

Opinion

Congratulations on the 60th Anniversary of Africa Day

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The adoption in 1960 by the UN General Assembly of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, proclaiming the need to put an end to colonialism and any segregation and discrimination, gave a powerful impetus to the liberation movement around the world, primarily in Africa. This year was the one that entered world history as the “Year of Africa” — in a short period of time 17 young countries appeared on the world map, and the flags of the new independent African member states of the global organization were raised one after another at the UN headquarters. The USSR played an important role in the fight against colonialism, in word and deed promoting the adoption of the Declaration, helping Africans in the battle against colonial oppression. At the same time, the Soviet Union not only fought for the granting of political independence to Africa, but also stood at the creation of the foundations of the national economy of many countries of the continent. Entire sectors of national economies were built with the support of the USSR. More than 300 industrial enterprises were constructed, about half a million highly qualified specialists were trained (some in Africa, and some in the universities of the USSR), who, upon returning to their homeland, made an invaluable contribution to the economic development of their countries.

In the post-colonial years, the best minds of Africa were busy looking for ways to achieve complete and true independence of the continent from the domination of the former metropolis. The idea of pan-African cooperation of independent states was gaining momentum. During numerous conferences (in 1958 in Ghana, in 1959 in Liberia, in 1960 in Ethiopia, in 1961 in Morocco, in 1962 in Nigeria and Egypt), African leaders discussed at that time the most topical issues of developing a common foreign-policy course, safeguarding the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the continent, determining ways and means of expanding economic, technical, scientific and cultural interaction between African states.

Meanwhile, the path to African unity was thorny, and opinions often differed on how the continent could achieve the desired results. As a consequence, various “interest groups” appeared in the political arena of Africa — the Brazzaville, the Monrovia, the Casablanca groups. Many Africans considered the divisions between these groups as insurmountable, and doubted the African unity to be an attainable goal. However, due to the energetic actions of African diplomats — primarily Ethiopian ones — it became possible to bring the positions closer and prevent a split among the African nations. As a result, in 1963, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was



established.

At the conference that started on May 15, 1963 in Addis Ababa, the participants were to elaborate and adopt a Charter — the main document of the future organization of independent African states. The Ethiopian project was chosen as a compromise basis, since it reflected the views of all interest groups, and included such points as the establishment of the Organization of African Unity with a Charter and permanent Secretariat; development of cooperation between African states in the fields of economy and social security, education, culture and collective defense; final eradication of the colonial system; fight against racial discrimination and apartheid; creation of regional economic groups; disarmament.

At the opening ceremony of the summit on May 22, 1963, the Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie I said: “We cannot leave here without having created a single African organization possessed of the attributes we have described... If we succeed in the tasks which lie before us, our names will be remembered and our deeds recalled by those who follow us. If we fail, history will puzzle at our failure and mourn what it lost...” Following lengthy discussions, on May 25, 1963, the heads of thirty-two independent states of Africa put their signatures on the charter of the OAU.

Undoubtedly, the formation of the OAU and adoption of the Charter did not mean that numerous problems of Africa that existed at that time were automatically

resolved. However, the establishment of the Organization marked the culmination of the first phase of Africa’s decolonization. Countries of the continent were able to consolidate their efforts in the struggle against colonialism and apartheid and began to act jointly in international affairs.

The evolution of the OAU, which was completed by 2002, with the appearance on the world stage of the African Union, the most representative intergovernmental organization of the continent, became a key step towards the implementation of the concept of African unity in modern realities, demonstrating the determination of African leaders to follow the path of bringing together the political and economic opportunities of the continent, to speak with one voice in order to secure Africa’s rightful place in the emerging new world order.

Today, the future of Africa, first of all, depends on how the African political and intellectual elites themselves will be able to develop and implement an adequate and effective strategy for overcoming challenges and threats, how successfully the political commitment will be shown and the existing potential will be used to translate the interests and aspirations of the continent’s population into reality. The genuine battle for Africa is the fight of Africans themselves to gain real opportunities to determine the content, routes and pace of pressing structural changes, to mobilize their own internal resources for such accomplishments.

The Russian Federation shares and supports

the goals of the member states of the African Union, enshrined in its ambitious socio-economic development program “Agenda-2063”, actively participates in providing comprehensive support to the continent both on a bilateral basis and within the framework of existing international mechanisms, is ready to contribute in every possible way to the strengthening of the sovereignty of African states and the protection of the principle of their sovereign equality. Russia will continue to act as a reliable, time-tested partner of Africa in the matters regarding maintaining peace and security, combating terrorism and extremism, and eliminating crisis situations. We intend to provide every possible assistance in the achievement by the African Union of its noble goal of ending armed conflicts on the continent in the spirit of the principle formulated by the continental organization itself “African solutions to African problems”.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the Russian Federation has consistently advocated expanding the representation of African states in the Council on the basis of the pan-African position set out in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, which would contribute not only to correcting the historical injustice towards the African continent, but also to adapting UN to modern realities. We strongly support the initiative to include the African Union in the G20. We highly appreciate that the African Union, despite the colossal pressure exerted on it, maintains a balanced, unbiased approach to the situation around the crisis in Ukraine.

I am certain that the Second Russia-Africa Summit to be held in the northern capital of the Russian Federation — the city of St. Petersburg — in July 26-29, 2023, will become a landmark event in the modern history of Russian-African relations. The meeting, which is being jointly prepared in the new geopolitical conditions against the backdrop of tectonic changes taking place in global politics and economy, will become an important evidence of our common aspiration to create a fair world order based on the principles of respect for international law, multipolarity, due consideration for national interests, indivisibility of security under the central coordinating role of the UN.

Today Africa is the most dynamically developing part of our planet. Africans are known for their desire for cooperation and mutual understanding. Africa can rightfully be proud of its wonderful traditions and culture, natural resources, and most importantly — the peoples inhabiting it! On behalf of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and on my own behalf, I sincerely and cordially congratulate our African friends on Africa Day!

Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald