

**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER
EDUCATION AND TRAINING, MR BUTI MANAMELA,
TO THE 2018 BRICS FUTURE SKILLS CHALLENGE
WELCOME CEREMONY**

GALLAGHER CONVENTION CENTRE, GAUTENG

1 OCTOBER 2018

Programme Director

Ambassadors from the BRICS countries

Chairs of the BRICS Countries Skills Development Working
Groups

Delegations from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

Members of the media

It is an incredible pleasure for me to welcome you to the warm
and sunny Johannesburg for the 2018 BRICS Future Skills
Challenge. Welcome to our beautiful South Africa.

You would have travelled fourteen and a half hours from Beijing
to Johannesburg. If you are from Moscow, you would also have
travelled fourteen and a half hours as well.

If you are from New Delhi, you would have travelled about twelve hours. If you are from Brasilia, you would have travelled about 13 and a half hours. Thank you for making the trip and we promise to make this a special visit.

Our country has much to offer and is a key tourist destination in the southern hemisphere. I am told that you have already visited the Lion Park and despite the hunger of the lions, you are still here tonight.

You have also visited Nelson Mandela's house in Soweto and the Apartheid Museum. Both these places are important in understanding the history of our country.

Tonight, you heard the eloquence of two young South Africans as they paid tribute to Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu in their centenary years. It is significant that we have two young South Africans talk about these centenarians.

South Africa would not be a part of BRICS and take its rightful place among world nations had it not been for the contribution of these two icons to our struggle for freedom and democracy. We honour them by recognising their contribution, committing to their vision of justice and equality and living their values.

Four days of exciting skills challenges lie ahead of you this week. There are many skills competitions that take place globally. The World Skills competition is one such event that BRICS countries participate in.

However the Future Skills Challenge is different. This challenge is forward looking. It is considering the skills of the future. These skills include cyber security, industrial robotics, internet of things, drone technology, aircraft composites and intelligent manufacturing amongst others. It is preparing for mastery of the skills that Industry 4.0 will need.

In this way, the Future Skills Challenge is compelling our BRICS countries to consider, embrace, prepare and lead the skills needed for the future while we are living in the present.

This is not an easy task to achieve especially when you consider the relative levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality that exist in BRICS countries. BRICS countries do not have the luxury of addressing poverty, unemployment and inequality first and then focussing on future skills and Industry 4.0. If they do this they run the risk of being left behind and being rendered as irrelevant to the global economy.

As developing nations we have to do both simultaneously – we must address our current development challenges and prepare for the future at the same time. In doing this we have to bring all our people along and not leave some behind. This is the challenge that we are faced with.

Within this context, it is undeniable that education plays a key role in the social, political and economic development. In South Africa we are building a post-school education system that can adequately respond to the needs of millions of people including adults and youth. Considerable investments are being made in infrastructure, lecturer development and curriculum advancement to provide education of a high quality. The gaps are closing to ensure equal opportunities for education and training. Opportunities are expanding opportunities for people in disadvantaged areas and especially our youth. Access is increasing. The quality and diversity of education and training is improving.

Innovation and technological development are essential in reducing the challenges of unemployment, inequality and poverty experienced in our BRICS countries. The creation of an innovation architecture will lay the foundation for increased productivity in our industrial sectors and contribute to social upliftment.

Technology has influenced the way we function, the way we teach and the way we learn. It has also given rise to new opportunities, research and areas for development. The BRICS Future Skills Challenge is an integral part of our research, innovation and technological development pathway.

However, the BRICS Future Skills Challenge must not be seen as the preserve of the elite. The Challenge, within its current configuration, may only involve a few hundred people. The skills areas may seem daunting and incomprehensible to the majority of people in our countries. But it is our responsibility to broaden education and access to these skills for the benefit of the majority as we take our people along this Industry 4.0 journey.

A key feature of this 2018 BRICS Future Skills Challenge is the emphasis of Ubuntu. I am told that you have been exposed to Ubuntu through a theatre production that you saw today. Put simply, Ubuntu is the idea of personhood through other people.

I am because you are – we are together. I see you and you see me.
Ubuntu emphasises humanity, solidarity and connectedness.

As South Africa, we believe that it is important to emphasise Ubuntu in this Future Skills Challenge. The future skills related to Industry 4.0 can be individualistic and disconnecting. It must be grounded in humanness and must connect us to each other. We must all benefit from these future skills.

Ubuntu and other philosophical frameworks provide for this interconnectedness. South Africa will present a detailed overview of Ubuntu to the Skills Development Working Group Session. There will also be a discussion on Ubuntu like frameworks that operate in BRICS countries. These discussions will lead to a common framework for consideration in the preparation of Future Skills Challenges and beyond.

As you participate in the skills challenges that will be presented to you over these next days, I encourage you to consider Ubuntu in your participation and interaction with colleagues.

I wish you well in your participation. You represent the best and brightest in our BRICS countries in these future skills areas. We are counting on your contribution to broadening access, information and education in these areas.

Enjoy the BRICS Future Skills Challenge 2018. Enjoy our South African hospitality. Enjoy South Africa, and take the time to do some sight-seeing after the Skills Challenge.

I welcome you to the BRICS Future Skills Challenge 2018.