

Brazil Hosts BRICS Ministerial Meeting on Social Development



Brasilia, February 11 (RHC-Xinhua) -- A ministerial meeting of the BRICS bloc of emerging economies got underway on Tuesday with a call for cooperation towards social development.

Ministers from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa gathered at Brazil's Foreign Affairs Ministry for a preliminary seminar on demographics in the bloc, which represents nearly 2.9 billion people.

In an opening address, Brazilian economist and former minister of strategic affairs Marcelo Neri highlighted the group's potential for cooperation, likening the meeting to the landmark 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, which was hailed by the UN for reinforcing "the principle that development should center on people."

"BRICS' great strength is complementarity (and) our challenge is to convert that complementarity into a virtue. Reducing unemployment among the young, respecting diversity and gender equality are concerns of the post-Cairo agenda," said Neri.

Taking Brazil as an example, Neri said while the country has taken major strides in cutting extreme poverty in the past 12 years, there is still much to be done to promote equality and bolster the middle class.

Participants at the BRICS meeting, which officially runs from Wednesday to Friday, are set to discuss maternal mortality rates, AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, rural-to-urban migration and urbanization, aging, gender differences in the labor market, and the role of women as caretakers. The ministers will present their conclusions and a work plan on Friday.

The meeting follows up on the plan of action adopted at the 2014 6th BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil, and the first workshop of experts on the agenda topics held in March in South Africa.

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