The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

At Flagship Forum, Putin Promotes BRICS Growth and Economic Restructuring

June 20, 2025



Vladimir Putin at SPIEF 2025. **Vyacheslav Viktorov / Roscongress Photobank**

President Vladimir Putin on Friday touted the rising economic influence of the BRICS group of countries and Russia's pivot toward non-Western markets, using the plenary session of the annual St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) to promote what he described as a "restructuring" of Russia's economy.

"BRICS makes up 40% of the global economy," the Kremlin leader said during his address. "And it's obvious that this share will only continue to grow. As they say, that's a medical fact. This growth will primarily come from the dynamic countries of the Global South."

Putin has long sought to highlight BRICS — a bloc of countries originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — as a geopolitical counterweight to Western power and influence. The group, which now includes countries like Indonesia and the United Arab

Emirates, was also a major theme during the president's address at last year's economic forum.

Before Putin took the stage on Friday, the audience was shown a dramatic video presentation tracing the history of global economic growth. The present day was depicted with the United States as a declining financial hegemon, symbolized by an apocalyptic image of the Hollywood sign in Los Angeles engulfed in flames. In contrast, the BRICS group was portrayed as a new, more equitable driver of global growth in the 21st century.

The plenary session, scheduled to begin at 2 p.m. local time, started around 45 minutes late. It was moderated by Lebanese journalist Nadim Koteich and featured a panel of political leaders that, besides Putin, included Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, Chinese Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang, Bahraini royal Nasser bin Hamad Al-Khalifa and South African Deputy President Paul Mashatile.

Koteich introduced Putin by saying the panel's diversity demonstrated that Russia is not isolated internationally, but instead showed "how multipolar the world has become."

Related article: Sberbank CEO Warns High Rates and Strong Ruble Creating 'Perfect Storm' for Russian Economy

In his address, Putin said Russia's GDP growth had outpaced the global average in recent years despite what he called a "complex external environment." He emphasized the growing role of non-oil and gas revenues, saying Russia was expanding exports to countries like China and India as part of its diversification away from traditional hydrocarbon dependence.

"Our economy is higher in quality, more complex and multifaceted," Putin said. "Our strategic course is precisely to actively and consistently, step by step, change the structure of the national economy."

"The government, regions, businesses and the expert and scientific community have jointly set the objectives of increasing long-term growth rates and implementing structural changes in the economy," the president continued.

Putin prefaced his proposals with the need to adapt to "tectonic changes" in the world, including the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. But unlike last year, he did not directly mention Russia's war against Ukraine in his nearly hour-long speech.

At the same time, he said that Russia must take steps to avoid an economic slowdown. "Some specialists and experts are pointing to the risks of stagnation or even a recession. This, of course, must not be allowed to happen under any circumstances."

Putin's warning came amid growing concerns about Russia's economic trajectory. Both Economy Minister Maxim Reshetnikov and Sberbank CEO German Gref this week pointed to the central bank's 20% key interest rate alongside nearly double-digit inflation as a major drag on growth.

During his address on Friday, Putin also pushed back on the view that surging defense spending had become the main engine of Russia's economy. He repeated his call for achieving

“technological sovereignty” in the face of sweeping Western sanctions and the departure of foreign businesses.

Stressing the need for flexibility in the defense sector, the Kremlin leader called for closer integration of military and civilian production.

“We need to move away from dividing enterprises into military and civilian,” he said. “The most successful holdings are those that handle both types of tasks. Our defense industry has gained good momentum. Enterprises have increased production and are developing new types of weapons.”

Related article: Russian Business Lobby Calls for Training Skilled Workers in India to Combat Labor Shortage

Once dubbed the “Russian Davos,” SPIEF had for years attracted top Western business leaders and policymakers, serving as a platform for major deals like the Nord Stream gas pipeline. But since 2022, the forum’s lineup has reflected Moscow’s pivot toward countries in Asia and Africa amid its isolation from the West.

In a written message to SPIEF guests earlier this week, Putin said the 2025 forum would focus on “technology and digital transformation as key drivers of leadership in the modern world,” along with issues like demographics, science and education, labor productivity and social protection.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/06/20/at-flagship-forum-putin-promotes-brics-growth-and-economic-restructuring-a89520