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Environmental Aspects of the BRICS Normative Space

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Abstract. In the modern world, normative regulation is one of the key measures to improve the environmental crisis situation. At the international level, such regulation is carried out by both international organizations and interstate associations. This research examines the BRICS normative acts that were adopted between 2009 and 2025, as outcomes of this interstate association in the context of environmental aspects. The relevance of the research stems from the fact that the majority of current studies tend to focus only on certain environmental aspects of international treaties and national laws of the BRICS countries. This research, however, presents a concept of the BRICS normative space as a set of BRICS norms, which is further divided into official and unofficial subsets based on the status of the norm-makers. These norms are analyzed to assess their scope and coverage of environmental aspects. The main findings of the research indicate that the environmental aspects are covered in the norms of both subsets from different perspectives, including through the expression of opinions, intentions, recommendations, action plans, and calls. This research can contribute to a better understanding of the nature and structure of the BRICS environmental norms.

Keywords: environmental aspects; the BRICS normative space; interstate associations; environmental situation; environmental acts; joint statements.

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Introduction

Since the second half of the twentieth century, the environmental situation has been widely recognized as a global crisis,¹ confirmed by extensive scientific evidence. For example, numerous analyses of climate change have shown that human activities have caused global warming through the emission of greenhouse gases, leading to losses and damage to both nature and people.² According to the World Wildlife Fund, environmental pollution has resulted in a significant decline in biodiversity. Currently, approximately one million plants and animals are threatened with extinction, and approximately two and a half percent of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and fish have already become extinct.³ Deforestation produces carbon emissions, which has led to warmer, drier local climates, increasing droughts and wildfires and, depending on the scale, reduced rainfall and shifting global precipitation patterns.⁴

¹ Meadows, D. H., et al. (1972). *The limits to growth: A report for the Club of Rome's project on the predicament of mankind* (pp. 158–175). Universe Books; Oosthoek, J., & Gills, B. K. (2005). Humanity at the crossroads: The globalization of environmental crisis. *Globalizations*, 2(3), 283–291; Fotopoulos, T. (2007). The ecological crisis as part of the present multi-dimensional crisis and inclusive democracy. *International Journal of Inclusive Democracy*, 3(3), 283–291. https://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol3/vol3_no3_takis_torino.htm; Jessop, B. (2012). Economic and ecological crises: Green new deals and no-growth economies. *Development*, 55, 17–24; Chichkin, D. (2017). Global environmental crisis: Origins and ways of solution. *Economy and Society*, 5(36), 760–762. (In Russian).

² IPCC. (2023). Summary for Policymakers. In H. Lee & J. Romero (Eds.), *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (p. 4). IPCC.

³ Almond, R. E. A., et al. (2022). *Living planet report 2022—Building a nature-positive society* (p. 16). WWF. https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/embargo_13_10_2022_lpr_2022_full_report_single_page_1.pdf

⁴ Lawrence, D., et al. (2022). The unseen effects of deforestation: Biophysical effects on climate. *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change*, 5, Article 756115.

The existing environmental conditions have long been and still are a matter of serious concern for the world community, represented by international organizations and interstate associations, and served as an incentive to take determined and consistent actions. One of these actions is the development and adoption of environmental normative acts.

Among the international organizations, the United Nations (UN) plays a special role in environmental governance. To improve the activity of setting environmental standards, it even created a special body—the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1972. Today, the UN environmental normative framework includes a wide range of normative acts, both legally binding (such as the 1991 Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement) and non-binding (such as the 1972 Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the 2015 UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”).

Environmental issues are also addressed in normative acts of organizations that are not primarily focused on environmental issues, such as the World Trade Organization. Thus, Article XX of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) provides that, in certain cases, trading in goods that is intended to protect human life and health, flora and fauna, as well as the conservation of non-renewable natural resources, is exempt from normal restrictions. Similarly, according to Article 27 of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), public authorities have the right to refuse the granting of patents and licenses that could be harmful to the life and health of people, animals, and plants or that pose a threat to the environment.

Among interstate associations, the experience of the European Union (EU) is particularly noteworthy. The EU environmental normative framework consists of two parts. The first part includes strategic acts that set out general environmental trends (such as the 8th Environmental Action Program of the EU, the EU Green Deal, and the EU Action Plan “Towards Zero Air, Water, and Soil Pollution”). The second part consists of the regulations addressing specific environmental problems (such as Directive 2003/87/EC of the European Parliament and of the EU Council on the Establishment of a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading System in the Union (and the amendment of Directive 96/61/EC), Regulation (EC) No 1005/2009 of the European Parliament and the EU Council on substances that deplete the ozone layer, and EU Regulation 2018/1999 on the Management of the Energy Union and Climate Change-Related Actions).

In light of the above, the environmental normative activity of such an active global player as the BRICS is of particular interest. The BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China)⁵ interstate association was founded in June 2006 and then renamed

⁵ The term “BRIC” was first developed and applied in 2001 by researchers of Goldman Sachs Corporation headed by Jim O’Neill. See O’Neill, D. (2011). *The growth map: Economic opportunity in the BRICS and beyond* (p. 266). Penguin.

the BRICS in 2011 when South Africa joined.⁶ One of the first official documents of the BRIC—the Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries' Leaders (BRIC 2009)⁷ declared that implementation of the concept of sustainable development, comprising the multilateral environmental agreements, should be a major vector in the change of paradigm of economic development. This raises key questions: Do the BRICS normative acts reflect environmental issues? If so, what is the nature and content of the BRICS norms regarding these issues? Attempts to find the answers to these questions in the existing research show that, despite titles implying broader coverage, most studies focus only on selected aspects of the national and international environmental normative acts of the BRICS countries.

For instance, the study *Analyzing the Impact of Natural Resources and Rule of Law on Sustainable Environment: A Proposed Policy Framework for BRICS Economies*⁸ examines the role of the rule of law of the BRICS members as a means of reducing CO₂ emissions. The study *Trends and Prospects for Legislative Regulation of Legal Responsibility for Environmental Offenses in BRICS Countries: Comparative Law*⁹ provides a comparative analysis of the features of the national legislation of the BRICS countries that regulate the issues of legal responsibility for environmental offenses. Other studies have analyzed the impact of national environmental laws on the sustainable development of the BRICS members,¹⁰ the peculiarities of legal regulation of the use of renewable energy in these countries,¹¹ and the participation of the BRICS member states in international legal regulations on climate change.¹²

This study aims to answer the questions posed earlier. To that end, this article is organized as follows: the first section examines the specifics of the normative space of BRICS as a result of the functioning of this interstate association. The next section provides an analytical review of the BRICS normative acts adopted between 2009 and 2025, focusing on environmental aspects. The final section presents the main findings and conclusions.

