries for these endeavours as well as financial instruments to support regions in Russia. Mr Lomakin called for strengthened partnerships between the education sector and joint scientific research programmes and extended an invitation to built environment professionals for a competition in St. Petersburg in October 2023, where 40 countries, including BRICS nations, will participate in the exchange of best practices and experiences.



# KEYNOTE ADDRESS



**MR KULDIP  
NARAYAN**

Director General for Housing for  
All Mission at the Ministry of  
Housing and Urban Affairs

**India: Director General for Housing for All Mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs: Mr Kuldip Narayan, Director General for Housing for All Mission** at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in India, started his opening remarks by drawing attention to the innovative and inclusive approaches of BRICS mechanisms in addressing urban challenges. He pointed out the rate of urbanisation in BRICS countries, adding that India's urbanisation priorities are centred around developing cities and revitalising older towns.

Mr. Narayan referred to the implementation of the Housing for Urban Poor programme in India to tackle housing shortages alongside sustainable urban transport policies and investments in metro rail development. He mentioned that policies have been introduced to support the urban poor and street vendors, and initiatives have been taken to ensure that female-headed households contribute to inclusive development.

He further added that sustainable growth and the achievement of the SDGs by 2030 are integral to India's priorities. Urban transformation, development of new cities, and modernisation of older ones are focal points, along with collaboration to enhance public service delivery. Policies concentrate on promoting sustainable and inclusive urban growth and improving quality of life. Technological integration, smart city initiatives and the recovery of cities from the impact of COVID-19 were also listed as significant aspects of India's urban development strategies.



# KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**China: Vice Minister of Urban-Rural Development: Mr. Qin Haixian, Vice Minister of Urban-Rural Development,** showed that China has undergone the world's largest urbanisation transformation in the past 40 years, with about 600 million people living in towns. Challenges such as urban diseases and traffic congestion exist, prompting a need for improved urban planning and infrastructure as well as a comprehensive urban renewal strategy.

He mentioned that China is actively engaged in urban renewal projects to create liveable, resilient, and smart cities, focusing on housing quality improvement and renovating historically significant buildings. The country advocates for alignment between ecological and environmental governance to enhance urban ecosystems and control issues like waterlogging. Digital monitoring aids disaster response, and the promotion of new urban infrastructure systems is a priority.

The Vice Minister confirmed China's commitment to cooperation with other BRICS countries, working in line with the SDGs to promote sustainable development, adding that the upcoming World Cities Day in October will provide a platform for global discussions on urban development.



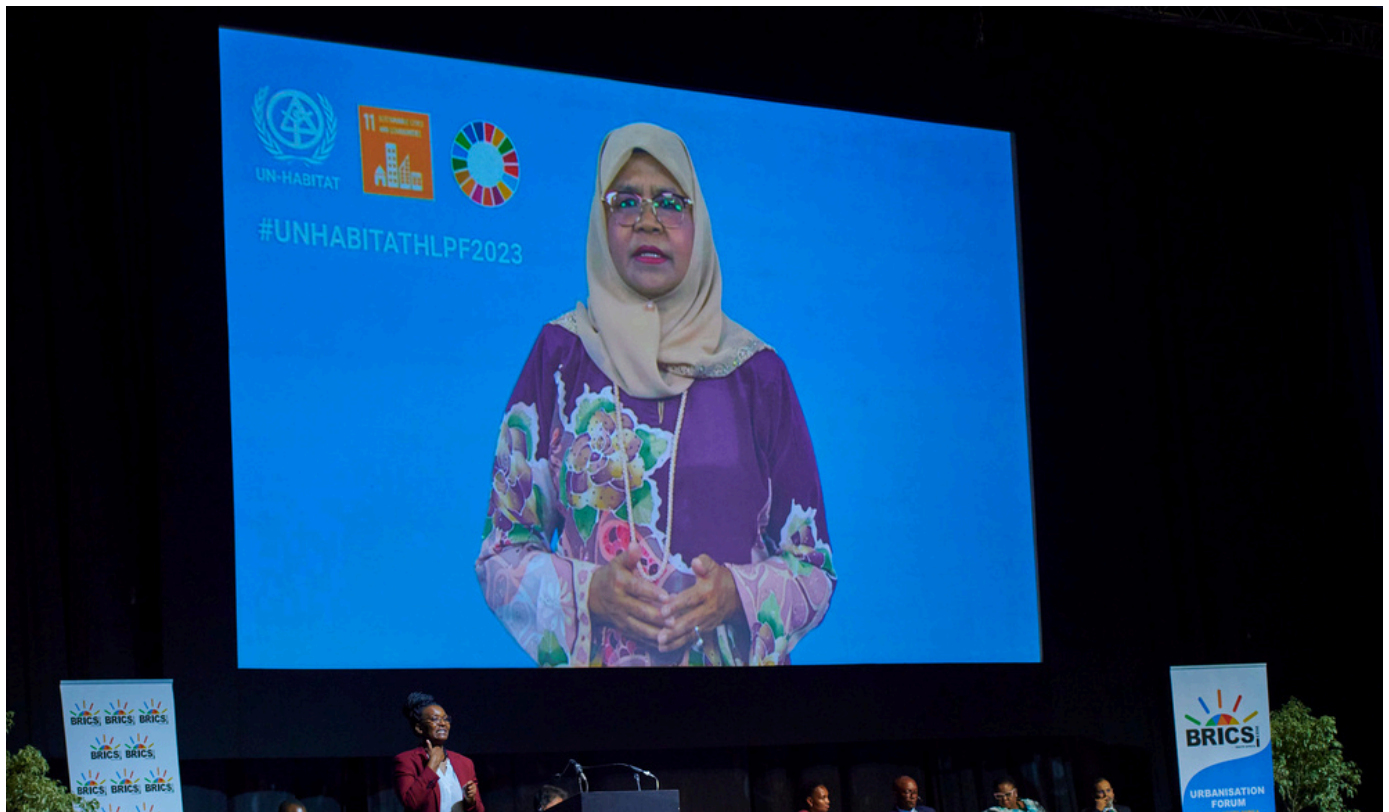
# KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif**  
**Executive Director of UN-Habitat**  
(via video link)



The Executive Director of UN-Habitat drew focus on the challenges in achieving SDG 11, particularly in the context of increasing slum dwellings in developing countries. She stressed the intensity of the rate of urbanisation in Asia and Africa, where cities struggle with urban sprawl and climate-related risks. She drew focus on responsive urban policies and disaster preparedness, aiming to create resilient cities capable of withstanding future challenges.

Ms Sharif expressed the urgent need to prevent disasters through effective planning and governance of human settlements. She voiced the need to elevate the urban agenda and acknowledged the support of BRICS nations towards UN Habitat commitments, valuing the combined efforts to work together to ensure equitable and resilient urban development, leaving no one behind in this rapidly urbanising world.



All the keynote addresses placed a strong emphasis on cooperation, improving living conditions, addressing infrastructure challenges, and promoting sustainable development, all as approaches to enhancing urban resilience.

In sum, the opening session of the BRICS Urbanisation Forum was a symphony of shared aspirations and commitments, paving the way for meaningful dialogue and knowledge exchange over the course of the two days. As the delegates embarked on this collective journey, they carried with them the momentum generated during this opening session, ready to chart a course towards resilient and sustainable urban futures.



# PROCEEDINGS



# Day 1

The theme for Day 1 was *Advancing, Strengthening and Building Urban Resilience* in the face of challenges such as climate change, rapid urbanisation, social vulnerabilities and natural disasters. The sessions focused on the role of effective governance and policy frameworks in advancing urban resilience, the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals in strengthening national priorities towards sustainable development and building resilience in the face of the myriad shocks, stresses and risks cities and city regions face.



