



President of Brazil Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (L), President of China Xi Jinping (2nd L), South African President Cyril Ramaphosa (C), Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi (2nd R) and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov attend the 2023 BRICS Summit at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg on August 24, 2023.

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# Iran, five other countries invited to join **BRICS**

## International Desk

The BRICS bloc of developing nations has invited Iran, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Argentina and the United Arab Emirates to join the group in a move aimed at accelerating its push to reshape the world order. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who hosted a three-day BRICS summit in Johannesburg, said on Thursday that the six new candidates will formally become members on Jan. 1, 2024. "BRICS has embarked on a new chapter in its effort to build a world that is fair, a world that is just, a world that is also inclusive and prosperous," Ramaphosa said. "We have consensus on the first phase of this expansion process and other phases will follow." BRICS comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, which represent five major world economies in the Global South.

## Iran's accession

Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi, who attended the BRICS 15th annual

summit in South Africa, said on Friday that Iran's accession to BRICS will boost the country's political clout and economy. Speaking upon his return from South Africa, Raeisi hailed Iran's accession to the organization as "significant". The Iranian president said BRICS and similar organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are against unilateralism and work to promote convergence among nations to boost their level of prosperity. "One of the advantages of membership in BRICS is that it enhances the country's political power because increased interaction with global and regional organizations will contribute to bolstering both the political and economic power of our nation," he said. The president said BRICS plays a big role in global economic and trade cooperation, and contacts with its members can help Iran grow economically.

'Historic' expansion Chinese President Xi Jinping described the group's

enlargement as historic. "It shows the determination of BRICS countries for unity and cooperation with the broader developing countries," he said on Thursday. "The expansion is also a new starting point for BRICS cooperation. It will bring new vigor to the BRICS cooperation mechanism and further strengthen the force for world peace and development." Russia's Vladimir Putin, who attended the summit remotely, said, "BRICS is not competing with anyone. But it's also obvious that this process of the emerging of a new world

order still has fierce opponents." For Argentina, facing dire economic problems, membership represents a potential lifeline to escape from the deepening crisis. Its president, Alberto Fernández, said it represented a "new scenario" for the country. "We open up our possibilities of joining new markets, of consolidating existing markets, of raising incoming investments, of creating jobs and raising imports," Fernandez said. Ethiopia became the only low-income country in the group. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed described it as "a great moment" for

his country. Originally an acronym coined by Goldman Sachs chief economist Jim O'Neill in 2001, the bloc was founded as an informal four-nation club in 2009, and added South Africa a year later in its only previous expansion. Over 40 countries had expressed interest in joining BRICS, and 23 formally applied to join the club, which already represented a quarter of the global economy and 40 percent of the world's population. Some 50 other heads of state and leaders attended the summit in South Africa, which concluded on Thursday.



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On Friday, the BRICS bloc of emerging markets announced the approval of Iran and five other states to join the group, which caught the attention of global analysts, who penned their opinions on various websites and news agencies, answering the question in everyone's mind, "Why these six states and not others?"

Jannie Rossouw, professor at the Wits Business School, noted that the primary objective of BRICS was always to create an alliance of all of the world's emerging economies to rival the G7, according to Eyewitness News. Therefore, he added, the strategy must be to get trade among these countries growing.

Rossouw believes the financial aspect of the alliance had generally been "a failure" up until now but said the Chinese and Russians were pushing forward on this front and he expects them to invest in infrastructure projects with the entry of the new members. "The choice of these countries is far from insignificant." International relations analyst, Professor John Stremblau, also noted that China is likely behind the addition of Iran and the United Arab Emirates, a hunch that is shared by geopolitics professor Xavier Aurégan at Université Catholique de Lille, France.

Aurégan told the Brussels Signal news outlet that one can see an attempt by Beijing "to rally governments and populations that have not had the opportunity to be represented in the main multinational institutions [except in the UN]". An Iranian analyst, Ali Behboud-