⁶ Since 6 January 2025, BRICS has also included Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia.

⁷ Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries' Leaders (Yekaterinburg, Russia, 16 June 2009). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁸ Khan, Y., et al. (2023). Analyzing the impact of natural resources and rule of law on sustainable environment: A proposed policy framework for BRICS economies. *Resources Policy*, 86 (Part A), Article 104070.

⁹ Anisimov, A., & Kayushnikova, J. (2019). Trends and prospects for legislative regulation of legal responsibility for environmental offenses in BRICS countries: Comparative law. *BRICS Law Journal*, 6(1), 82–101. (In Russian).

¹⁰ Liu, M. (2022). Environmental sustainability impact of environmental protection regulations on the BRICS countries. *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*, 10, Article 4626387.

¹¹ Kologermanskaya, E. (2019). Peculiarities of legal regulation of the use of renewable energy in the BRICS member states. *Legal Energy Forum*, 3, 108–112. (In Russian).

¹² Gladun, E., & Ahsan, D. (2016). BRICS countries' political and legal participation in the global climate change agenda. *BRICS Law Journal*, 3(3), 8–42.

1. The Normative Space of BRICS

The determination of the BRICS normative space is based on an analysis of the features of the establishment and functioning of this interstate association. The preconditions for the formation of the BRICS association arose quite a long time ago. In 1998 E.M. Primakov, who was at that time the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, proposed the idea of creating a strategic Eurasian triangle “Russia–India–China.”¹³ Initially, the prospective member states were skeptical about this proposal. However, with the advent of the new millennium, the situation changed dramatically, and both Russian and foreign experts began to actively discuss the possibility of creating such a framework and its viability.

The starting point for the creation of the BRIC was the meeting of the ministers from China, India, Russia, and Brazil that took place in June 2006. The next leadership meetings of the four countries to outline multi-level cooperation were held in 2008. The outcomes of the 2006–2008 meetings were not formally documented.

The first formal act of the BRIC was the Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries’ Leaders, which was issued at the full-format BRIC Summit held in Yekaterinburg on June 16, 2009. This Joint Statement did not provide for either the creation of any BRIC grouping or the establishment of a permanent mechanism governing its periodic meetings but merely declaratively indicated the main tasks of interstate cooperation.

Overcoming global economic and financial crises, as well as the formation of a new system of world order involving not only financial and economic interaction but also ensuring food and energy security and the sustainable development of participating countries, were identified as areas of foremost priority. Following the accession of South Africa to the BRIC in 2011, the interstate association was renamed BRICS.

The first formal act of the BRICS association was the BRICS Leaders’ Declaration, adopted as a result of the summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People’s Republic of China, and the Republic of South Africa in 2011.¹⁴ This declaration, however, did not contain the basic provisions governing the establishment and operation of the BRICS group as a kind of interstate association. To date, no formal document determining the basis of the BRICS functioning as an interstate association has been adopted. Moreover, BRICS currently still has no governing bodies, no secretariat, and no independent budget.

Since its inception and to the present day, BRICS continues to function primarily in the format of periodic meetings of the official actors (such as heads of states, heads of governments, ministers) and unofficial actors (such as representatives of the corporate sector, science, and community). For example, the BRICS Heads of

¹³ Shevchenko, R. (2016). Unification of BRICS: Stages of formation and prospects. *Bulletin of Irkutsk State University. Series “Political Science and Religion Studies,”* 17, 43–44. (In Russian).

¹⁴ Sanya Declaration (Sanya, Hainan, China, April 14, 2011). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

State Summits have been held annually since 2011. Regular annual meetings of the BRICS foreign ministers have been held since 2008. Six business community forums within BRICS were held from 2010 to 2015. Representatives of the BRICS academic community have met on seven occasions from 2009 to 2015. The results of the BRICS meetings usually are fixed in different formal acts, such as joint statements, declarations, memorandums, and similar documents. The set of norms contained in these acts forms the normative space of the BRICS. Depending on the status of the norm-setters within the BRICS normative space, two main subsets of norms can be distinguished: an official subset, which includes norms adopted by official actors, and an unofficial subset, which includes norms adopted by unofficial actors.

The structure of the official subset of the BRICS normative space can be presented as follows. Meetings of the BRICS officials take place at different levels, ranging from heads of state to heads of ministries and departments. Depending on the rank of the officials, all the adopted normative acts can be divided into three groups. The first group of the official subset of the BRICS normative space includes acts that are the normative outcomes of the meetings of the BRICS Heads of State. These acts fall into two types: Joint Statements and Summit Declarations.

To date the following Joint Statements have been adopted: Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries' Leaders,¹⁵ 2nd BRIC Summit of Heads of State and Government: Joint Statement,¹⁶ Statement by BRICS Leaders on the Establishment of the BRICS-Led Development Bank,¹⁷ Media Statement: Informal BRICS Leaders' Meeting on the Margins of the G20 Summit,¹⁸ Joint Statement on BRICS Leaders' Informal Meeting on the Margins of G20 Summit,¹⁹ and the BRICS Leaders' Statement on the Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence.²⁰

The Summit Declarations include the Sanya Declaration,²¹ Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration,²² BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration

¹⁵ Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries' Leaders (Yekaterinburg, Russia, June 16, 2009). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

¹⁶ 2nd BRIC Summit of Heads of State and Government: Joint Statement (Brasília, Brazil, April 15, 2010). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

¹⁷ Statement by BRICS Leaders on the Establishment of the BRICS-Led Development Bank (Durban, South Africa, March 27, 2013). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

¹⁸ Media Statement: Informal BRICS Leaders' Meeting on the Margins of the G20 Summit (Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 30, 2018). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

¹⁹ Joint Statement on BRICS Leaders' Informal Meeting on the Margins of G20 Summit (Osaka, Japan, June 28, 2019). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

²⁰ BRICS Leaders' Statement on the Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 6, 2025). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

²¹ Sanya Declaration (Sanya, Hainan, China, April 14, 2011). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

²² Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration (New Delhi, March 29, 2012). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

and Industrialization—eThekweni Declaration,²³ Sixth BRICS Summit: Fortaleza Declaration,²⁴ VII BRICS Summit: 2015 Ufa Declaration,²⁵ 8th BRICS Summit: Goa Declaration,²⁶ BRICS Leaders Xiamen Declaration,²⁷ 10th BRICS Summit Johannesburg Declaration,²⁸ Brasilia Declaration,²⁹ XII BRICS Summit Moscow Declaration,³⁰ XIII BRICS Summit: New Delhi Declaration,³¹ XIV BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration,³² XV BRICS Summit Johannesburg II Declaration,³³ XVI BRICS Summit Kazan Declaration,³⁴ and the XVII BRICS Summit Rio de Janeiro Declaration,³⁵ Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance.³⁶