## THEMATIC SESSION 1

# ADVANCING URBAN RESILIENCE: A GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE

*Following the Opening Session, the Forum commenced with an insightful session on **Advancing Urban Resilience – A Governance Perspective**, which set the stage in outlining the urban landscape context in each of the BRICS countries and highlighting the governance systems, mechanisms and processes that contribute to urban resilience.*

Facilitated by **Mr Sithole Mbanga, Chief Executive Officer of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA)**, the session kicked-off with leaders and policymakers foregrounding the indisputable requirement for effective governance, institutional capacity, and coordination among various stakeholders. The panel members had the opportunity to share experiences on effective urban governance models and instruments that foster collaboration, citizen participation and responsive decision-making. Emphasis was placed on the role of local governments in building resilience from the grassroots level.

### Panel members:

1. **Brazil: Mr Jader Barbalho Filho**, Minister of Cities (via video link)
2. **Russia: Ms Maria Sinichich**, Head of Comprehensive Territorial Development Department, Ministry of Construction, Housing and Utilities of the Russian Federation.
3. **India: Mr Kuldip Narayan**, Director General for Housing for All Mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
4. **China: Mr Qin Haixiang**, Vice Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development
5. **South Africa: Mr Parks Tau**, Deputy Minister for Cooperative Governance

Speaking about the challenges in governance, including inadequate urban planning, weak enforcement of regulations and limited financial

resources, the following are the key points discussed by each panel member:

**Brazil: Mr Carlos Querios Tome** asserted the role of all three spheres of government in urban resilience and in particular, the role of local governments in policy implementation, specifically in addressing mobility challenges, sustainability and disaster prevention. Mr. Tome further advocated for collaboration and participation from all BRICS member countries.

**Russia: Ms Maria Sinichich** discussed Russia's experience in balanced territorial development and mentioned strategies for spatial planning and development, master plans for cities and investment from other BRICS countries. Ms. Sinichich acknowledged the escalating vulnerabilities faced by urban populations and how solutions in housing development, climate change adaptation and smart city initiatives can go a long way in advancing the resilience capacity of communities.

**India: Mr Kuldip Narayan** noted India's low urbanisation rate among BRICS countries and mentioned key areas of urban resilience that the country is focusing on, namely infrastructure, environment, social equality, economic diversification and governance. Mr Narayan shared India's approach to urban development with a focus on smart cities and different levels of strategies for cities' development.

## THEMATIC SESSION 1

# ADVANCING URBAN RESILIENCE: A GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE

*"Effective governance paves the path to urban resilience, where foresight and collaboration fortify cities against adversity."*

**China: Mr Qin Haixiang** stressed the value of safety in urban planning and construction and discussed the measures that China is using to address natural disaster risks and ensure urban safety. Mr Qin further spotlighted China's efforts in upgrading infrastructure, redevelopment, and using technology for resilient urban development.

**South Africa: Deputy Minister Parks Tau** addressed the challenges of managing urbanisation with limited resources. Mr. Tau discussed South Africa's fiscal and legislative systems as well as the spatial and integrated planning instruments used for urban development and shared examples of funding mechanisms, bonds, and partnerships for infrastructure projects.



### Key session outcomes:

- Knowledge sharing and efficiency enhancement of governance systems and institutional capabilities will be the focus among BRICS countries.
- Building collaborative institutions across nations and levels of government to address urban challenges collectively will be prioritised.
- Collaboration on specific programmes, including project preparation, financing for climate change responses and innovative financing models, will be structured for the benefit of the bloc.



## THEMATIC SESSION 2

# STRENGTHENING URBAN RESILIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BY

## EXPLORING THE LOCALISATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

As major emerging economies, the BRICS countries play a significant role in localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by aligning national priorities with the global sustainability agenda and implementing actions at the local level to address challenges related to sustainable development and urban resilience. Localisation programmes also take direction from several SDGs that build on the interconnections and interdependencies between rural and urban areas, which are both vital to the economic, social, and environmental viability of countries.

Facilitated by **Oumar Sylla, Director of the Regional Office for Africa UN-Habitat**, representatives from BRICS countries shared insights on their experiences, approaches and policy practices in achieving the SDGs and acknowledged the unique challenges and opportunities that exist along the rural-urban continuum.

### Panel members:

1. **Brazil: Mr Nathan Belcavello de Oliveira**, Coordinator of the National Secretariat on Urban and Metropolitan Development
2. **Russia: Dr Nikolai Bobylev**, Leading Expert, Federal Autonomous Institution "United Research and Design Institute for Spatial Planning of the Russian Federation
3. **China: Mr YANG Hongyi**, Deputy Director-General: Department of Urban Development, MoHURD

4. **South Africa: Prince Zolile Burns-Ncamashe**, Deputy Minister for Traditional Affairs

5. **South Africa: Clinton Heimann**, Deputy Director-General: Spatial Planning and Land Use Management, Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development

6. **South Africa: Dr Lindile Ndabeni**, Tshwane University of Technology

### Key discussion points:

**Brazil:** The panel member from Brazil shared the country's efforts in localising and implementing SDGs through policies guided by the Ministry of Cities. He drew attention to key issues like human settlements and environmental sustainability and pointed out the usefulness of monitoring projects and learning from them. He concluded his input by stressing the need for partnerships and technological support among BRICS countries.

**Russia:** The panel member from Russia presented the country's approach to localising the SDGs through the Voluntary Local Review (VLR) process and expressed concerns about the difficulties in acquiring local-level data. He indicated that participatory processes, stakeholder engagement and data collection are essential elements in undertaking the VLR process.



## THEMATIC SESSION 2

# STRENGTHENING URBAN RESILIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BY

## EXPLORING THE LOCALISATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**China:** The panel member from China discussed the country's focus on improved rural development, capacity building, and disaster preparedness. He mentioned real-time disaster measures and policies that address pollution, flooding and ageing infrastructure.

**South Africa:** The first-panel member from South Africa effectively underlined the pivotal role played by traditional leaders in driving the implementation of SDGs within local communities. Their discourse encompassed vital subjects such as forging partnerships, directing investments into infrastructure and recognising the intricate interdependencies between rural and urban areas. A resounding emphasis was placed on fostering community engagement, cultivating inclusive value chains and unlocking the potential of raw material beneficiation.

Continuing the discourse, the second panellist from South Africa delved into the intricacies of the SDG Data Hub's development. This innovative endeavour aims to capture both geospatial and statistical data, offering a nuanced understanding of regional dynamics. The significance of precise, granular data at the municipal level was underscored as a cornerstone for well-considered decision-making.

The panellist also conveyed a keen interest in nurturing international partnerships, particularly within the BRICS countries, to facilitate collaborative data reporting efforts.

Representing Tshwane University of Technology, one of the panel members delved into the intricate landscape of rural development in South Africa and navigated the challenges posed by urbanisation. In this insightful input, the interdependency of urban and rural domains was brought to the fore, pressing upon the compelling requirement for pioneering collaborations. The discourse expertly shone light on the vital role of innovative partnerships in addressing these complex issues, illustrating pathways towards holistic and sustainable development.

### Key session outcomes:

- It is incumbent on BRICS countries to engage in collaborative efforts encompassing the exchange of expertise and the establishment of data-sharing frameworks to enhance resilience-building and sustainable development.
- Forging alliances on innovative approaches and technological solutions can go a long way in addressing rural-urban interdependencies.
- Prioritising the localisation of the SDGs, monitoring, and evaluating projects, and leveraging data for informed decision-making and tailoring solutions to the unique contexts and challenges of individual cities and communities is vital for strengthening resilience.

