

THE BRICS LEADERS-AFRICA DIALOGUE FORUM (RETREAT)

President Jacob Zuma hosted the BRICS Leaders-Africa Dialogue Forum on the margins of the Fifth BRICS Summit in Durban on 27 March 2013. The Retreat was held under the theme, "Unlocking Africa's potential: BRICS and Africa Cooperation on Infrastructure".

Invited participants included amongst others: the BRICS Heads of State and Government, the Chairperson of the African Union (AU), the Chairperson of the AU Commission, African Leaders representing the eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs), as well as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative (PICI).

The overall objective of the Retreat was to offer an opportunity for BRICS and African Leaders to engage on measures to strengthen cooperation between the BRICS countries and the African continent to unlock its potential and promote regional integration through infrastructure development and industrialisation.

The BRICS leaders have undertaken to take their cooperation forward to support Africa's efforts to accelerate the diversification and modernisation of its economies, through infrastructure development, knowledge exchange and support for increased access to technology, enhanced capacity-building and investment in human capital, within the framework of the AU and NEPAD.

It is clear that BRICS support for the AU and NEPAD is undiminished from the Sanya Summit, through New Delhi, to Durban. This support was enhanced and energised at the Retreat. A path has been forged to further strengthen collaboration between the BRICS countries and the AUC; the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) and the RECs in support of the implementation of projects under the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA); and the AU/NEPAD PICI and the Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plans.

It is expected that relations between the BRIC countries and African countries and institutions will move from strength to strength, with enhanced cooperation in various priority fields, and the building of a strategic partnership in a concrete manner. In this regard, South Africa will keep the African side informed of developments regarding BRICS and Africa cooperation through the AU Assembly, including proposals in response to the African appeal that such exchanges should be on-going to fully realise the potential of the partnership.