All of the normative acts adopted by the Heads of State of the BRICS countries share a number of common characteristics. As outcomes of the meetings, these acts express the collective position of the leaders of the BRICS countries on issues of a general nature that are relevant to the participating states. These issues include the common vision and global governance, international economics and finance,

²³ BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialisation—eThekweni Declaration (Durban, South Africa, March 27, 2013). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

²⁴ Sixth BRICS Summit: Fortaleza Declaration (Fortaleza, Brazil, July 15, 2014). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

²⁵ VII BRICS Summit: 2015 Ufa Declaration (Ufa, Russian Federation, July 9, 2015). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

²⁶ 8th BRICS Summit: Goa Declaration (Goa, India, October 16, 2016). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

²⁷ BRICS Leaders Xiamen Declaration (Xiamen, China, September 4, 2017). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

²⁸ 10th BRICS Summit Johannesburg Declaration (Johannesburg, South Africa, July 26, 2018). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

²⁹ Brasilia Declaration (Brasilia, Brazil, November 14, 2019). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

³⁰ XII BRICS Summit Moscow Declaration (Moscow, Russia, November 17, 2020). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

³¹ XIII BRICS Summit: New Delhi Declaration (New Delhi, India, September 9, 2021). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

³² XIV BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration (Beijing, China, June 23, 2022). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

³³ XV BRICS Summit Johannesburg II Declaration (Sandton, Gauteng, South Africa, August 23, 2023). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

³⁴ XVI BRICS Summit Kazan Declaration (Kazan, Russian Federation, October 23, 2024). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

³⁵ XVII BRICS Summit Rio de Janeiro Declaration (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 6, 2025). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

³⁶ Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 7, 2025). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

international trade development, agricultural and energy policies, the fight against poverty, the environmental situation, and cooperation among BRICS members. The norms contained in the acts of this group contain three types of provisions, namely opinions, calls, and intentions.

The opinions reflect the subjective views on certain issues. For example, paragraph 1 of the “2nd BRIC Summit of Heads of State and Government: Joint Statement 2010” states:

We share the perception that the world is undergoing major and swift changes that highlight the need for corresponding transformations in global governance in all relevant areas.

Another example of an opinion is contained in paragraph 3 of the BRICS Leaders Xiamen Declaration 2017:

Our cooperation since 2006 has fostered the BRICS spirit featuring mutual respect and understanding, equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation, which is our valuable asset and an inexhaustible source of strength for BRICS cooperation.

Calls take the form of invitations for specific actions. In particular, paragraph 15 of the Sanya Declaration 2011 calls for a quick achievement of the targets for the reform of the International Monetary Fund, and paragraph 18 of the 2nd BRIC Summit of Heads of State and Government, “Joint Statement 2010,” calls upon the international community to make all the necessary efforts to fight poverty, social exclusion, and inequality, bearing in mind the special needs of developing countries.

Intentions express plans to undertake specific actions. For example, paragraph 66 of the XV BRICS Summit Johannesburg II Declaration 2023 proclaims,

Taking into account national legislation and priorities of BRICS countries, we commit to continue cooperation in traditional medicine in line with previous meetings of the BRICS Health Ministers and their outcomes, as well as the BRICS High-Level Forum on the Traditional Medicine.

Another example can be seen in paragraph 12 of the Joint Statement on BRICS Leaders’ Informal Meeting on the Margins of G20 Summit 2019, which states:

We will, therefore, strive to promote international anticorruption cooperation and strengthening of legal frameworks, as appropriate, to more effectively address cases of corruption especially with regard to assets recovery.

The second group of the official subset of the BRICS normative space comprises acts adopted as a result of meetings of the BRICS heads of government or ministers. Within this group, three types of acts can be identified. The first type consists of the Joint Statements, such as the Goa Statement on Environment (Second Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers),³⁷ the Tianjin Statement on Environment (Third Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers),³⁸ the Joint Statement for the 5th BRICS Ministers

³⁷ Goa Statement on Environment: Second Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers (Goa, India, September 16, 2016). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

³⁸ Third Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers Tianjin Statement on Environment (Tianjin, China, June 23, 2017). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

of Environment Meeting: Contribution of Urban Environmental Management to Improving the Quality of Life in Cities,³⁹ the Statement of the 10th BRICS Environment Ministers Meeting,⁴⁰ and the Joint Statement of the 11th BRICS Environment Ministers Meeting.⁴¹

The second type consists of the Ministers' Declarations, for example, the Ministerial Declaration of the BRICS Trade Ministers,⁴² the Declaration of the BRICS Industry Ministers,⁴³ the Joint Declaration of BRICS Ministers of Agriculture,⁴⁴ etc.

The third type comprises the Memorandums of Understanding or Action Plans, such as the "Memorandum of Mutual Understanding in Energy Saving and Energy Efficiency among the Ministries and Governmental Agencies of BRICS Responsible for Energy and Energy Efficiency,"⁴⁵ the Memorandum of Understanding on the Creation of the Joint BRICS Website,⁴⁶ the BRICS Science, Technology and Innovation Work Plan 2019–2022,⁴⁷ etc.

All the acts within this second group demonstrate positions of the BRICS heads of government or ministers regarding special fields of BRICS cooperation, including the environment, industry, agriculture, energy saving and energy efficiency, culture, health, and so on. The norms contained in these acts include such types of provisions as opinions, intentions, calls, and lists of planned actions. For example, paragraph 2 of the Joint Declaration of the Twelfth Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Agriculture⁴⁸ expresses the following opinion:

³⁹ Joint Statement for the 5th BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting: Contribution of Urban Environmental Management to Improving the Quality of Life in Cities (Sao Paulo, Brazil, August 15, 2019). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁴⁰ Statement of the 10th BRICS Environment Ministers Meeting (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, June 28, 2024). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁴¹ Joint Statement of the 11th BRICS Environment Ministers Meeting (Brasilia, Brazil, April 3, 2025). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁴² Ministerial Declaration of the BRICS Trade Ministers (Geneva, Switzerland, December 14, 2011). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁴³ Declaration of the BRICS Industry Ministers (Moscow, Russia, October 20, 2015). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁴⁴ Joint Declaration of the BRICS Ministers of Agriculture (New Delhi, India, September 23, 2016). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁴⁵ Memorandum of Mutual Understanding in Energy Saving and Energy Efficiency among the Ministries and Governmental Agencies of BRICS, Responsible for Energy and Energy Efficiency (Moscow, Russia, November 20, 2015). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁴⁶ Memorandum of Understanding on the Creation of the Joint BRICS Website (Ufa, Russia, July 9, 2015). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁴⁷ BRICS Science, Technology and Innovation Work Plan 2019–2022 (Campinas, Brazil, September 20, 2019). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁴⁸ Joint Declaration of the Twelfth Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Agriculture (July 8, 2022, hosted by China (virtual)). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

We acknowledge that as major emerging markets, BRICS countries are also pillars of global food security and nutrition, as their large agricultural sectors produce over one-third of the world's food commodities.