## THEMATIC SESSION 2

# STRENGTHENING URBAN RESILIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BY

## EXPLORING THE LOCALISATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



## THEMATIC SESSION 3

# BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE:

*"In the face of a changing climate, building resilience is not a choice but a necessity, where innovation and adaptation intertwine for a sustainable future."*

The impact of climate change on urban resilience took centre stage in this panel discussion facilitated by **Dr Meggan Spires, Director of Climate Change, Energy & Resilience at ICLEI Africa**. The gravity of the session's significance was indicated by the facilitator's opening remarks, which outlined three key reasons:

i. The pivotal role of BRICS countries in tackling climate change is accentuated, given their collective share of over 40% of the global population. Addressing climate change comprehensively, both in terms of mitigation and adaptation, within BRICS is essential; otherwise, global efforts would be incomplete. The complexity of this challenge necessitates a multilevel governance approach.

ii. BRICS nations face complex decisions due to the convergence of developmental challenges and poly-crises encompassing climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The Forum's value lies in the exchange of ideas among similar contexts and individuals grappling with comparable issues, becoming even more crucial in the current context.

iii. The urgency of achieving net zero emissions was stressed, with the year 2050 often cited as the target to avert a catastrophic global temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius. However, a more immediate deadline is 2024, when Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) outlining climate goals will be revised. Timely and ambitious NDCs are vital for the

realisation of the 2050 targets. While all countries share this responsibility, innovative solutions from BRICS countries are anticipated to significantly contribute to addressing these challenges.

### Panel members:

1. **Brazil: Mr Guilherme Simoes**, Vice Minister for Peripheries
2. **Russia: Dr Nikolai Bobylev**, Leading Expert, Federal Autonomous Institution "United Research and Design Institute for Spatial Planning of the Russian Federation
3. **China: Mr Zheng Degao**, Vice President of China Academy of Urban Planning and Design (CAUPD)
4. **South Africa: Kgosi Thabo Milton Seatlholo**, Chairperson of the National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders (NHTKL)
5. **South Africa: Mayor Kenalemang Phukuntsi**, Mayor of Tswelopele Local Municipality; Working Group Chairperson on Environmental Management and Climate Resilience; and Presidential Climate Change Commissioner
6. **South Africa: Councillor Dada Morero**, Member of Mayoral Committee for Finance (responsible for International Relations and Intergovernmental Relations) – City of Johannesburg



## THEMATIC SESSION 3

# BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE:

*"Climate change demands that we construct more than buildings – we must build resilience, forging communities that weather challenges with unity and innovation."*

**7. South Africa: Mr Dhesigen Naidoo**, Head of the African Climate Risk and Human Security Programme at the Institute for Security Studies, Africa and the Climate Adaptation Lead at the South African Presidential Climate Commission

**8. South Africa: Ms Barbara Mgutshini**, Deputy Director General: Development and Planning, KwaZulu Natal Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA)

The session's focus was on the imperative of building urban resilience within the context of climate change for BRICS member states. Several panel members shared insights and strategies from their respective fields and regions.

### Key discussion points:

#### **Brazil's mitigation efforts and vulnerability:**

Brazil advocated for an emergency approach to climate change, particularly focusing on the most vulnerable populations, understanding their vulnerability on the peripheries of cities, and empowering and educating them is vital for resilience building. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand historical discrepancies and territorial measures that have contributed to the status quo in order for appropriate context-specific measures to be put in place. The Brazilian government has taken steps to address some of these challenges, but constraints remain in building adequate capacity to tackle these issues effectively.

**Three-dimensional spatial planning:** The concept of three-dimensional spatial planning was presented by the panel member from Russia as a forward-thinking and innovative approach to urban development and city planning. This approach goes beyond traditional two-dimensional planning by considering the utilisation of underground spaces for innovative solutions such as transport tunnels to address complex urban challenges. In the context of rapid urbanisation, climate impacts, and infrastructure deficiencies, this concept offers a unique solution that maximises available space and resources. The panel input illustrated the benefit of adopting creative thinking and holistic strategies to meet the diverse demands of urban populations and enable cities to expand their capacity without encroaching further on valuable above-ground space.

#### **China's Climate Resilience Strategy:**

Focusing on efforts to enhance resilience, monitor extreme weather, develop resilient crops and optimise urban layouts, China's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy was presented. It focuses on transitioning to low carbon emissions and building resilience, demonstrating the role of strong policy frameworks to guide sustainable development.

#### **Traditional and indigenous knowledge:**

Harnessing the cultural practices, inherent knowledge and lived experiences of traditional

## THEMATIC SESSION 3

# BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE:

*"Urban resilience in BRICS cities is the art of forging strength from diversity, transforming challenges into opportunities for a better tomorrow."*

leaders and indigenous knowledge holders were reflected on as critical to building resilience. Reflecting on the approaches of historical African civilizations to the various challenges they faced, there was a call for forging partnerships and reimagining African values and place-making in urban planning.

**The role of Local Government:** The increasing severity and frequency of climate change impacts on local governments, especially those in rural areas, calls for prioritisation of financial support, access to climate finance and a multi-level governance approach to address the multiplicity of challenges posed by rapid urbanisation and climate change.

**Johannesburg's Resilience Initiatives:** From the City of Johannesburg, various climate resilience initiatives, such as high-density integrated corridors and waste-to-energy programs, were highlighted. Furthermore, distributive justice was advocated for in moving towards a just transition, with a differentiated responsibility assigned to Global North countries for climate action and finance.

**BRICS Climate Club and the Just Transition:** The establishment of a BRICS Local Government Climate Change Forum and a BRICS Climate Club was proposed, which would have a particular focus on the imperatives of a just transition, climate resilience investment plans and collective climate action.

**Challenges faced by KwaZulu-Natal:** The multiple climate-related shocks and stresses faced by KwaZulu-Natal were brought to the fore as relevant to the issues of advancing, strengthening and building the resilience of communities of systems that underpin the functioning of cities and the utility of initiatives such as the Green Book, technologies such as GIS and climate change education programmes being conducted in harmony with community-based programs. These can all be useful tools that help strengthen the resilience of cities.

## Key session outcomes:

Panelists called for the need to:

- Emphasise context-specific and homegrown solutions to build urban resilience across the BRICS bloc.
- Encourage partnerships between various stakeholders, including governments, academia, the private sector, and communities.
- Prioritise poverty reduction, innovation, finance, science, and a just transition in climate resilience efforts.
- Explore the establishment of a BRICS Local Government Climate Change Forum and a BRICS Climate Club to enhance collaboration and climate action.

## THEMATIC SESSION 3

# BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

*"Adapting to climate change isn't merely surviving; it's thriving in the midst of challenges, demonstrating the strength of human innovation and resilience."*

The session brought forward the urgency of building urban resilience within the context of climate change and the need for coordinated efforts, innovative solutions and inclusive strategies to ensure prosperous and equitable cities within the BRICS nations.

At the conclusion of the proceedings of **DAY 1**, the commitment to **advancing, strengthening, and building** urban resilience while ensuring a just transition remained unwavering among BRICS member countries.





# Day 2

The theme for Day 2 of the BRICS Urbanisation Forum was *Building a Resilient Future: Solutions in Action*. The sessions were aimed at showcasing and discussing practical solutions and actions that contribute to building urban resilience in BRICS Cities. Throughout the sessions, participants explored innovative strategies, projects and initiatives implemented in cities to address the challenges of rapid urbanisation, climate change and social vulnerabilities.

## THEMATIC SESSION 4

# BUILDING URBAN WATER RESILIENCE IN CITIES

*Water stewardship ensures a thriving, sustainable future for our cities and communities."*

In this session facilitated by Mr. Jay Bhagwan, Executive Manager: Water Use, Wastewater Resources and Sanitation Futures at the Water Research Commission, delegates engaged in discussions around urban water resilience, exploring strategies to ensure secure and sustainable water sources for growing urban populations. The session delved into the investment gaps in the urban water sector, showcasing ambitious water investment programmes aimed at scaling high-impact water resilience solutions and providing examples of urban water resilience projects in action.

