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BRICS New Delhi Declaration 2026: India Builds Consensus on Security, Trade, Finance, AI and Global South Cooperation

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Recent Developments:

- The **18th BRICS Summit** was held in New Delhi on **12–13 September 2026** under India's chairship, with the theme **"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability."**
- BRICS members unanimously adopted the **New Delhi Declaration**, overcoming significant differences over the **West Asia conflict** and other geopolitical issues.
- The consensus was diplomatically significant because the **BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in May 2026** had failed to produce a joint statement due to differences, particularly between Iran and the United Arab Emirates, over the West Asia conflict.
- India's chairship emphasised a **practical, inclusive, development-oriented and people-centred approach**, with more than **400 BRICS meetings and engagements across 30 Indian cities** during 2026.
- The declaration strengthens cooperation under the three established BRICS pillars: **political and security cooperation, economic and financial cooperation, and cultural and people-to-people cooperation.**
- The declaration also marks the **20th anniversary of BRICS**, reaffirming its objective of making global governance more representative, equitable and responsive to the interests of emerging markets and developing countries.

West Asia and Conflict Diplomacy:

Consensus Through Diplomatic Language:

- BRICS adopted broader language on West Asia that enabled members with divergent geopolitical positions to reach consensus without attributing responsibility for the conflict to a particular party.
- The declaration called for **maximum restraint, dialogue and diplomacy**, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and avoidance of actions that could further aggravate the situation.
- It also emphasised protection of **civilians and civilian infrastructure**, while stressing the importance of maintaining trade, supply chains and energy flows.

Nuclear Safety and Regional Stability:

- BRICS expressed serious concern over attacks affecting **civilian infrastructure and peaceful nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.**
- The emphasis on nuclear safety during armed conflicts is significant because damage to safeguarded nuclear facilities can create consequences extending beyond national borders.

Gaza and Palestine:

- BRICS called for **maintenance of the ceasefire, unhindered humanitarian assistance and protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.**

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- It opposed the **forced displacement of Palestinians** and the use of starvation as a method of warfare.
- The grouping reaffirmed support for **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**, Palestinian self-determination and a two-state solution based on the **1967 borders**, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.
- The declaration also supported Palestinian aspirations for **full United Nations membership** and addressed the question of the right of return.

Lebanon and Syria:

- BRICS called for adherence to the **Lebanon ceasefire** and withdrawal from remaining Lebanese territory.
- It also supported an **inclusive political transition in Syria**, reflecting its broader emphasis on sovereignty, dialogue and regional stability.

Terrorism: A Significant Indian Diplomatic Outcome:

Condemnation of Terrorism:

- The declaration strongly condemned the **22 April 2025 terrorist attack in Jammam Kashmir**, in which **26 people were killed**.
- BRICS reaffirmed **zero tolerance for terrorism** and condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
- The declaration specifically addressed **cross-border movement of terrorists, terrorism financing, safe havens, extremism and radicalisation**, which directly aligns with India's longstanding counter-terrorism priorities.
- It rejected the practice of associating terrorism with any particular **religion, nationality, civilisation or ethnic group** and called for accountability of those involved in terrorist activities and their support networks.
- The declaration also recognised the role of the **BRICS Counter-Terrorism Working Group** in strengthening practical cooperation.

Significance for India:

- The explicit reference to the Pahalgam attack represents an important diplomatic outcome for India because the declaration was adopted despite divergent strategic interests among BRICS members.
- The emphasis on **terrorist safe havens and cross-border terrorism** strengthens India's effort to place terrorism at the centre of international security discussions.
- However, the declaration does not transform BRICS into a collective-security alliance, and implementation remains dependent on national positions and institutional cooperation.

Trade and Global Economic Governance:

Opposition to Unilateral Protectionism:

- BRICS opposed **unilateral coercive economic measures** that are inconsistent with international law, the United Nations Charter and World Trade Organization principles.
- The declaration supported a **fair, stable, predictable and non-discriminatory trading environment** that facilitates sustainable development.
- BRICS also criticised punitive or discriminatory applications of **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms**, particularly where environmental measures become instruments of protectionism.
- The position reflects developing countries' concerns that unilateral tariffs and environmental trade measures can restrict market access and increase adjustment costs for emerging economies.