Paragraph 27 of the “BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers Declaration: Quality Jobs and Inclusive Employment Policies 2016”⁴⁹ contains the following intention:

We intend to strengthen our tripartite dialogue format for advancing labor market development and promoting of stronger labor market outcomes.

An example of a call can be found in paragraph 14 of the Joint Statement of the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, in which the ministers called for continued efforts to strengthen the system of arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation treaties and agreements to preserve their integrity for maintaining global stability and international peace and security, and further stressed the need to maintain the effectiveness and efficiency as well as the consensus-based nature of the relevant multilateral instruments in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control.⁵⁰

The section entitled “Development of a General Strategy for Ensuring Access to Food for the Most Vulnerable Population” of the Action Plan 2012–2016 for Agricultural Cooperation of BRICS Countries⁵¹ contains a list of such actions as sharing seminars on food security and sustainable intensification of agricultural production and productivity of smallholder farmers, establishing a BRICS group in Food and Agriculture Organization for the coordination of food security initiatives, and developing a strategy to ensure food access for the most vulnerable populations.

The third group of the official subset of the BRICS normative space includes acts that are the normative outcomes of meetings of other BRICS authorities. These include, for instance, the Communiqué of the BRICS Heads of Revenue Meeting,⁵² the Communiqué of the BRICS Heads of Revenue Meeting,⁵³ and the Joint Statement of the Heads of BRICS Competition Authorities.⁵⁴ The norms contained in these acts typically consist of opinions, agreements, and acknowledgments of the BRICS

⁴⁹ BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers Declaration: Quality Jobs and Inclusive Employment Policies (Ufa, Russia, January 26, 2016). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁵⁰ BRICS Joint Statement on “Strengthen BRICS Solidarity and Cooperation, Respond to New Features and Challenges in International Situation” (May 19, 2022, hosted by China (virtual). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁵¹ Action Plan 2012–2016 for Agricultural Cooperation of BRICS Countries (Chengdu, China, October 30, 2011). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁵² Communiqué of BRICS Heads of Revenue Meeting (Delhi, India, January 18, 2013). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁵³ Communiqué of BRICS Heads of Revenue Meeting (Moscow, Russia, November 19, 2015). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁵⁴ Joint Statement of the Heads of BRICS Competition Authorities (Durban, South Africa, November 13, 2015). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

Heads of Revenue or Authorities. For example, the section titled “International Tax Cooperation” of the Communiqué of the BRICS Heads of Revenue Meeting 2015 contains the following opinion: “We recognize the importance of the economic and commercial links between Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa and the need for us to contribute to the strengthening of these links.” The 2013 Communiqué of BRICS Heads of Revenue Meeting includes an agreement to extend cooperation in the field of tax policy and tax administration within the section titled “Tax Administration Cooperation.” Furthermore, in paragraph 3 of the Joint Statement of the Heads of BRICS Competition Authorities 2015, the parties acknowledge that “... dialogue amongst the BRICS countries in the field of competition policy and enforcement, based on mutual respect and trust, is essential.”

The unofficial subset of the BRICS normative space consists of the outcomes of forums, conferences, and workshops involving representatives of the corporate sector, science, and community. Such outcomes are reflected in joint statements, recommendations, and declarations. For example, the Joint Statement of the BRICS Business Forum represents the outcome of the BRICS Business Forum 2013.⁵⁵ The BRICS Academic Forum 2012 concluded with the adoption of the Recommendations to the 4th BRICS Leaders’ Summit in New Delhi.⁵⁶ Other documents produced in this context include the Declaration of the First BRICS Meeting on Human Milk Bank 2019,⁵⁷ the Statement of the BRICS First Parliamentary Forum (Moscow, June 8, 2015), and the Jaipur Declaration 2016.⁵⁸

Thus, all of the above acts contain provisions comprising opinions, intentions, recommendations, and calls. For example, in paragraph 4 of the Joint Statement of the BRICS Business Forum 2013, the parties express the opinion that greater economic cooperation among BRICS countries is imperative. Paragraph 6 of the Statement of the BRICS First Parliamentary Forum 2015 demonstrates the intention to create mechanisms for cooperation between legislative bodies and exchange experiences in order to further improve their national legislative systems. Paragraph 13 of the Recommendations to the 4th BRICS Leaders’ Summit in New Delhi 2012 recommends that the BRICS members study the efficacy of their individual education policies in promoting inclusive growth. Finally, paragraph 10 of the Jaipur Declaration

⁵⁵ Joint Statement of the BRICS Business Forum 2013 (Durban, South Africa, March 26, 2013). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁵⁶ Recommendations to the 4th BRICS Leaders’ Summit in New Delhi (New Delhi, India, March 5–6, 2012). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁵⁷ Declaration of the First BRICS Meeting on Human Milk Bank 2019 (Brasilia, Brazil, August 30, 2019). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

⁵⁸ Jaipur Declaration: Meeting of BRICS Women Parliamentarians’ Forum on Women Parliamentarians: Enablers for Achieving SDGs (Jaipur, Rajasthan, India, August 21, 2016). BRICS Information Centre. <http://brics.utoronto.ca/docs/index.html>

“Meeting of the BRICS Women Parliamentarians’ Forum on Women Parliamentarians: Enablers for Achieving SDGs” (2016) contains the following call:

... call upon international financial institutions to support and facilitate financing for development on favorable terms for the developing and the least developed countries, and to help them gain easier access to new and affordable technologies for capacity-building, as envisaged under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement.

2. The Coverage of Environmental Aspects within the BRICS Normative Space

2.1. The Coverage of Environmental Aspects within the Official Subset of the BRICS Normative Space

As established above, the official subset of the BRICS normative space consists of three groups of normative acts: acts adopted by the Heads of State; acts adopted by the Heads of Government or ministers; and acts adopted by the Heads of authorities. An analysis of each group of acts to determine the environmental aspects demonstrates that environmental issues have been repeatedly covered from different angles.

