

South Africa says more than 40 nations have expressed interest to join BRICS

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Brazil's Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira (L), South Africa's Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor (C) and

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov attend a press conference as BRICS foreign ministers meet in Cape Town, South Africa, June 1, 2023. (Photo by Reuters)?

Pretoria, July 20 (RHC)-- More than 40 countries have already expressed their desire to join the BRICS group of nations, South Africa says, as the bloc prepares to hold a summit next month. Speaking at a press conference on Thursday, South Africa's Ambassador to BRICS Anil Sooklal said that 22 countries have so far formally asked to join the bloc.

Furthermore, there is "an equal number of countries that have informally expressed interest in becoming BRICS members ... (including) all the major global south countries," he added. Sooklal's remarks come as a BRICS summit is due to take place in Johannesburg between August 22 and 24.

Iran, Venezuela, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Argentina are among the list of the nations that have either formally applied to join or expressed interest.

BRICS is an acronym for the current members of the group, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Since the establishment of the bloc in 2006, member countries have achieved beneficial results in areas such as economy, trade, politics, security, technological innovations, as well as social and cultural exchanges.

The group's members host around half of the world's population besides representing one-fifth of the global economy.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was formally invited to attend the upcoming summit, but his South African counterpart Cyril Ramaphosa, whose country is the current chair of the BRICS group, announced on Wednesday that the Russian leader would not attend the event. "By mutual agreement, President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation will not attend the summit, but the Russian Federation will be represented by Foreign Minister Mr. [Sergei] Lavrov," said Vincent Magwenya, a spokesman for Ramaphosa.

"President Putin decided to take part in the BRICS summit in a video conference format," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was cited as saying by Russian news agencies. "It will be a full-fledged participation."

The BRICS is a rising competitor to the G7 group of Western industrial countries. The member states' economies have more than 40 percent of the world's people and almost a quarter of the world's gross domestic product.

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