### Panel members:

1. **Brazil: Mr Leonardo Picciani**, Vice Minister for Environmental Sanitation (via video link)
2. **Russia: Ms Maria Sinichich**, Head of Comprehensive Territorial Development Department, Ministry of Construction, Housing and Utilities of the Russian Federation.
3. **China: Mr GONG Daoxiao**, Director of Research Institute of Urban Water Treatment and Engineering, CAUPD
4. **South Africa: Mr Mbulelo Tshangana**, Director-General: Department of Cooperative Governance
5. **Dr Aklilu Fikresilassie**, Director: Thriving and Resilient Cities, World Resources Institute
6. **Mr Alex Simalabwi**, Global Head: Climate

Resilience at Global Water Partnership and Director of the Africa Water Investment Programme

7. **South Africa: Mr Dhesigen Naidoo**, Adaptation Lead: Presidential Climate Commission

8. **Dr George Tsibani**, University of Johannesburg, Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment

### Key discussion points:

**Water as a human right:** The vital role of water as a human right was raised, along with the stark inequalities in access to clean water, underscoring the pressing need for concerted efforts and unification across BRICS countries to address these disparities. Reflections from Brazil impressed on the crucial role of sanitation programs in ensuring the realisation of this right, particularly in densely populated urban areas where challenges can escalate; point out that providing basic sanitation facilities and a reliable water supply transcends mere infrastructure concerns – it is a direct affirmation of human rights, fostering an environment where all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographical location, can lead dignified and healthy lives. The panel member's insights underscored the imperative of collective action and cooperation among BRICS nations to secure universal access to water and sanitation, in turn contributing to a more equitable and just global society.

## THEMATIC SESSION 4

# BUILDING URBAN WATER RESILIENCE IN CITIES

*Water stewardship ensures a thriving, sustainable future for our cities and communities."*

### **Water infrastructure and accessibility:**

Panelists discussed the urgency of modernising existing water infrastructure as crucial for ensuring the reliability and sustainability of clean water access, particularly in the face of growing urbanisation and environmental challenges. Russia shed light on the country's proactive and multifaceted approach to modernising its existing water systems, ensuring that clean and safe water reaches every citizen.

The panellist from Russia shared how the meticulous evaluation of system conditions is conducted by employing a comprehensive array of parameters to ensure optimal functionality, efficiency, and resilience of the water supply systems. Notably, the panel member confirmed Russia's dedication to unified monitoring, stressing the importance of real-time oversight and data-driven decision-making and how acquiring financing from diverse sources has been strategically leveraged to support this ambitious endeavour.

The goal is the creation of a nationwide smart water supply system – an innovative and interconnected network that exemplifies Russia's determination to provide sustainable water solutions for its population.

**Improving resilience against floods:** The ground-breaking and innovative concept of "sponge cities" in China was foregrounded as a transformative approach to urban planning and

water management, particularly in the context of combating flooding and enhancing overall urban resilience. The panellist from China presented China's forward-thinking approach that envisions cities as porous and adaptable systems that mimic the natural water-absorbing capabilities of sponges. By effectively integrating a variety of techniques and technologies, sponge cities aim to absorb, store, and manage rainwater and stormwater, thereby reducing the risk of flooding and its associated damages.

Emphasising the centrality of effective policy implementation, the panellist discussed how stringent technical standards and robust institutional mechanisms are integral to successfully managing urban water systems. Furthermore, the emphasis on incorporating green spaces within this approach promotes a holistic perspective, which demonstrates how urban water management can harmoniously coexist with environmental preservation, creating cities that are both adaptable and sustainable in the face of changing climatic conditions.

### **Urban Water Resilience Strategies in South African Cities:**

**Case Studies of eThekweni and Cape Town:** During the discussion, the South African panellist provided valuable insights into the proactive measures taken by two cities, eThekweni and Cape Town, to enhance their water resilience. These cities have successfully implemented strategies



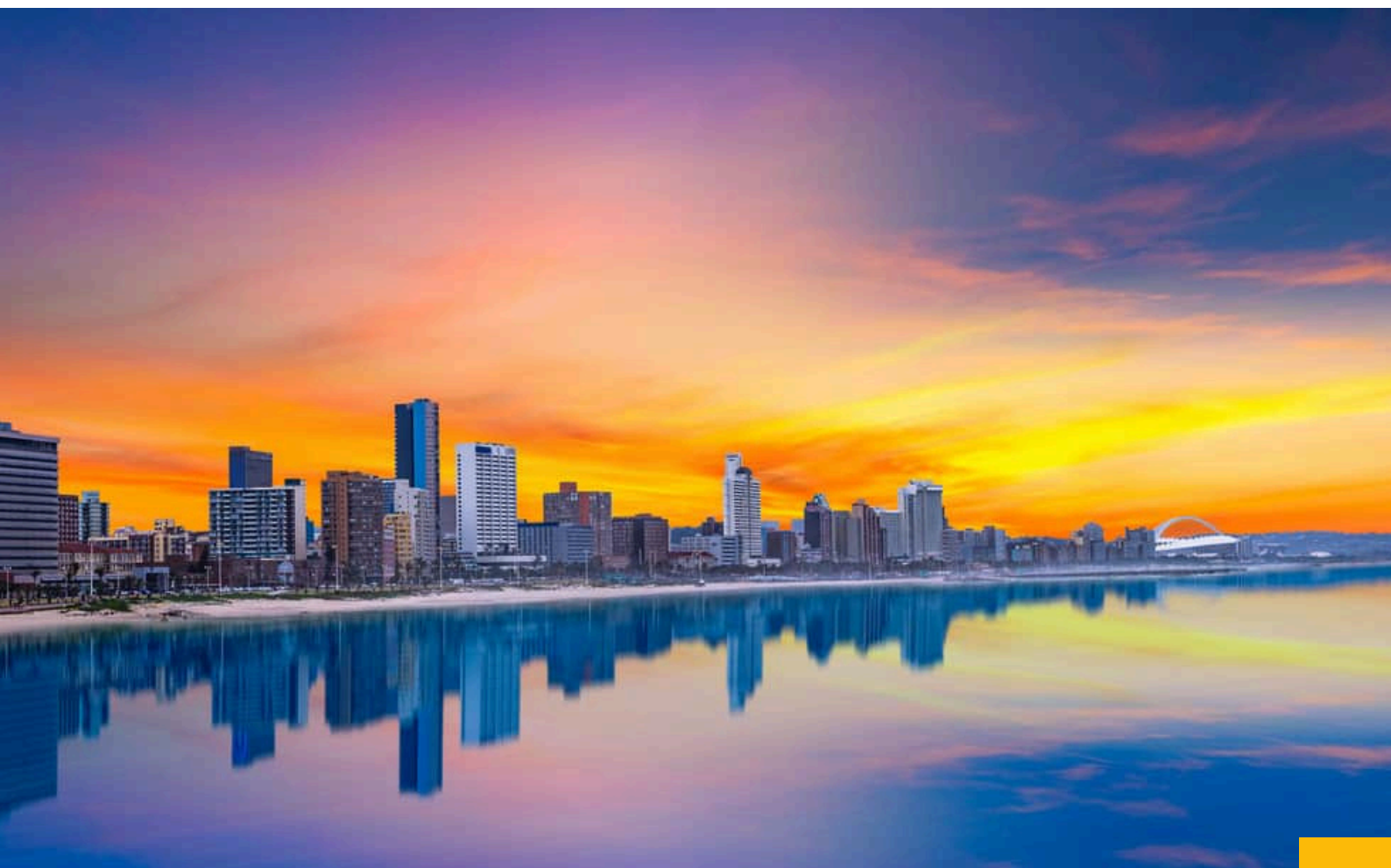
## THEMATIC SESSION 4

# BUILDING URBAN WATER RESILIENCE IN CITIES

*Water stewardship ensures a thriving, sustainable future for our cities and communities."*

aimed at mitigating the impacts of both floods and droughts, demonstrating a robust response to the challenges posed by changing climatic conditions. The panellist also noted the significance of considering climate change predictions when devising such strategies, emphasising the need for adaptive solutions. Additionally, the conversation centred around the crucial role of attracting investors in bolstering these efforts, building the case for financial support to ensure the effective implementation of resilient water management practices in urban areas.

