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Southern Africa Resource Watch

Statement on BRICS, Critical Minerals, and the Energy Transition

24 October 2024 - The ongoing power shift in global dynamics is exemplified by the BRICS bloc—now including Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Egypt and Ethiopia—establishing itself as a formidable force in financial, economic, and political arenas. The addition of these nations, particularly Egypt and Ethiopia, reflects the growing influence of Africa in global forums and emphasizes the need for a multipolar approach that directly addresses the continent's development challenges. This summit in Kazan marks a pivotal moment, particularly for Africa, which is poised to redefine its relationship with these influential powers. African nations expect a transformative partnership, one that not only fosters economic growth but also prioritizes mutual benefit and sustainable development.

Africa is endowed with vast reserves of critical minerals essential for the global energy transition, including cobalt, lithium, and rare earth elements. These resources are pivotal for renewable energy technologies and electric vehicle production, making Africa a key player in the emerging green economy. However, the historical narrative reveals a troubling pattern: Africa's wealth has often been exploited to fuel the development of other nations, leaving its people with minimal benefits and perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality. This status quo cannot continue; the global push for sustainability relies heavily on Africa's mineral wealth—positioning it not just as a contributor, but as the part of the backbone of the energy transition. If we are to achieve a just energy transition, Africa's resources must be harnessed to directly benefit its communities and contribute to the continent's socio-economic transformation.

The challenges of the energy transition are particularly pronounced in Africa, where many nations face inadequate infrastructure, limited access to sustainable energy, and the looming threat of climate change. In this context, BRICS must play a proactive role in addressing these issues by establishing climate finance mechanisms tailored to the needs of all member countries, especially developing nations like those in Africa. Such mechanisms should focus on financing projects that promote renewable energy development, enhance energy access, and ensure the sustainable extraction of critical minerals while safeguarding the environment and the rights of local communities.

Moreover, Africa's expectations from BRICS extend beyond mere economic transactions. There is a pressing need for equitable partnerships that promote shared prosperity and respect for human rights. These partnerships must be grounded in transparency and accountability, ensuring that the benefits of Africa's resources are equitably shared and that local communities are involved in decision-making processes regarding resource management.



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The potential for a new, equitable relationship between Africa and BRICS is within reach, but it requires commitment and action from all parties involved. Now is the time for BRICS to lead by example, fostering partnerships that truly empower African nations in the global energy transition. The world is watching, and the opportunity for a fairer, more sustainable future hinges on the ability of the BRICS bloc to forge a path that benefits all its members, particularly those in Africa.