WTO and Developing Economies:

- BRICS reaffirmed the importance of a **rules-based multilateral trading system** centred on the WTO.

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- The grouping supported reforms to strengthen the WTO dispute-settlement system and called for greater integration of developing economies into **global value chains**.
- The declaration also linked trade cooperation with **MSME financing, digital trade, trade infrastructure and special economic zones**, thereby connecting global trade reform with domestic development.

De-dollarisation and Financial Cooperation:

Local-Currency Payments:

- BRICS did not announce a **common BRICS currency**; instead, it adopted a gradual and practical approach towards greater use of national currencies in trade and investment.
- The principal priorities include **interoperable payment systems, faster and cheaper cross-border payments, local-currency settlement and stronger financial connectivity**.
- The **BRICS Payment Task Force** is studying the interoperability of payment and messaging channels and exploring practical mechanisms for cross-border payments.

Financial Diversification:

- BRICS supported greater **local-currency financing by the New Development Bank**, while continuing discussions on additional investment mechanisms.
- India also proposed exploring a **BRICS Risk Lab at GIFT City**, which could strengthen cooperation on financial risk assessment, resilience and economic policy.
- The approach represents **financial diversification rather than an immediate replacement of the US dollar**, recognising differences in the convertibility, liquidity and international acceptability of BRICS currencies.
- The declaration also reaffirmed the need for stronger representation of **emerging markets and developing economies** in institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Artificial Intelligence and the Global South:

AI as Opportunity and Governance Challenge:

- BRICS identified **Artificial Intelligence** as both an engine of economic development and a major governance challenge for the Global South.
- The grouping emphasised **inclusive access to AI resources, safety and security, reliability, energy efficiency and trustworthy AI**.
- BRICS called for greater participation of developing countries in shaping global AI governance so that emerging international norms do not become dominated by a limited group of technologically advanced economies.
- The approach is consistent with India's broader effort to promote **inclusive and development-oriented AI governance**.

India's AI Leadership:

- The declaration welcomed India's hosting of the **AI Impact Summit in February 2026**, reinforcing India's position as a major voice in debates concerning responsible and inclusive AI.
- For the Global South, AI governance is closely connected with **digital divides, computing capacity, data access, energy requirements, skills and technological sovereignty**.

Indian Imprint on the New Delhi Declaration:

Digital Public Infrastructure:

- The declaration supports work towards a **BRICS repository on Digital Public Infrastructure**, including pilot projects that could facilitate knowledge-sharing among member and partner countries.

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- India can use its experience with **digital identity, digital payments, interoperable platforms and public digital infrastructure** to support scalable digital solutions across the Global South.

Health and Mental Well-being:

- BRICS endorsed cooperation through a **Training Hub Network and Centres of Excellence on mental well-being**.
- **National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences, Bengaluru**, has been designated as the coordinating centre for the network.
- The initiative can strengthen research collaboration, policy exchange and integration of mental-health services into primary healthcare.

Industry 4.0 and MSMEs:

- India's participation in the **BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies** seeks to strengthen manufacturing capabilities and help MSMEs adopt **Industry 4.0 and advanced digital technologies**.
- The National Productivity Council has been designated as India's centre for engagement with the initiative, with technical support from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.
- This initiative connects BRICS cooperation with **productivity enhancement, advanced manufacturing, technology adoption and industrial competitiveness**.

Development Cooperation:

- Other India-linked priorities include the **BRICS Task Force on Growth and Development, BRICS–New Development Bank Knowledge Portal, infrastructure cooperation and public-private partnerships**.
- The declaration also seeks to strengthen the **BRICS insurance ecosystem**, which can support financial resilience and risk-sharing across emerging economies.

Global South and Multilateral Reform:

Reforming Global Governance:

- The declaration calls for a more **just, equitable, representative, democratic and accountable international order**.
- BRICS supports greater representation of **Emerging Markets and Developing Countries** in global decision-making institutions.
- The grouping continues to advocate reform of the **United Nations Security Council** and international financial institutions to better reflect contemporary economic and demographic realities.
- This agenda reflects the broader Global South demand for **voice, representation and institutional legitimacy**, rather than simply seeking an alternative bloc to existing Western institutions.