The features of the environmental issues covered within the acts adopted by the Heads of State, which include the Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State and the Summit Declarations, may be summarized as follows. The Joint Statements do not contain any separate sections devoted exclusively to environmental matters; instead, environmental issues are covered only in some paragraphs. The objects of normative regulation are issues such as the implementation of the concept of sustainable development, the problem of climate change, environmental cooperation and the introduction of eco-friendly technologies, the implementation of environmental agreements, and the support of environmental initiatives. In terms of content, the environmental-oriented norms of the Joint Statements fall into three types of normative provisions: opinions, calls, and intentions.

Based on their content, opinions can be divided into “opinions-assessments,” “opinions-recognitions,” and “opinions-confirmations.” The “opinions-assessments” reflect the evaluations of the importance of such environmental aspects as the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements and climate change (Table 1).

Table 1: Environmental “Opinions–Assessments” in the Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State

Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State	Environmental “Opinions–Assessments”
Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries’ Leaders 2009	“7. The implementation of the concept of sustainable development, comprising, <i>inter alia</i> , the Rio Declaration, Agenda for the 21 st Century and multilateral environmental agreements, should be a major vector in the change of paradigm of economic development.”
Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries’ Leaders 2010	“22. We acknowledge that climate change is a serious threat which requires strengthened global action.”

“Opinions–recognitions” reflect the recognition of the potential of the environmentally friendly technologies or the role of cooperation in building a sustainable economy (Table 2).

Table 2: Environmental “Opinions–Recognitions” in the Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State

Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State	Environmental “Opinions–Recognitions”
Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries Leaders 2010	“20. We recognize the potential of new, emerging, and environmentally friendly technologies for diversifying the energy mix and the creation of jobs.”
Joint Statement of the BRICS Leaders’ Informal Meeting on the Margins of the G20 Summit 2019	“1. We recognize the crucial role of cooperation in transitioning towards cleaner, more flexible, energy-efficient systems that combine growth with decreasing greenhouse gas emissions while ensuring energy security, access to energy, sustainability, and affordability.”

“Opinions–confirmations” demonstrate the reaffirmation of the environmental commitments relating to sustainable development (Table 3).

Table 3: Environmental “Opinions–Confirmations” in the Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State

Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State	Environmental “Opinions–Confirmations”
2018 Informal Meeting: November 30, Buenos Aires, Argentina Media Statement: Informal BRICS Leaders’ Meeting on the Margins of the G20 Summit	“12. We reinforce our commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals that would provide equitable, inclusive, open, all-round innovation-driven and sustainable development in its three dimensions—economic, social and environmental.”
Joint Statement of the BRICS Leaders’ Informal Meeting on the Margins of the G20 Summit 2019	“16. Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we reaffirm our strong commitment to sustainable development.”

As regards calls, they take the form of invitations to undertake specific environmental action, such as the implementation of the Paris Agreement or the provision of support to developing countries (Table 4).

Table 4: Environmental Calls in the Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State

Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State	Environmental Calls
Media Statement 2018 of the BRICS Heads of State	“14. We call upon all countries to reach a balanced outcome under the Paris Agreement Work Program during COP-24 that enables operationalization and implementation of the Paris Agreement.”
Joint Statement of the BRICS Leaders’ Informal Meeting on the Margins of the G20 Summit 2019	“15. We urge developed countries to provide financial, technological, and capacity-building support to developing countries to enhance their capability in mitigation and adaptation.”

The intentions contained in the Joint Statements demonstrate the willingness to undertake environment-oriented actions regarding sustainable development and the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Table 5).

Table 5: **Environmental Intentions in the Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State**

Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State	Environmental Intentions
2 nd BRIC Summit of Heads of State and Government: Joint Statement 2010	"20. ... we will encourage, as appropriate, the sustainable development, production, and use of biofuels."
Joint Statement of the BRICS Leaders' Informal Meeting on the Margins of the G20 Summit 2019	"16. ... we continue to support the G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda, the G20 Initiative on Supporting Industrialization in Africa and Least Developed Countries and the G20 Africa Partnership, including the Compact with Africa."

The analysis of various Summit Declarations also demonstrates the existence of norms on a variety of environmental issues. Notably, declarations such as the XIV BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration 2022 and the XV BRICS Summit Johannesburg II Declaration 2023 contain separate sections devoted to sustainable development and the environment, entitled "Expediting Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and "Partnership for Sustainable Development." By their normative nature, the provisions of the Summit Declarations addressing environmental matters also take the form of opinions, calls, and intentions. Similar to the norms contained in the Joint Statements, the norms in the Summit Declarations encompass three types of opinions relating to sustainable development, cooperation, and coordination in the environmental area; the role of energy in environmental protection; and the importance of implementing the multilateral environmental agreements (Table 6).

Table 6: **Environmental Opinions in the BRICS Summit Declarations**

BRICS Summit Declarations	Environmental "Opinions-Assessments"
Delhi Declaration 2012	"32. We consider that sustainable development should be the main paradigm in environmental issues, as well as for economic and social strategies."
Ufa Declaration 2015	"68. We welcome the first meeting of the environment ministers of our countries in Moscow on 22 April 2015 that marked the beginning of a new format of cooperation in the environmental

	area. We support the establishment of a platform for sharing environmentally sound technologies as a new international mechanism for public-private partnerships that can assist in addressing environmental challenges in our countries.”
Brasilia Declaration 2019	<p>“56. We acknowledge the crucial role of energy in promoting social and economic development, as well as environmental protection.”</p> <p>“65. ... we underline the importance of BRICS environmental cooperation initiatives that contribute to the quality of life in our cities through the sharing of knowledge and experience on important issues such as waste management, circular economy in the context of sustainable consumption and production, sanitation and water quality, urban air quality, and urban green areas.”</p>
	Environmental “Opinions–Recognitions”
Sanya Declaration 2011	“18. ... we recognize the important role of renewable energy to address climate change.”
Brasilia Declaration 2019	“65. We recognize the outcomes of the 5 th BRICS Ministerial Meeting on Environment, held under the theme ‘Contribution of Urban Environmental Management to Improving the Quality of Life in Cities.’”
Johannesburg II Declaration 2023	“56. We reemphasize the importance of implementing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement and the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) enhancing low-cost climate technology transfer and capacity building, as well as mobilizing affordable, adequate, and timely delivered new additional financial resources for environmentally sustainable projects.”
	Environmental “Opinions–Confirmations”
Delhi Declaration 2012	“30. We are fully committed to playing our part in the global fight against climate change and will contribute to the global effort in dealing with climate change issues through sustainable and inclusive growth and not by capping development.”

