**26 August 2023**

**Programme Director**

**Director General : Ministry of Employment and Labour**

**Bric’s Member Countries**

**Esteemed International Guests**

**Invited guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**All Protocols Observed.**

As the host nation's labour representative, I have the great pleasure of extending our warmest greetings to all of you, on the occasion of this gathering of the BRICS Employment Working Group. On behalf of the workers of this country, welcome to South Africa.

South Africa holds a deep respect for the BRICS partnership and the values it represents - cooperation, mutual respect, and shared prosperity. As South Africa emerges from its 24 September Heritage Day celebrations that epitomises the spirit of our beloved rainbow nation, resonance of shared prosperity is a notion that in many instances evades us. But we believe that the aspirations of ensuring decent work, dignity and respect for all, the theme for this working group, will lead us, through this collective BRICS partnership, to translate that vision into a reality of economic and financial liberation that will truly realise decent work, dignity and respect for all.

Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Agenda, which aims to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all," emphasizes the crucial role that decent work for all plays in attaining sustainable development. Most unfortunately, the state of the labour market and the widespread lack of possibilities for decent work is also acknowledged as existing connections between the worldwide crisis of youth unemployment, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

Henceforth, the significance of this gathering cannot be understated. The critical role that this EWG will play in shaping the key policies and productive ecosystems that will lead to greater embracement of social protection that underpins the well-being of workplaces, are pivotal in creating more equitable global working environments.

Collaboration, solidarity, and a shared vision are the fundamental ingredients and the building blocks of social justice, and unity of purpose and action. Therefore in pursuit of the dream of decent work, dignity and respect for all, lets do this and do it right! As I borrow from Henry Ford…. Allow me to close and emphasise…. “Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress, but Working together is success”

I thank you