Multipolarity and Strategic Autonomy:

- BRICS seeks to strengthen a **multipolar international system** in which multiple centres of economic and political influence coexist.
- For India, BRICS provides a platform to engage simultaneously with major powers and developing countries while maintaining its **strategic autonomy**.
- The grouping therefore complements, rather than replaces, India's engagement with forums such as the **G20, SCO, Quad and other multilateral institutions**.

Challenges and Limitations:

Divergent Geopolitical Interests:

- BRICS includes countries with competing strategic interests, such as India and China, Iran and some Gulf countries, and Russia and several Western-oriented partners.
- The failure of the May 2026 Foreign Ministers' Meeting to produce a joint statement demonstrated the difficulty of maintaining consensus after BRICS expansion.
- The successful adoption of the New Delhi Declaration therefore demonstrates diplomatic flexibility but does not eliminate underlying differences.

Institutional and Economic Constraints:

- Greater use of local currencies faces challenges involving **exchange-rate volatility, currency convertibility, liquidity, payment-system interoperability and regulatory differences**.
- BRICS also needs stronger institutional mechanisms to convert political declarations into measurable outcomes.
- The expanding membership increases BRICS' economic and diplomatic weight but simultaneously makes **consensus-building and policy coordination more complex**.

Way Forward:

From Declarations to Implementation:

- BRICS should develop **time-bound implementation mechanisms, measurable indicators and institutional monitoring** for major summit commitments.
- Payment interoperability, local-currency settlement, digital infrastructure and development financing should move from pilot projects towards scalable systems.
- Cooperation should focus on practical areas such as **trade facilitation, MSMEs, health, infrastructure, critical minerals, food security, energy security and digital technologies**.

Maintaining Strategic Balance:

- BRICS should remain an **inclusive platform for cooperation rather than an exclusive anti-Western alliance**.
- Consensus-based diplomacy should remain central because the grouping's strength lies in bringing together countries with different political systems, economic structures and strategic priorities.
- India can continue playing the role of a **bridge-builder**, connecting the interests of developed and developing economies while advocating a more representative multilateral order.

Conclusion:

- The **New Delhi Declaration** demonstrates BRICS' ability to preserve collective consensus despite substantial geopolitical fragmentation.
- For India, the declaration represents important diplomatic gains in **counter-terrorism, digital public infrastructure, local-currency payments, AI governance, health cooperation and development partnerships**.
- The summit also reinforces India's image as a **consensus-builder and bridge between competing geopolitical interests**.
- BRICS' future influence will ultimately depend not on the number of declarations it adopts but on its ability to transform political commitments into **interoperable institutions, effective financial mechanisms and sustained practical cooperation**.
- The New Delhi Declaration therefore represents an important step towards a **more representative, multipolar and Global South-oriented international order**, while leaving implementation and internal cohesion as its principal tests.

Value Addition for UPSC:

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Key Concepts:

- **Global South:** A broad political and economic grouping of developing and emerging economies seeking greater representation and equity in global governance.
- **Multipolarity:** An international system characterised by several significant centres of political, economic and strategic power.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** The ability of a state to pursue national interests independently while maintaining partnerships with multiple powers.
- **De-dollarisation:** The gradual reduction of dependence on the US dollar in international trade, investment and financial transactions.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure:** Open and interoperable digital systems that enable large-scale delivery of public and private services.

Prelims Pointers:

- **18th BRICS Summit:** New Delhi, 12–13 September 2026.
- **2026 BRICS Chair:** India.
- **2026 Theme:** “Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability.”
- **New Delhi Declaration:** Adopted in 2026 with **140 paragraphs**.
- **Current BRICS membership:** 11 countries.
- **Three BRICS pillars:** Political and security; economic and financial; cultural and people-to-people cooperation.
- **India’s BRICS chairship:** Fourth chairship after 2012, 2016 and 2021.
- **Next BRICS Chair:** China in 2027.

Mains Linkages:

- **Essay:** “*The effectiveness of multilateral institutions depends not merely on representation, but on their capacity to convert consensus into collective action.*”