Fortaleza Declaration 2014	"51. We reiterate our commitment to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocols, with special attention to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020."
Xiamen Declaration 2017	"14. We reaffirm our commitment to fully implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We will also advocate equitable, open, all-round, innovation-driven, and inclusive development to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions—economic, social and environmental—in a balanced and integrated manner."
New Delhi Declaration 2021	"47. We reaffirm our commitment to the full implementation of the UNFCCC, its Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement and to the principles of UNFCCC, including 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities' in light of different national circumstances."
Beijing Declaration 2022	"54. We oppose green trade barriers and reiterate our commitment to enhancing coordination on these issues."

The environmental calls contained in the Summit Declarations relate primarily to the implementation of the environmental acts and instruments. (Table 7).

Table 7: **Environmental Calls in the BRICS Summit Declarations**

BRICS Summit Declarations	Environmental Calls
Xiamen Declaration 2017	"16. We call upon all countries to fully implement the Paris Agreement adopted under the principles of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and urge developed countries to provide financial, technological, and capacity-building support to developing countries to enhance their capability in mitigation and adaptation."

Johannesburg II Declaration 2023	"52. We reaffirm the call for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental, in a balanced and integrated manner by mobilizing the means required to implement the 2030 Agenda."
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The environmental intentions in the Summit Declarations concern cooperation and collaboration among the BRICS countries in the environmental field (Table 8).

Table 8: **Environmental Intentions in the BRICS Summit Declarations**

BRICS Summit Declarations	Environmental Intentions
Delhi Declaration 2012	"45. Given our growing needs for renewable energy resources as well as on energy efficient and environmentally friendly technologies, and our complementary strengths in these areas, we agree to exchange knowledge, know-how, technology and best practices in these areas."
Xiamen Declaration 2017	"17. Stressing the importance of environmental cooperation to the sustainable development of our countries and the well-being of our peoples, we agree to take concrete actions to advance result-oriented cooperation in such areas as the prevention of air and water pollution, waste management, and biodiversity conservation."
Johannesburg Declaration 2018	"22. We undertake to strengthen BRICS cooperation in energy, especially in transitioning to more environmentally sustainable energy systems supportive of the global sustainable development agenda, balanced economic growth, and the collective socio-economic well-being of our citizens." "30. We reaffirm the intention to enhance cooperation and collaboration amongst BRICS countries in the field of biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and equitable access, and benefit sharing of biological resources, and also undertake to promote our cooperation in biodiversity-related international conventions and for a, including on endangered species and amongst our National Parks authorities."

Moscow Declaration 2020	"82. We look forward to further strengthening cooperation on environmental issues, combating marine plastic litter as a key focus of the BRICS Clean Rivers Program."
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An analysis of acts adopted by the BRICS Heads of government or ministers shows that environmental issues are mainly covered within the acts adopted by the Environment Ministers of the BRICS. For example, to date the BRICS Environment Ministers have held eight meetings, resulting in Joint Statements that contain environmental opinions, intentions, calls, and lists of concrete actions. Regarding the content of these environmental provisions, the following may be noted.

As in the Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State and the Summit Declarations, three types of opinions can also be distinguished in the Ministers' Joint Statements. These opinions relate to the green economy and sustainable development, BRICS environmental cooperation and collaboration, and the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (Table 9).

Table 9: **Environmental Opinions in the Joint Statements of BRICS Ministers**

BRICS Ministers' Joint Statements	Environmental Opinions
	Environmental "Opinions-Assessments"
Statement: First Official Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers 2015	"4. We consider that an inclusive green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication is one of the tools available to achieve sustainable development in our countries, in accordance with national circumstances and priorities."
Third Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers: Tianjin Statement on Environment 2017	"9. We appreciate that the conservation and sustainable use of the rich biodiversity of BRICS countries is of special significance for the global environment, and to achieve the internationally agreed targets and goals, including SDGs and Aichi targets." "17. We also welcome the collaboration of the United Nations Environment Program in the BRICS environmental cooperation."

<p>Joint Statement of the Fourth BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting 2018</p>	<p>"4. We welcome various partnerships for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." "10. We welcome the promotion of cooperation within BRICS in the area of waste management and pollution prevention, the theme of the 4th BRICS Environment Ministers' meeting entitled 'Strengthening cooperation amongst BRICS on Circular Economy in the context of Sustainable Consumption and Production' (SCP)."</p>
<p>Joint Statement of the Fourth BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting 2018</p>	<p>"16. We also welcome the participation of the UN Environment Program and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in BRICS environmental cooperation."</p>
	<p>Environmental "Opinions-Recognitions"</p>
<p>Statement: First Official Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers 2015</p>	<p>"1. We, the BRICS Environment Ministers, assembled for the first official meeting during the Russian Presidency of BRICS in Moscow (the Russian Federation) on 22 April 2015, share the common aspiration that the effective implementation and promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future is essential to achieve our overarching priority of poverty eradication."</p>
<p>Second Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers 2016: Goa Statement on Environment</p>	<p>"3. We recognize that eradication of poverty must be our priority, as it is the poor who bear the disproportionate burden of environmental degradation caused by unsustainable and inequitable consumption of resources. And we emphasize the need for sustainable lifestyles." "9. We recognize that efficient management of various categories of waste is key for healthy ecosystems and quality of life of our people."</p>
	<p>Environmental "Opinions-Confirmations"</p>
<p>Statement: First Official Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers 2015</p>	<p>"3. We reaffirm our commitment to implement the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), and the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference in our respective countries, and through our cooperation within the framework of BRICS in accordance with the Rio Principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities."</p>

Second Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers 2016: Goa Statement on Environment	"4. We reaffirm our commitment to the Principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992, including Equity, and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities."
Third Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers: Tianjin Statement on Environment 2017	"1. We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development as well as the Paris Agreement." "5. We reiterate our commitment to the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992, including equity, dignity and common but differentiated responsibilities."
Joint Statement of the Fourth BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting 2018	"11. We reaffirm that the promotion of a circular approach to waste management contributes significantly to the achievement of the SCP goal, as outlined in SDG12 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) 'Towards a Pollution-Free Planet' theme."

The environmental intentions contained in the BRICS Ministers' Joint Statements are mainly aimed at cooperation and collaboration among the BRICS countries in the environmental field (Table 10).

Table 10: **Environmental Intentions in the Joint Statements of BRICS Ministers**

BRICS Ministers' Joint Statements	Environmental Intentions
Statement of the First Official Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers 2015	"7. We will consolidate efforts in our respective countries to develop policies and measures contributing to mitigation efforts and adaptation of the national economies to the adverse impacts of climate change in accordance with the principles of equity, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and other provisions of UNFCCC."
Second Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers 2016: Goa Statement on Environment:	"8. ... we have agreed to share with each other our technical expertise on air quality and water pollution as well as conservation and management of water resources and rivers through joint projects and networks of our regulatory and technical institutions."

	<p>“9. ... we have agreed to enhance our cooperation for efficient management of waste.”</p> <p>“12. We have resolved to develop a platform for sharing environmentally sound technologies as a new international mechanism for public-private partnership that can assist in addressing environmental challenges in our countries and promote innovations, knowledge management and capacity building including by means of a common website, a network of technical institutions and to undertake joint projects in areas of mutual interest.”</p>
<p>Third Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers: Tianjin Statement on Environment 2017</p>	<p>“10. We resolve to enhance cooperation in the field of biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits, and promote cooperation in biodiversity-related international conventions and fora including on endangered species. We will closely cooperate to ensure the success of COP15 of CBD to be held in China in 2020.”</p> <p>“11. We reiterate our intention to promote cooperation within BRICS in the area of pollution prevention, in particular air pollution, which will help achieve Agenda 2030 and is in line with the UNEA 3 theme of ‘towards a pollution free planet.’”</p>
<p>Joint Statement of the Fourth BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting 2018</p>	<p>“12. We welcome the vast potential in cooperation and collaboration in advancing the Oceans Economy amongst BRICS countries, which encompasses multiple sectors. We will explore enhancing our cooperation on marine protection and ocean governance taking into account that the scope for cooperation may be limited to the programs of environmental ministries, although the BRICS Ocean Economy cooperation will seek to influence and cooperate with all sectors of the ocean economy.”</p> <p>“13. We express our intention to enhance cooperation in the fields of water on the basis of sustainable development in an integrated way, addressing the themes of water security, flood protection, water supply and sanitation, water and climate and systematically facilitating water pollution prevention and control, aquatic ecosystem conservation and water resources management.”</p>

The environmental calls contained in the Ministers' Joint Statements concern the implementation of environmental projects, the fulfillment of environmental commitments, and the enhancement of environmental cooperation and collaboration among BRICS countries (Table 11).

Table 11: **Environmental Calls in the Joint Statements of BRICS Ministers**

BRICS Ministers' Joint Statements	Environmental Calls
Third Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers: Tianjin Statement on Environment 2017	"6. We urge full implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for sustainable development, including the Technology Facilitation Mechanism. The official development assistance, technology transfer, and capacity building remain the key means in addressing global environmental challenges. We reaffirm our call to developed countries to honor their commitments relating to means of implementation and operationalization of Agenda 2030 with a clear roadmap."
Joint Statement of the Fourth BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting 2018	"4. We call for good governance to enhance implementation actions to integrate sustainable development at the heart of social and economic development policies in relation to Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)." "6. We reiterate the call to enhance cooperation and collaboration among BRICS countries in the field of biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, and equitable access and benefit sharing of biological resources, and also undertake to promote cooperation in biodiversity-related international conventions and fora, including on endangered species."
Joint Statement of the 5 th BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting: Contribution of Urban Environmental Management to Improving the Quality of Life in Cities 2019	"14. We also urge developed countries to fulfill their commitment under the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement to provide means of implementation to developing countries, including climate finance, technology development, and transfer and capacity building support."

Statement of the 6 th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting 2020	"5. We call for initiatives to improve the environment, promote the Circular Economy in the context of sustainable patterns of production and consumption to be included in national plans for economic recovery after COVID-19 ..."
Joint Statement issued at the BRICS High-level Meeting on Climate Change 2022	"17. We encourage all parties to share specific policies, measures, and actions towards climate goals, especially the information on best practices, difficulties, and challenges."

The BRICS Environment Ministers' Joint Statements differ from other BRICS acts in that some of them contain lists of concrete environmental actions (Table 12).

Table 12: **Environmental Actions in the Joint Statements of BRICS Ministers**

BRICS Ministers' Joint Statements	Environmental Actions
Statement of the First Official Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers 2015	<p>"8. For the realization of our common goals, we resolve to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a working group on environment, which will identify and discuss the priority areas of cooperation and decide to convene its first meeting in 2015 in Russia; • Explore the potential of the BRICS New Development Bank for purposes of funding environmental projects; • Explore at the working group level the possibility of establishing a collaborative platform of the BRICS countries intended to share best environmental practices and facilitate the exchange of environmentally sound technologies and know-how with participation of public and private stakeholders, taking into account the existing mechanisms of cooperation; • Hold regular meetings of environment ministers of BRICS."

<p>Joint Statement of the 5th BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting: Contribution of Urban Environmental Management to Improving the Quality of Life in Cities 2019 (app. 5th BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting Ministerial Decision on Cooperation)</p>	<p>“1. For the implementation of the Best Available Technologies (BAT) in the BRICS countries the parties decided to work on the compilation of the BRICS BAT reference guide, which could be made available for all participants. This compendium may be published in the format of a reference book(s). 2. To fulfill this mandate, within a 3-month period, an expert group will be created consisting of representatives from each country, and a working plan of action shall be prepared for adoption in the next Ministerial Meeting in Russia in 2020. 3. To initiate cooperation projects for the development of urban environment programs leading to concrete results by 2020, and to seek support from the New Development Bank (NDB) and multilateral financing organizations to provide a long-term strategy to address those important needs.”</p>
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Another type of environmental act adopted by the environment ministers of the BRICS is the Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation (2018),⁵⁹ which aims to develop cooperation between the participants in the field of environment. The Memorandum identifies the following priority areas of cooperation: air quality, water, biodiversity, climate change, waste management, and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals.

The Memorandum also identifies possible forms of cooperation, such as the exchange of experience and of information, the development of regulatory and methodological documents, the conduct of joint research, experimental work, and practical consultations, as well as the sharing of results of research and experiments on subjects of mutual interest; joint capacity building and training activities; joint organization of or participation in symposia, conferences, workshops and exhibitions; the development of joint programs and projects to demonstrate best achievements, practices, and technologies in the areas of environmental cooperation; and other forms of cooperation as decided by the participants.

⁵⁹ Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Environment of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of the Republic of India, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China, and the Department of Environmental Affairs of the Republic of South Africa on Environmental Cooperation (Sandton, South Africa, July 26, 2018). 15th BRICS Summit. <http://brics2023.gov.za>

The final group of the official subset of the BRICS normative space comprises the normative outcomes of the meetings of BRICS authorities. To date, meetings have been held by the representatives of the BRICS Tax and Revenue Authorities, Science and Technology Officials, National Statistical Authorities, National Security Advisors, Competition Authorities, and Anticorruption Officials. Given the nature of the mandates and activities of these bodies, environmental issues have not been addressed in their normative acts.

2.2. The Coverage of Environmental Aspects within the Unofficial Subset of the BRICS Normative Space

The unofficial subset of the BRICS normative space consists of acts adopted at informal meetings of society and business representatives. These acts take the form of joint statements, recommendations, and declarations, and include such types of provisions as opinions, intentions, and calls. An analysis of these acts in the context of environmental issues shows the following.

The outcome of the BRICS Business Forum 2013 was the Joint Statement of industry leaders from the business communities of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. In paragraph 10 of that Joint Statement, the parties express the opinion that they agree to promote sustainable growth, indicate their intention to promote cooperation among the business communities to share sustainable technologies and best practices, and call upon governments to move towards renewable sources of energy.

Another example is the Recommendations to the 4th BRICS Leaders Summit in New Delhi adopted by the 4th BRICS Academic Forum in 2012, which contains the following recommendation:

As home to nearly half of the world's population, BRICS has a responsibility to create pathways for sustainable development. BRICS could learn from policy successes as well as failures of the past from within and outside BRICS and seek to implement policy solutions for sustainable development. In this context, BRICS must bring to the fore inclusive growth and equitable development as the central narrative at global fora, such as Rio+20.

Another notable act addressing environmental matters is the Jaipur Declaration (2016), adopted as a result of the BRICS Women Parliamentarians' Forum. In paragraph 6 of the Declaration, the parties express concern over the deleterious effects of climate change on ecological systems, biodiversity, and food production. Paragraph 10 of the Declaration calls upon international financial institutions to support and facilitate financing for development on favorable terms for developing and least developed countries, and to help them gain easier access to new and affordable technologies for capacity-building, as envisaged under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. Paragraph 11 of the Declaration emphasizes the need to address climate change in all its manifestations and to develop integrated

solutions aimed at preserving and protecting ecological systems and forests, and ensuring food security.

Conclusion

This study aimed to answer the following research questions: Do the BRICS normative acts reflect environmental issues? If so, what is the nature and content of the BRICS norms regarding these issues? To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set: to identify the specifics of the normative space of the BRICS and to reveal the features of the coverage of environmental aspects within the BRICS normative acts. The empirical base of the research consists of BRICS normative acts adopted between 2009 and 2025.

According to the results of the study, the following conclusions were drawn. As an interstate association, the BRICS functions through periodic meetings of official (heads of states, heads of governments, ministers) and unofficial (representatives of the corporate sector, science, and community) actors. The outcomes of BRICS meetings are typically formalized in various acts, such as joint statements, declarations, memorandums, and so on. The absence of a constituent treaty that provides for law-making and law enforcement functions, however, limits BRICS' ability to take legally valid actions. Consequently, all BRICS formal acts constitute international non-legal acts. Therefore, the norms of these acts have no legal force, do not directly regulate relationships, and there is no legal liability for failure to comply with them. In essence, the norms of BRICS formal acts reflect the common views on the reality and desired development of relations. In the context of international law, the norms of the BRICS acts are a form of soft law.

The set of norms contained in BRICS acts forms the normative space of BRICS. Participation of official actors (such as heads of states, heads of governments, and ministers) and unofficial actors (including representatives of the corporate sector, science, and community) in the BRICS norm-making process allows for the distinction of two corresponding subsets within this normative space.

The official subset comprises acts that are the normative outcomes of the meetings of the BRICS Heads of State (such as Joint Statements and Summit Declarations), the BRICS heads of government or ministers (including Joint Statements, Ministers' Declarations, Memorandums of Understanding, or Action Plans), and other BRICS authorities (such as Communiqués and Joint Statements). These acts represent the official BRICS position on such issues as the common vision and global governance, international economics and finance, international trade development, agricultural and energy policies, the fight against poverty, the environmental situation, and cooperation among BRICS members. This position is expressed through various normative forms such as opinions, calls, intentions, action plans, agreements, and acknowledgments.

The unofficial subset consists of acts that are the normative outcomes of the forums and workshops of representatives of the corporate sector, science, and community

(Joint Statements, Recommendations, and Declarations). These normative acts represent the unofficial BRICS position on cooperation within the BRICS framework and are expressed in the form of opinions, intentions, recommendations, and calls.

Environmental issues have received considerable coverage within the BRICS normative space. Regarding their coverage in the official subset, the following observations can be noted. The Joint Statements of the BRICS Heads of State and the Summit Declarations do not contain any separate sections devoted entirely to environmental issues; instead, environmental issues are addressed only in some paragraphs. For example, these issues may include the implementation of the concept of sustainable development, the problem of climate change, environmental cooperation, the introduction of eco-friendly technologies, the implementation of environmental agreements, and support for environmental initiatives.

The environmentally oriented norms contained in the Joint Statements and the Summit Declarations contain such types of normative provisions as opinions, calls, and intentions. Among these normative provisions, opinions are the most diverse and, based on their meaning, may be divided into three categories, namely “opinions-assessments” (expressing assessments of the importance of particular environmental aspects), “opinions-recognitions” (acknowledging the significance of environmentally significant issues), and “opinions-confirmations” (reaffirming environmental commitments related to sustainable development).

With regard to the acts of the BRICS heads of government or ministers, environmental issues are mainly addressed in the Joint Statements of the Environment Ministers of the BRICS. The issues covered in these acts include the green economy and sustainable development, BRICS environmental cooperation and collaboration, the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements and environmental projects, as well as the fulfillment of environmental commitments. The normative provisions contained in the Environment Ministers’ Joint Statements are also expressed in the form of opinions, intentions, calls, and proposed action plans. In 2018, the Environment Ministers of the BRICS signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation, which identified priority areas and forms of cooperation. By contrast, the acts that are the normative outcomes of meetings of other BRICS authorities do not explicitly address environmental issues.

Analysis of the unofficial subset of the BRICS normative space indicates that certain acts also address environmental issues through the expression of opinions, intentions, recommendations, and calls. These issues include the promotion of cooperation among the business communities to share sustainable technologies and best practices, the transition to renewable energy sources, the implementation of international environmental agreements, and the development of solutions to preserve and protect ecological systems and forests.

Summing up the research, it is possible to conclude that the BRICS normative space, as a set of non-legal acts, covers a wide range of environmental issues. In the

future, it would be significant to observe the extent to which BRICS soft law norms impact the formation and development of national environmental legislation in the BRICS member states.

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