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Commentary

The BRICS 2026 Energy Ministers' Communiqué

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Summary

The 2026 communiqué reflects BRICS nations' reimagining of energy security, anchored in tech-centric innovation, Global South-led governance, and resilience.

Introduction

The June 2026 communiqué released following the 11th Energy Ministers' Meeting held under India's BRICS chairmanship reflected a growing recognition among the member countries about the need to rethink energy security beyond the reliance on traditional energy sources such as oil and the long-held drive to secure global supply chains. It visibly emphasises strengthening domestic infrastructure across partner nations, intra-organisational collaboration, and transitioning towards renewable energy through the strategic application of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI).

This represents the anticipated next step forward in fostering sustainable energy security, inclusive energy governance, and energy resilience for organisational members, building on the pathway laid down by India at the BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting hosted by Brazil in May 2025. This development is especially important against the backdrop of successive maritime and global energy supply chain disruptions since 2023, ranging from the crisis in the Red Sea to the events in the Strait of Hormuz this year.

The growing emphasis on moving away from dependence on global energy supply chains vulnerable to cascading effects from armed hostilities and partial or persistent disruptions in key maritime trade and transit routes has become even more significant when contextualised within the recent escalation in the Russia–Ukraine crisis. More recently, in July 2026, commercial shipping came to a complete halt due to relentless drone strikes against Russian gas and oil tankers in the Sea of Azov, resulting in a surge in global wheat prices. On 15 July, European wheat prices surged by 7 per cent, to €231.75 (US$ 265) per metric ton.[1]

Reimagining Energy Security in BRICS

In his remarks at the 2025 Energy Ministers' Meeting, the Union Minister of Power, Manohar Lal Khattar, emphasised energy security as "one of the most pressing current challenges" and linked this issue to long-held global concerns attached to "global development goals" as well as "economic stability and sustainability".[2] One theme that featured in his remarks at the 2026 meeting and in the 2026 communiqué was trade in energy products in local currencies, wherever applicable.

[1] **"Russia and Ukraine Strike Vessels in Black Sea, Wheat Prices Jump"**, *Reuters*, 17 July 2026.

[2] **"India Leads Call for Inclusive Energy Governance at BRICS Energy Ministers' Meet in Brazil"**, Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Power, Government of India, 20 May 2025.

The emphasis on trading in local currencies is an integral part of the shifting zeitgeist within the non-First World and non-petrodollar economies. This growing focus can be largely attributed to the collective need to mitigate market volatility and geopolitical tensions, and retain financial sovereignty, especially in the event of the imposition of sanctions. It is also integral to the exercise of strategic autonomy.

In this respect, some of the key affirmations in the 2026 communiqué also underscore the changing perceptions of policymakers, grounded in existing realities. Specifically, they signal a gradual reorientation within energy security-linked policymaking, as decision-makers confront an irrevocable shift in reality. There is now a visible tilt towards the need to integrate energy security with the tech-based innovation domain, to enhance "energy access, security, affordability, and resilience across BRICS countries".[3]

There also appears to be a growing consensus among participating nations that this shift in their national priorities must be aligned with international frameworks, more specifically, the 7th United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).[4] They address universal access to affordable and clean energy for all of humankind by 2030. Therefore, another positive development is the reaffirmation of the need to foster collaboration and encourage informal consultations between member states. At the same time, BRICS members underscored "the need to ensure market stability and uninterrupted, secure, and affordable energy supplies through diversified energy systems that leverage national resource endowments".[5]

This highlights the partner countries' commitment to maintaining a delicate balance between international commitments, multilateral cooperation, and their national priorities. It reflects BRICS' evolving agenda to strategically calibrate how the collective drive to ensure the unimpeded realisation of energy security could be achieved by leveraging the cooperative framework provided by the multilateral organisation.

Strategic Significance and Implications

The BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting communiqué reflects the member states' efforts to exercise strategic autonomy. They seek to do so by instituting energy

[3] **"BRICS 2026: 11th Energy Ministers Meeting - Joint Communiqué"**, Communiqué, BRICS, June 2026.

[4] **"Sustainable Development Goals"**, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, September 2015.

[5] **"BRICS 2026: 11th Energy Ministers Meeting - Joint Communiqué"**, no. 3.

resilience frameworks and pathways among Global South countries beyond the previously existing dependency on Western-led institutions such as the World Bank or the International Energy Agency (IEA) to spearhead credible change.

Furthermore, the communiqué signals growing political support across BRICS nations for mobilising requisite resources to ensure that their collective energy security landscape is led by the Global South and in the region's best interests. Notably, the document reflects that the member nations are looking to take greater ownership within the global energy governance framework, given that "the global energy landscape is undergoing structural transformation amid sustainable development imperatives, and market volatility".[6]

In addition, the document indicates that member states are striving to maintain an independent policy outlook, best suited to their individual needs. This is a crucial aspect in the context of persisting pressure imposed by Western powers on BRICS member states, including those that remain significantly reliant on fossil fuels and other non-renewable sources to meet their domestic energy requirements.

Taken together, the communiqué reflects an exercise in strategic autonomy within the sphere of energy security, and brings to the fore the broader organisational worldview concerning energy transition. It has done so by emphasising concepts such as smart grids, digitisation, green energy, the need to ensure infrastructure redundancy, and the establishment of alternative supply chains that are not subject to the kind of volatility witnessed following the Red Sea, Strait of Hormuz and Sea of Azov crises.

It is also important to note the carefully calibrated language woven throughout the document. Instead of adopting polarising and emotive language, the document reflected BRICS' pragmatic tone under India's leadership, pushing for a digitally enabled, sustainable, long-term and inclusive endeavour to institute a Global South-led and Global South-centric operational energy governance framework moving forward.

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that while the measures announced as part of the communiqué are geared towards redefining energy security and resilience through the Global South's lens, they should not be viewed as efforts to undermine the interests of other stakeholders and institutions that may, for example, be situated in or led by countries in the Global North.

[6] Ibid.

Challenges and the Way Forward

Some of the initiatives highlighted as part of the meeting included the establishment of the BRICS Digital Centre of Excellence for Smart Grids and Energy Storage as well as mobilising monetary support for investments in the energy sector using the New Development Bank (NDB) and public–private partnerships. Overall, however, it remains to be seen how the various initiatives and declarations launched during India's Chairship could make way for the deepening of technical and logistical cooperation. Equally important is the need to try and understand how emerging technologies, including AI, would be leveraged and regulated to advance the objectives laid down with the establishment of this centre.

Taken together, these initiatives illustrate that BRICS is looking to codify energy collaboration and cooperation over the long term. Furthermore, their success will also hinge on their ability to enable capacity-building initiatives within the realm of building resilient power systems, and facilitate the long-term exchange of best policy practices among BRICS member states. At the same time, it is important to question if the competing interests of the member states could influence the degree, or in this case, the limits of cooperation and collaboration on energy security and resilience. The fissures were reflected in the absence of a joint statement following the conclusion of the Foreign Ministers' meeting held in May 2026.

This declaration should not be viewed through distinct and polarising lenses. It should neither be viewed as mere rhetoric nor as a catalyst leading to a sudden reformation of the organisation from within. Rather, it should be understood as a pragmatic initiative that carries the potential to redefine BRICS' role beyond a geopolitical and economic bloc. It could also be an enabling factor in BRICS becoming an integral stakeholder within the global energy framework, one that is anchored in existing realities and cognizant of the needs of the Global South.

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