Adaptation funds to address water-related challenges: The Urban Water Resilience Initiative, spanning six African cities, has emerged as a beacon of comprehensive water management. During the panel discussion, the World Resources Institute's panellist accentuated the imperative for holistic city-region approaches in tackling water-related challenges. By stressing the necessity of adaptation funds, they motivated financial support for these cities. The panellist further illuminated their commitment to facilitating progress through collaborative efforts, emphasising the innovative utilisation of the



## THEMATIC SESSION 4

## BUILDING URBAN WATER RESILIENCE IN CITIES

*Water stewardship ensures a thriving, sustainable future for our cities and communities."*

African Cities Water Adaptation (ACWA) Fund. This strategic approach aims to engender innovation across all stages of urban water resilience projects, reflecting a dedicated endeavour to enhance water sustainability and foster resilience within these vital urban centres.

**Multifaceted Insights on Urban Water Resilience:** This part of the discussion revolved around the necessity of achieving a harmonious equilibrium between rural and urban advancement, stressing the imperative of confronting challenges encountered by municipalities and the urgency of addressing economic and societal obligations for all-encompassing and just water resilience strategies, particularly beneficial for marginalised communities.

Inputs from the University of Johannesburg suggested the idea of market-driven methodologies for implementing solutions as a strategic approach to enhancing water infrastructure development and investment within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The aim is to revamp and optimise operations to effectively collaborate with BRICS nations, leveraging their expertise and resources to drive infrastructure projects that align with the goals of AfCFTA. This approach aims to foster economic growth, connectivity, and development across African nations.

The panel member from the Global Water Partnership provided a comprehensive outline of initiatives undertaken to establish standardised water programs. His insights extended to crucial aspects such as tackling non-revenue water, rejuvenating infrastructure and fostering collaboration with the private sector.

Additionally, he expanded on the exploration of innovative techniques like desalination and non-sewer sanitation, emphasising a forward-thinking approach to addressing water-related challenges. This part of the panel discussion showcased a multi-faceted and proactive approach that not only promotes water efficiency but also advances sustainable and resilient urban water management.



## THEMATIC SESSION 4

# BUILDING URBAN WATER RESILIENCE IN CITIES

*Water stewardship ensures a thriving, sustainable future for our cities and communities."*

### Key session outcomes:

Panelists called for the need to:

- Prioritise and commit to ensuring equitable access to clean water as a fundamental human right across all member nations, focusing on both rural and urban areas, particularly targeting underserved communities.
- Establish collaborative initiatives between BRICS countries to share technological advancements, best practices and investment strategies for upgrading and maintaining water supply systems, with an emphasis on the use of smart technologies and sustainable solutions.
- Encourage the integration of green spaces, advanced water management techniques and effective policies to enhance flood resilience and environmental sustainability.
- Mobilise financial resources and technical expertise for the development and implementation of urban water resilience initiatives.





## THEMATIC SESSION 5

# SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND ALTERNATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE APPROACHES

The panel discussion, facilitated by **Ms Nosipho Hlatshwayo, Executive Manager of Programmes at the South African Cities Network (SACN)**, brought together representatives from BRICS member countries to address the multifaceted challenges of rapid urbanisation and its impact on infrastructure, basic services and housing. The panel included experts from Brazil, Russia, India, China and UN-Habitat, along with key officials from South Africa's Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent and the Department of Human Settlements.

The session delved into the pressing urbanisation risks faced by BRICS nations, such as critical infrastructure threats, resource shortages, social instability and slum proliferation. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 and its focus on sustainable cities and communities provided a framework for discussions on inclusive, safe and resilient urban development. The panellists shared insights into innovative initiatives and smart city projects aimed at enhancing infrastructure, basic services and affordable housing to build urban and rural resilience.

Furthermore, the session explored the challenges and approaches to creating safe and inclusive human settlements for vulnerable groups, particularly women, children and Persons with Disabilities, addressing gender-based violence and displacement issues. The discussion aimed to foster knowledge-sharing,

best practices and collaborative strategies among BRICS member countries to improve living conditions and urban resilience.

### Panel members:

1. **Brazil: Ms Carolina Goncalves Pinheiro**, International Affairs
2. **Russia: Mr Vladimir Smirnov**, Leading Research Scientist, Research Institute of Building Physics of the Russian Academy of Architecture and Building Sciences
3. **India: Mr Kuldip Narayan**, Director General for Housing for All Mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
4. **China: Ms ZHANG Yan**, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Building Energy Efficiency and Science and Technology, MoHURD
5. **Mr Oumar Sylla**, Director Regional Office for Africa: UN-Habitat
6. **Ms Pati Kgomo**, Acting Chief Executive Officer for Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA)
7. **Mr Siyabonga Zama**, Director-General: Department of Human Settlements



**THEMATIC SESSION 5**

# SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND ALTERNATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE APPROACHES

**Key discussion points:**

**Brazil** presented the "My House My Life" national program established after the 2008 economic crisis, focusing on building housing to improve Brazil's economy and respond to urbanisation. The program focuses on housing development, spatial development and investment collection. It aims to structure urban development beyond just housing, with new technology integration and smart city solutions, using ecosystem services for nature-based solutions, acquiring funding from both the public and private sectors. The program aims to build 2 million houses within the current administration and targets low-income groups in the urban periphery, seeking to provide inclusive housing with adequate infrastructure.

**Russia** focused on the impact of urbanisation on transport and railways, honing in on vibration-related challenges affecting buildings and inhabitants. The transmission of noise and vibration associated with the proximity of rail lines to houses and office buildings has become a significant issue in metropolitan areas. The operators of rail transit systems have begun turning to measures that mitigate noise and vibration and complaints from city dwellers and business operators. Among vibration-mitigating measures, the country has introduced the Mass-Spring System to reduce vibration directly at the source, aiming to enhance the quality of life of communities.

**India** discussed the Housing for All Mission, the world's largest affordable housing program, promoting the integration of urban and rural areas. India uses a cafeteria approach to provide affordable housing, women's empowerment and innovative construction technology. The "cafeteria approach" to affordable housing in India refers to a flexible and diverse strategy that offers a range of housing options to cater to the varied needs and preferences of the population. Much like choosing from a cafeteria menu, where individuals can select the items that suit their tastes and dietary requirements, the cafeteria approach in housing provides people with different choices that align with their financial capabilities and lifestyle preferences. This approach recognises that a one-size-fits-all solution may not be effective in addressing the complex and diverse housing needs of a large and heterogeneous population like India's.

**China's** inputs centred on the country's objective of ensuring housing for all, marked by a strong commitment to enhancing housing conditions and guaranteeing housing security. The panel member eloquently outlined a well-structured implementation plan that places a premium on social cohesion and inclusivity. Special attention was devoted to catering to the needs of vulnerable groups within society, with a distinct emphasis on safeguarding the rights and well-being of the most marginalised.

## THEMATIC SESSION 5

# SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND ALTERNATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE APPROACHES

This approach underscores China's dedication to creating a harmonious and supportive environment where even the most vulnerable populations find a secure and dignified place to call home.

**UN-Habitat's** contribution to the discussion validated the pivotal role that cities play in tackling the urgent challenges of climate change and promoting accessible housing. The panel member notably advocated for strengthened collaboration among the BRICS nations, recognising the collective potential for addressing shared urban issues. A significant proposal was put forth, suggesting the establishment of international guidelines for the development of smart cities, a step that could revolutionise urban planning and sustainability efforts worldwide. UN-Habitat's unwavering commitment to fostering cooperation and knowledge exchange was palpable, reflecting a shared aspiration to create smarter, more resilient cities that contribute to a more sustainable future.

