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BRICS Science Ministers Adopt the Chennai Declaration Under India's Chairship

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BRICS Science Ministers Adopt the Chennai Declaration Under India's Chairship

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

At the closing session of the 14th BRICS Science, Technology and Innovation Ministerial Meeting at Chennai on August 22, 2026, Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh announced the unanimous adoption of the Chennai Declaration, also styled the Chennai Consensus, under India's BRICS Chairship 2026.

WHAT THE DECLARATION CONTAINS

It places a **people-centred, humanity-first** approach at the centre of BRICS science cooperation, with explicit emphasis on the **Global South**, young innovators and collaborative research. Substantively it:

- Welcomes the **Action Plan and Terms of Reference** of the Task Force under the **Working Group on Research Infrastructures and Mega-science Projects**
- Records progress toward operationalising the **BRICS Global Research Advanced Infrastructure Network (BRICS GRAIN)**
- Welcomes a **BRICS Science and Research Repository** as a digital public good
- Endorses the **BRICS STI Calendar of Activities for 2026-27**
- Transfers the STI Ministerial process to **China's Chairship for 2027**

*BRICS GRAIN is recorded as **progress towards operationalising**, which means it is **not yet operational**. A declaration is also **adopted**, not ratified: it is politically binding at most.*

THE INSTITUTIONAL DEPTH ON RECORD

MECHANISM	COUNT
Thematic Working Groups	14
BRICS Young Scientist Forum	11 editions
Young Innovators Prize	9 editions
STI Framework Programme calls	9

India's chairship theme for 2026 is "**Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability.**" The Indian nodal body is the **Department of Science and Technology.**

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The process architecture is genuinely impressive, and the Minister's own closing remark concedes the problem. He urged the partnership to move "beyond sustained dialogue towards demonstrable outcomes." Fourteen working groups, eleven youth forums and nine funding calls represent real institutional investment. What they have not yet visibly produced is joint capability that any member could not have built alone.

The members are also competitors. This is the structural tension. BRICS science cooperation asks states to share research infrastructure and researcher mobility with partners who are simultaneously rivals in the technologies that matter most, and where **China dominates the bloc on R&D spending and patent output** by a wide margin. Shared infrastructure between *asymmetric* partners tends to reflect that asymmetry.

Two readings, and a good answer holds both. One is that BRICS STI functions mainly as **Global South signalling** against Western-dominated research networks, valuable diplomatically and thin scientifically. The other is that shared mega-science infrastructure is exactly the kind of thing no single developing economy can fund alone, which is the strongest case for the bloc. India's chairship year is the natural test.

Watch what transfers to China in 2027. A calendar and a repository transfer easily. An operational GRAIN would be the first genuinely hard deliverable, and whether it survives the chairship handover is the real measure.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2 (International Relations): Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and affecting India's interests.

GS Paper 3 (Science and Technology): International scientific collaboration; **indigenisation** and research capacity.

Prelims focus: the meeting number and venue; the outcome document's name; India's chairship theme; what GRAIN stands for; the counts of working groups, youth forums and framework calls; who chairs BRICS in 2027.

Mains angle: Examine whether institutionalised scientific cooperation among states that are simultaneously technological competitors can produce joint capability, or whether it functions primarily as bloc signalling. Use India's chairship deliverables as the evidence.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEdia

THE MEETING:

14th BRICS Science, Technology and Innovation Ministerial, Chennai, closing session August 22, 2026

Outcome: the Chennai Declaration (Chennai Consensus), adopted by consensus

Announced by Dr Jitendra Singh, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences

Indian nodal department: Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology

INDIA'S BRICS CHAIRSHIP 2026:

Theme: "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability"

The STI Ministerial process passes to China's Chairship in 2027

WHAT THE DECLARATION RECORDS:

BRICS GRAIN = BRICS Global Research Advanced Infrastructure Network — progress toward operationalising, not yet operational

A BRICS Science and Research Repository as a digital public good

The BRICS STI Calendar of Activities 2026-27

14 thematic Working Groups; 11 Young Scientist Forum editions; 9 Young Innovators Prize editions; 9 STI Framework Programme calls

WATCH THE TRAP: A DECLARATION IS ADOPTED, NOT RATIFIED, AND IS POLITICALLY BINDING AT MOST. DO NOT DESCRIBE THE CHENNAI DECLARATION AS A TREATY OR AS LEGALLY BINDING.

Sources: PIB, Department of Science and Technology

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