*Welcome address by Mr. Mikhail Shmakov,*

*President, Federation of Independent Trade*

*Unions of Russia (FNPR) at the BRICS*

*Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting*

*October 9, 2020*

Ladies and gentlemen,

The presidency of the Russian Federation in BRICS this year focuses on global stability, common security and innovative growth. It is only natural that the issues of safe work, poverty reduction and digitalisation of the economy that you are considering today fully fit into this agenda.

National means of achieving security and growth are based on internal socio-economic stability in each of the BRICS countries. In the trade union view clearly expressed in the 2019 Brazilian Declaration of the Trade Union Forum, ensuring justice based on respect for the ILO decent work principles should be an indispensable condition for security, stability and development.

This approach is particularly important in the context of the development of digital economy. All too often, the introduction of digital technologies means displacing human labour with machinery to reduce costs. This outdated approach, borrowed from the arsenal of the second industrial revolution, should be left in the past. A positive impetus to any technological breakthrough can be given by an equitable socio-economic setup that takes into account the balance of interests of business, employees and the state.

In the current context, our countries need solidarity and positive cooperation more than ever to ensure fullest guarantees and justice for hundreds of millions of workers through social dialogue.

Trade unions in the BRICS countries are united in the conviction that diseases and injuries at work are not inevitable, and that poverty does not justify disregard for the safety and health of workers.

A century ago, the ILO was created to ensure that everyone has the right to earn a living under conditions of freedom, human dignity and security. However, even today, trade unions are challenged to prove that the concept of "decent work" means work that is safe, productive and generates a fair income. Achieving this threefold goal of Decent Work requires profound changes to improve the living standards and working conditions of people in the BRICS countries.

BRICS trade unions welcome the ILO's four-pillar strategy for tackling the economic and social impact of the pandemic. The implementation of effective employment policies in our countries as the basis for fair incomes, as well as the protection of workers at workplaces, are the keynote of our current decisions. In the context of a pandemic, occupational safety and health should be included among the fundamental ILO standards, and COVID-19 infection in the workplace − in the list of occupational diseases.

These basic truths of normal life have become particularly clear and important during the pandemic. We can't let the BRICS economies slide into a "pandemic of competition" to emerge from the crisis on the shoulders of workers and at their expense.

Let me express confidence that all social partners of the BRICS countries will show utmost responsibility required by today's ordeals.

Thank you for attention.