

BRICS+ YOUTH INNOVATION SUMMIT



PRESS RELEASE

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BRICS+ YOUTH INNOVATION SUMMIT 2024



(L-R): Mr. Raymond Matlala (SABYA); Dr. Sindiswa Mzamo; Ms. Asanda Luwaca (NYDA); Ms. Gafone Modise; Ms. Thami Nkadameng; Ms. Siphosethu Mkwedana (Nogemane High School); Mr. Bangani Mpangalasane (Innovation Hub); Ms. Lerato Maela (BRICS Women's Business Alliance); Ms. Alice Qi (Zhongguancun Science Park); Mr. Tom Mkhwanazi (W&RSETA).
(Front): H.E. Pitso Lesaoana (Minister of Gender, Youth and Social Development of The Kingdom of Lesotho).

The South African BRICS Youth Association (herein under referred to as SABYA) successfully hosted its 2024 BRICS+ Youth Innovation Summit from 15-16 May at The Innovation Hub, Pretoria, under the overarching theme: *Innovate to Empower: Building Futures, Transforming Societies*. The primary objective of the Summit provided an international platform for youth entrepreneurs from BRICS+ countries and the Global South to represent and showcase their ongoing innovative projects. The Summit was held in partnership with The Innovation Hub; The



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Department of Women, Youth & Persons with Disabilities; NYDA; TV BRICS; and funded by W&RSETA and Z-Park.

SABYA aims to enhance understanding and cooperation among young people from South Africa, Global South and other BRICS countries through various initiatives, including conferences, seminars, workshops, and cultural exchanges. The organization strives to create a platform where young people can network, share ideas, and work together on projects that contribute to the development and prosperity of their respective nations. SABYA plays a significant role in advocating for youth empowerment, education, entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainable development.

It seeks to empower young people to actively participate in decision-making processes that shape policies and programs within the BRICS framework. By fostering collaboration and dialogue, SABYA seeks to leverage the collective potential of BRICS youth to address global challenges and contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In line with the purpose to strengthen linkages, institutional cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges within the BRICS and multilateral platforms, the 2024 Summit provided a platform to elevate youth entrepreneurs on the opportunities presented by the BRICS and other multilateral platforms, as well as to provide a platform for investors and businesses to pave the way for partnership with young innovators, and thus invest in their promising innovations.



Amongst the honorary guests who were present was the Minister of Youth, Gender, and Social Development of The Kingdom of Lesotho, H.E. Pitso Lesaoana, who gave a keynote address and encouraged the youth to harness their skills in becoming agents of change, by stating that they “be the architects of the future where innovation and entrepreneurship are not just ideals but the very engines that drive progress.”



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Furthermore, he encouraged a collective effort amongst the youth by encouraging that “this summit be a beacon of inspiration and a testament to what we can achieve when we unite in purpose and action. Let us ask questions where we need to, let us share where we need to share to create a conflict free and economically ripe planet”.

Participating members of this year's Summit included over 100 delegates from BRICS+ and Global South countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Lesotho, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. Not only did the Summit support and empower youth innovators and entrepreneurs, it also promoted peer-to-peer networks, knowledge sharing, cultural exchange, global visibility, and skills development.

The two day Summit provided youth delegates the opportunity to immerse in meaningful interactions with distinguished industry leaders as they embarked on fundamental themes and discussions towards unlocking youth potential. The Executive Chairperson of the South African BRICS Association (SABYA), Mr. Raymond Matlala, stressed the significance of SABYA and the Summit when he proclaimed that the summit aims to “create a space to allow young innovators and young entrepreneurs to showcase their projects and innovations”, and advised the youth to use this opportunity to network with other innovators, later characterizing the Summit as a “learning and networking space”.

Over the two day Summit, youth innovators and entrepreneurs who are undertaking projects that reflect prosocial impact in the real world, presented their work before industry experts and adjudicators under the following thematic topics:

- a) *Digital Transformation and Industry 4.0*
- b) *Sustainable Development and Green Innovation*
- c) *Inclusive Innovation*
- d) *HealthTech and Biotechnology*
- e) *Education Technology (EdTech)*



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It was announced that winners of the Youth Innovation Summit who presented their work, have the opportunity to present their projects at the Saint Petersburg International Forum (SPIEF). The Summit achieved its objective of serving as a meeting point between promising youth entrepreneurs and business leaders, investors, partners, and experts from across BRICS and the Global South.

Amongst other prominent figures present was NYDA Executive Chairperson, in her role as the Chairperson of BRICS Youth Council South Africa, Ms. Asanda Luwaca, who addressed the challenges facing the youth by highlighting that “those in the age category of 15-35 years remain the most vulnerable demographic”, and further reflecting on the importance of collective action and calling on assistance as “it is clear that there is a collective need for greater action involving not only ourselves, but also our various social partners”.

In the spirit of unified action towards changing the narrative and amplifying the voices of youth and their needs, CEO of The Innovation Hub, Mr. Bangani Mpangase, informed the audience of the strides undertaken by the organization to achieve youth empowerment by stating that “as the Innovation Hub, this year we will be intensifying our activities to empower our youth through assisting youth innovators to navigate the valley of death in bringing their innovations to market”. Furthermore, he enlightens how the organization will “deliberately be using young innovators to address challenges in government and industries through the open innovation solutions platform.”

CEO of W&RSETA, Mr. Tom Mkhwanazi, echoed equal sentiments on the importance of upskilling youth for their development, stating that “sometimes we give young people knowledge without skills, and that is where we play a role as W&RSETA, ensuring that young people get the skills they require”.

In light of the purpose of the Summit and harnessing innovation, an alternative perspective of the meaning of BRICS+ shared by the renowned Message Architect and Program Director of the Summit, Ms. Thami Nkadimeng, challenged delegates to be “BRICS”, in essence to ***Be Real In Changing Societies***. We are reminded of the words of encouragement by H.E. Pitso Lesaoana who proposes that we “advocate for policies that foster entrepreneurship ensuring the red tape does not suppress innovation. Let us forge partnerships across borders”.



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The Summit was closed off with a keynote address by UNDP Resident Representative in the Kingdom of Lesotho, Dr. Jacqueline Olweya, followed by a prize giving ceremony awarding all participants with certificates, as well as an awards ceremony for youth entrepreneur winners. The 2024 BRICS+ Youth Innovation Summit positioned youth at the forefront of empowerment in advancing sustainability towards a progressive future.

Therefore, the Summit underscored the significance of the South African BRICS Youth Association (SABYA) and its consistent strides towards *Empowering Youth Beyond Boundaries*.



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