During the discussion, the panellist from the **Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA)** played a crucial role in shedding light on the pressing challenges that municipalities face. The insightful contribution included a range of innovative solutions aimed at addressing these challenges, such as fostering community engagement, incentivising participation, and enhancing capacity

development. Notably, the panel member from MISA highlighted ongoing initiatives that exemplified these approaches, underlining their effectiveness in driving positive change at the local level. Moreover, the emphasis on harnessing the power of new technology emerged as a key theme, showing its potential to revolutionise municipal operations and services. MISA's valuable insights illustrated the importance of collaborative efforts and forward-thinking strategies to enhance the overall well-being of communities and ensure the sustainable growth of municipalities.

In a significant contribution to the discourse, the **National Department of Human Settlements** delved into essential aspects of policy evolution, alignment, and the critical issue of funding mechanisms pertaining to human settlements. The panel member eloquently articulated the necessity of redefining the value chain within the context of human settlement programs, shedding light on the need for innovative funding mechanisms.

This perspective resonated as a call to optimise resources, streamline processes and ensure the efficient allocation of funds towards creating sustainable and inclusive living environments. The emphasis on reshaping the funding landscape underpins the department's commitment to catalyse positive transformations in the realm of human settlements, reflecting a proactive approach to addressing contemporary challenges and



## THEMATIC SESSION 5

# SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND ALTERNATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE APPROACHES

securing a brighter future for communities.

The **South African Local Government Association (SALGA)** delivered a compelling argument that brought to the fore the multifaceted challenges posed by urbanisation. With an astute understanding of the complexities at hand, the panel member impressed upon the audience the necessity for forward-thinking and imaginative solutions that can effectively address the dynamics of urban growth and informality. Furthermore, the emphasis on climate-resilient infrastructure resonated as a pivotal approach in ensuring sustainable development amidst changing environmental conditions. Notably, SALGA's unwavering commitment to collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange among the BRICS nations reflected a collective determination to surmount shared obstacles and enhance the urban landscape for the benefit of all.

### Key session outcomes:

- Commitment to collaboration, knowledge sharing and innovative approaches to human settlement development, particularly in adapting to informality and promoting climate-resilient infrastructure among BRICS nations.
- Support for more inclusive approaches to community involvement, incentivisation and capacity development in integrating technology and smart city solutions.

"Embracing  
alternative  
infrastructure  
approaches is the  
blueprint for  
sustainable human  
settlements,  
where innovation  
and harmony  
shape the future  
we build for  
generations to  
come."

...ordination and integration  
(human settlements)

- ❑ Under investment in municipal infrastructure
- ❑ Poor management of assets
- ❑ Inadequate technical capacity
- ❑ Infrastructure not resilient and adaptive to climate change
- ❑ Infrastructure capacity limited (doesn't match growth)
- ❑ Conventional infrastructure is costly and high maintenance

COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE  
SOUTH AFRICA

BRICS

MISA



## THEMATIC SESSION 6

# ENHANCING URBAN EFFICIENCY THROUGH CENTRING DATA AS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE:

The role of data as critical infrastructure for enhancing urban efficiency took centre stage in this session, moderated by **Mr Musa Mbhele, City Manager eThekweni Municipality**. The session focused on harnessing the power of data, technology and digital solutions to enhance urban resilience. It featured a live demonstration of the eThekweni Municipality Strat Hub, showcasing practical implementation. Panel members from Brazil, China, and Sentech delved into the transformative potential of data as a critical component of urban infrastructure. The discussion cited the role of data analytics, real-time monitoring and data-driven decision-making to optimise service delivery, operational efficiency, policy-making and decision-making for resource allocation and urban planning.

"Centering data as critical infrastructure empowers cities to unlock new dimensions of urban efficiency, where insights illuminate the path to a smarter, more sustainable future."

The session aimed to amplify the importance of considering data as critical infrastructure and to showcase successful case studies and data-driven initiatives within BRICS countries. It explored how leveraging data can lead to better insights and public service quality. The panel also addressed challenges and considerations associated with centring data as critical infrastructure, with the ultimate goal of enhancing urban efficiencies and resilience across the BRICS nations.

### Panel members:

1. **Brazil: Mr Nathan Belcavello de Oliveira**, Coordinator of the National Secretariat on Urban and Metropolitan Development
2. **China: Mr Zhang Yongbo**, Deputy Director of Academic Information and Innovation Centre Planning (CAUPD)
3. **South Africa: Dr Sandile Mbatha**, Senior Manager: Data, Research and Policy Advocacy, eThekweni Municipality
4. **South Africa: Mr Dumile Ngwenya**, Sentech (Pty) Ltd

