

# Countries are clamoring to join BRICS group, South Africa says, as Russia takes up leadership

*Hong Kong CNN* — Nearly three dozen countries are seeking entry into the China and Russia-backed BRICS economic group, member state South Africa said Wednesday, weeks after the body expanded its membership for the first time in more than a decade.

Thirty-four countries have submitted an expression of interest in joining the bloc of major emerging economies, South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor told reporters, without naming the nations.

Russia was accepting those applications after assuming rotating chairmanship of the group this year – and will be the first member to oversee the body since it significantly expanded its global footprint at the start of the year, when Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Ethiopia, Iran and Egypt formally joined.

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