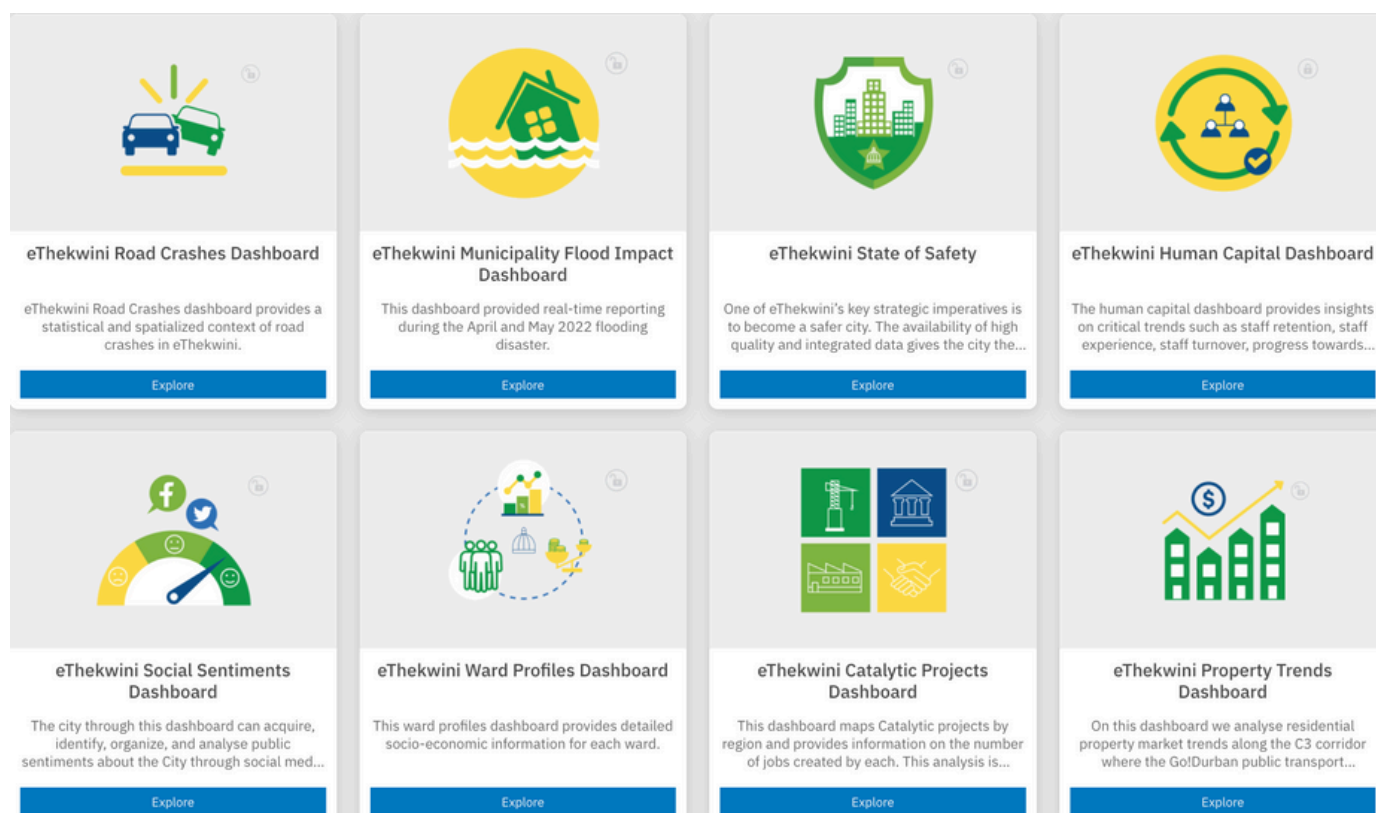


## THEMATIC SESSION 5

# ENHANCING URBAN EFFICIENCY THROUGH CENTRING DATA AS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE:

### Showcases during the session:

**eThekwini's Data Integration Process (StratHub):** eThekwini launched a data-driven Strategic Hub to integrate and analyse city-wide data for strategic planning, service delivery and resource mobilisation. Dr. Sandile Mbatha gave a live demonstration of the integrated city-level data system, which supports informed decision-making, smart city concepts and enhances performance evaluation. Dr. Mbatha highlighted the significance of data as primary infrastructure and recommended that decisions should be data-driven. The StratHub was launched to transform the city's strategic outlook by providing real-time, integrated and accurate data for planning, resource mobilisation and citizen engagement. Integrated city-level data offers benefits such as supporting informed political leadership, laying the foundation for a smart city, enabling data-driven decision-making and innovation, enhancing governance and participatory processes and optimising operational management and planning.

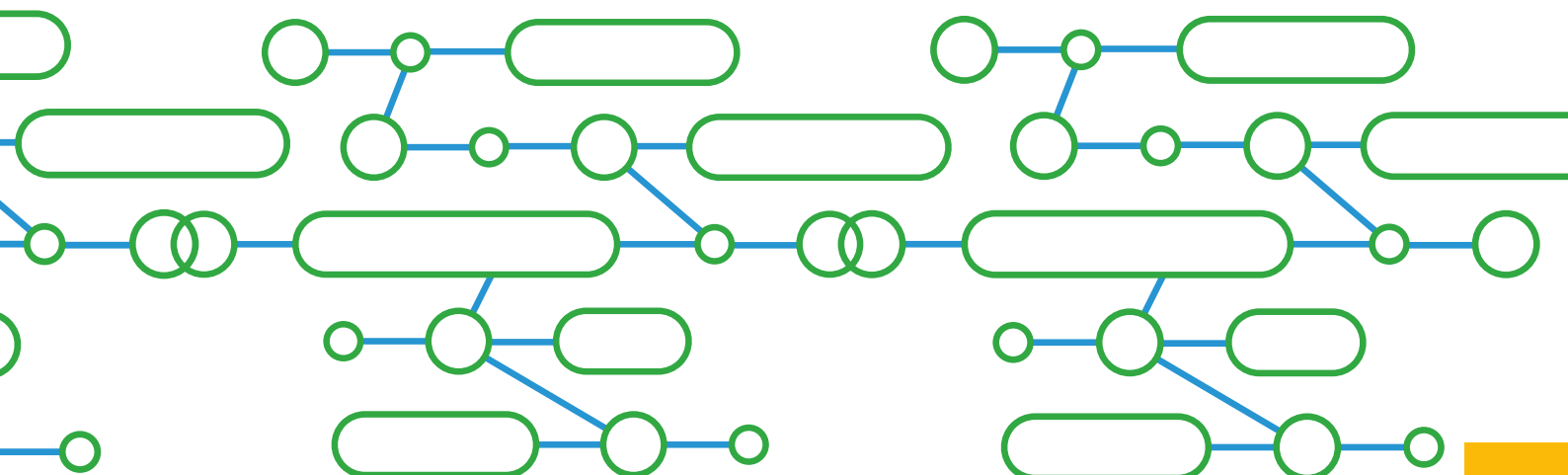


## THEMATIC SESSION 5

# ENHANCING URBAN EFFICIENCY THROUGH CENTRING DATA AS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE:

**Brazil's Approach to Data as Critical Infrastructure:** Brazil has developed a territorial database integrating various areas like health and education. A territorial registry facilitates data-driven dialogue for urban policies and services, building on technological mechanisms and tools that have been developed to organise databases and provide data-related services. This multipurpose territorial mapping system allows for the processing and integration of databases, aiding in the analysis of urban resilience and providing valuable information for governance. The Ministry has established a public registry and employs technological mechanisms, including satellite technology for data collection. Despite being in the initial phase, Brazil aims to collaborate with other BRICS countries to advance in this field. Training is provided to municipal teams responsible for the territorial registry, and efforts are made to use data for informed decision-making and urban resilience. The exchange of knowledge with BRICS countries is appreciated as Brazil continues to grow in this area.

**China's Smart City Development:** China has actively pursued smart city initiatives, with examples like Shenzhen using integrated data for improved urban planning and services. Urban and rural innovation is essential to enhance efficiencies. Shenzhen's use of data from various sources, including sensors and IoT devices, has led to improvements in transportation, waste management and public safety. China has also focused on urban and rural innovation to improve efficiencies, such as implementing digital identification (ID cards) in rural areas. The country has revamped old platforms to automate and create smarter digital systems using platforms like CIM, BIM and IoT. China has established a combined platform at the national and provincial levels to facilitate comprehensive digital transformation. The input reflected China's interest in promoting digital housing and expressed a willingness to exchange ideas on enhancing these efforts.



## THEMATIC SESSION 5

# ENHANCING URBAN EFFICIENCY THROUGH CENTRING DATA AS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE:

### Leveraging Big Data for Urban and Rural Areas:

This input from Sentech, demonstrated the effectiveness of collaboration to leverage big data and technology to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas. The need to understand the demand and supply dynamics and utilise Artificial Intelligence (AI) to derive insights and value from big data quickly was emphasised. Technologies like AI, internet of Things (IoT), and high-speed infrastructure are crucial for moving and analysing data, benefiting both rural and urban areas. Urbanisation's impact on production, food security and agriculture was discussed, bringing to the fore, the utility of automation and insights through big data and AI. The challenges in South Africa and developing countries include skills and technology gaps, making collaboration with partners and industry essential. The role of universities in researching technology's impact and gathering sufficient data to address real-world needs was highlighted. Mr. Ngwenya pointed out that business insights can be gained from data and 5G technology is particularly important for rural areas.

### Key session outcomes:

- The importance of providing real-time data to citizens, policy and decision-makers is critical.
- Using existing data for strategic purposes to inform better decision-making and resource allocations.
- Centralising, integrating and updating data for service delivery efficiencies and empowering citizens is essential.





# CLOSING SESSION



## CLOSING SESSION



# BRAZIL

### Mr Jader Barbalho Filho, Minister of Cities (via video link)

During the closing remarks, the Brazil Minister of Cities encouraged fostering international cooperation to address urban challenges, acknowledging that Brazil's focus was on diminishing inequality and countering the adverse effects of urbanisation. Promoting cities as pivotal hubs for development and economic growth, the Minister showcased key initiatives, including the introduction of a new public transport system and an emphasis on water, sanitation, drainage and waste management. The call to promote both public and private investments in infrastructure and regulation demonstrated a commitment to sustainable urban development. The Minister concluded by expressing a willingness to engage in collaborative efforts and networking to drive positive change collectively.

" Through international cooperation, we forge a path to combat urban challenges and nurture equitable development. Our commitment to sustainable cities lies in the union of public and private investments, driving progress that leaves no one behind."

*Jader Barbalho Filho,  
Minister of Cities*



## CLOSING SESSION

# RUSSIA

### Mr Alexander Lomakin, First Deputy Minister of Construction, Housing and Utilities of the Russian Federation (via video link)

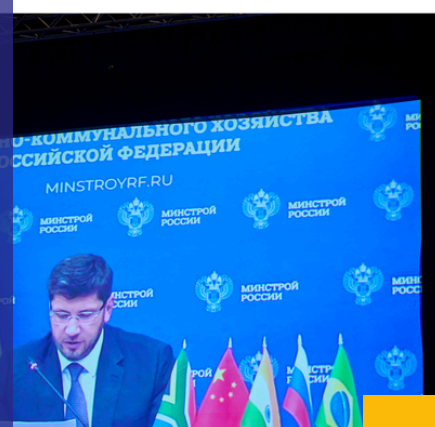
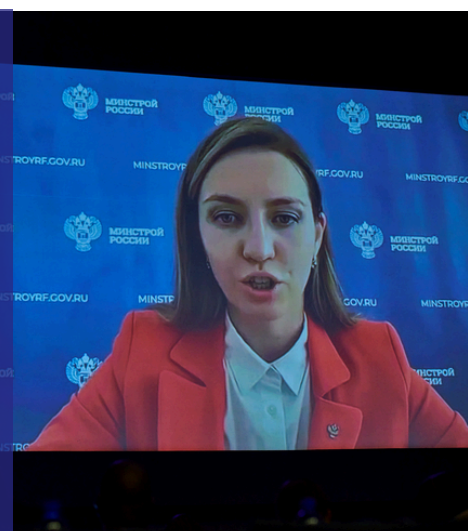
In his closing remarks, the Russian First Deputy Minister extended congratulations to South Africa for hosting the event and commended the fruitful discussions. He made the point that strengthening partnerships and collaboration can foster resilience and ecological equilibrium and acknowledged the enriching exchange of expert insights that took place over the two days, highlighting the significance of joint efforts in achieving common goals. Expressing optimism about the potential for new projects, the Deputy Minister committed to the readiness of the Russian Federation to actively collaborate as it prepares to assume the role of the next BRICS chair in 2024.



*"By forging partnerships,  
we cultivate resilience  
and ecological balance.  
The power of  
collaborative endeavours  
propels us towards  
shared objectives,  
sparking new projects  
and inspiring a promising  
future."*

Mr Alexander Lomakin, First Deputy  
Minister

”





## CLOSING SESSION



### Mr Kuldip Narayan, Director General for Housing for All Mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs

In the closing statements, India brought forward a range of pertinent subjects, including water resilience and innovative strategies. The representative reaffirmed India's dedication to bolstering resilience through effective governance while promoting the localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The pivotal role of national governments in enabling progress was underscored. Areas of potential cooperation were explored, with a focus on waste management, water supply and inventive financing mechanisms. India also expressed keen interest in gaining insights from South Africa's expertise in financing Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and extending mutual support during times of natural calamities.

*"Through mutual learning and support, we stand together, unwavering even in the face of nature's trials."*

*Mr Kuldip Narayan,  
Director General for Housing*

”

## CLOSING SESSION



## CHINA

**Mr Qin Haixiang, Vice Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development**

China's closing remarks encapsulated the comprehensive discussions that encompassed case studies, climate change adaptation, data, infrastructure and human settlements. Notably, the 17th anniversary of BRICS collaboration was acknowledged, with emphasis on the pivotal role of the BRICS Urbanisation Forum. A visionary proposal was put forth for the establishment of a high-level forum or a platform for round table talks, aimed at sharing best practices and amplifying the influence of the Forum. China championed the extension of collaboration to other emerging nations, aiming to infuse new vitality into sustainable development efforts. This aspiration was coupled with a call for heightened participation of BRICS cities in global initiatives like World Cities Day, highlighting the importance of international cooperation. Expressing gratitude to South Africa, the city of eThekweni and the organisers, China urged the expansion of the BRICS bloc's reach and infrastructure institutions to facilitate the exchange of valuable experiences.



*“With heartfelt appreciation, we urge the reach of BRICS to expand, nurturing knowledge exchange through the bonds of cooperation and shared experiences.”*

*Mr Qin Haixiang, Vice Minister*





## CLOSING SESSION

# SOUTH AFRICA

### **Closing remarks by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Minister Thembi Nkadimeng**

In her closing remarks, Minister Thembi Nkadimeng, the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, expressed a sense of optimism and determination as the BRICS Urbanisation Forum 2023 concluded. She highlighted the valuable discussions, innovative ideas and strengthened partnerships that emerged from the event, all aimed at advancing urban resilience within BRICS nations.

The Minister acknowledged the collective commitment displayed by participants, recognising their dedication to creating sustainable and resilient cities. She underscored the importance of inclusivity and social equity in urban development, especially as the world transitions to low-carbon economies. Minister Nkadimeng encouraged collaboration, knowledge sharing and the formation of partnerships to address common challenges and unlock new possibilities. She expressed gratitude to the delegates, facilitators, panel members, organisers and the eThekweni Municipality for their contributions to the Forum's success.

The Minister concluded with a call to move forward with determination, knowing that the decisions taken today will shape the cities of tomorrow and build a legacy of progress for a lasting, resilient, just and sustainable urban future for all.



CLOSING SESSION



# SOUTH AFRICA



*"As the BRICS Urbanisation Forum 2023 draws to a close, let us carry forward the optimism, collaboration and commitment that have defined our discussions. Our collective dedication to resilient cities, grounded in inclusivity and driven by partnership, will shape tomorrow's urban landscape and leave a legacy of progress for all."*

*Minister Thembi Nkadimeng, COGTA*

# OUTCOMES



# OUTCOMES



The BRICS Urbanisation Forum culminated in a shared commitment to advance urban resilience and ensure a just transition across member states in the face of escalating vulnerabilities confronting urban centres due to various factors, including climate change, natural disasters and inadequate infrastructure.



Delegates collectively acknowledged the imperative of cooperation among BRICS countries to address urban challenges holistically, particularly in a rapidly urbanising world. Collaborative projects and partnerships were identified to foster knowledge exchange, policy alignment and resource sharing among BRICS nations.



Enhancing the capabilities and capacities of local governments, urban planners, and practitioners with the skills, technology and innovation needed to foster urban resilience and manage just transitions effectively was another key priority elevated at the Forum, with a proposal to establish a BRICS Urbanisation Forum Programme and Secretariat that will respond to these at the City and community level.



Delegates jointly recognised the expediency of collectively exploring funding and finance mechanisms to bridge the investment gap for substantial and innovative investment in urban resilience actions, including infrastructure development and maintenance.



In charting the way forward, BRICS member states expressed their intent to continue the dialogue initiated at the Urbanisation Forum, working towards concrete actions that promote sustainable urbanisation, social equity and resilience in the face of evolving urban dynamics.



# CONCLUSION



# CONCLUSION



The BRICS Urbanisation Forum 2023 served as a platform for constructive dialogue, idea exchange and collaborative visioning and has exemplified the power of collective action and collaboration in addressing urban challenges. By embracing the themes of urban resilience and a just transition and by uniting under the shared theme of **"Advancing Urban Resilience for Sustainable Cities and Towns for Future Generations,"** BRICS member states demonstrated their commitment to pioneering solutions that will shape the cities of tomorrow and are already taking significant strides towards building cities that are not only resilient and sustainable but also equitable and prosperous for generations to come.

As the curtains close on this Forum, the spirit of cooperation and the momentum generated will undoubtedly serve as a catalyst for transformative change, inspiring nations and cities to thrive in the face of dynamic urban challenges while fostering a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future for all.

# ANNEXURES









# RESOURCES

## BRICS Urbanisation Forum 2023



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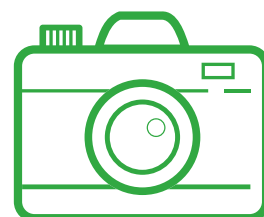
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