

Russia-Ethiopia ties acquiring more intense dynamics

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Article by Ambassador of Russia in Ethiopia H.E. Mr. Evgeny Terekhin for the New Year's special edition of “Ethiopian Herald”

Our countries and peoples are linked by close historical ties. Perhaps, it is difficult to find an example of other such relations between Ethiopia and a major world power, which for centuries have been continuously marked by friendship and mutual trust, so highly appreciated in Russia.

It is gratifying that today Russian-Ethiopian ties are acquiring more intense dynamics. Along with the strengthening of interaction in already traditional areas, we are

opening up new spheres of multifaceted cooperation. Collaboration in the field of the peaceful atom is becoming one of them. A solid legal framework for its development was laid during the Russia-Africa Summit in October 2019, when the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the FDRE on cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of nuclear energy was signed. This document, among other things, identified a wide range of possible sectors of interaction for the future that include research activities, nuclear power development, medicine and agriculture.

In the framework of cooperation on peaceful atom, the Russian state Corporation Rosatom offers Ethiopia various opportunities that go beyond power generation alone. A very promising project is the Center for Nuclear Science and Technology (CNST). Similar facilities have been operating for 60 years in more than 50 countries. Now there are 245 research reactors operating all over the world, of which 58 are in Russia. This opens the door for Ethiopia to enter the elite club of advanced scientific and technological research.

The CNST could include a research reactor, a multipurpose radiation center, a nuclear medicine center and laboratories, including ones for radioisotope production that can be used for industrial, agricultural and health care purposes. The CNST technologies provide the use of modern methods to carry out the analysis of the elemental composition of ores and minerals and environmental samples. The Center is to become a platform for training highly qualified personnel for the nuclear industry and contribute to research in digital technology as well.

The technologies and competencies that Rosatom shares with African countries really promote development of their economies and the improvement of living standards.

For example, nuclear medicine can make a significant contribution to the well-being of the African population by solving the problem of cancer treatment, which is currently one of the major challenges faced by the African continent. According to expert estimates, one in six Africans is diagnosed with cancer by the age of 75. This burden can be significantly reduced by early detection and effective treatment of the disease through the use of radioisotopes.

Nuclear technology also contributes to food security. Around the world, 20-45% of produced food staffs are spoiled and cannot be used due to pests and short shelf life, Africa being no exception here. The food irradiation services offered by Rosatom can extend shelf life, reduce spoilage, the need for pesticides, additives, toxic chemicals, and lower the risk of diseases caused by harmful microorganisms, especially in meat, poultry and fish.

Thus, we can see that the CNST has great potential and its construction in Ethiopia is very relevant.

The creation and development of legal basis is an important element for our bilateral cooperation in the field of nuclear energy. The recent ratification of the abovementioned Agreement by the Ethiopian Parliament turned to be a big step forward in this regard. Ethiopia is also expected to access to the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage (1963), since bilateral cooperation on nuclear energy must, of course, comply with international law regulating the field. Generally speaking, there is a lot of preparatory work to be done in terms of creating the tangible and intangible infrastructure, which, among other things, includes the country's nuclear power development plan, the legal framework for the construction and operation of the Center for Nuclear Science and Technology and the research reactor, ensuring their financing. I

am convinced that the establishment of a special state agency in Ethiopia, implementing governmental policy in the field of peaceful atom, will give a powerful impetus to these efforts.

Similarly, we will work on another promising project, the construction of a nuclear power plant here. Its commissioning, along with the development of the country's huge hydroelectric resources, could turn Ethiopia into a mighty giant of electricity production in Africa, making it one of the "locomotives" of the continent's industrial development.

Of course, the existence of peaceful conditions in the country is crucial for the success of constructive efforts. In this context, I cannot but mention the law-enforcement operation in Tigray. I am confident that our Ethiopian friends will be able to overcome the current temporary difficulties.

Ethiopia, first and foremost, is a long-standing friend and important partner for us on the African continent. Russia has always been on Ethiopia's side in its struggle for independence, state sovereignty, and territorial integrity. So we are not indifferent to current events in Ethiopia. We take the position that the situation in Tigray is a purely internal affair of Ethiopia and its people. Naturally, Russia is in favour of resolving such conflicts as soon as possible. The sooner peace is achieved there and the sooner it is possible to return to normal life, the better it will be for the whole Ethiopian people, tired of wars and turmoil.

We certainly welcome the completion of the military phase of the operation, which was conducted with the least possible number of civilian victims and casualties. However, we regret to note that the fighting has inflicted significant damage on the infrastructure that was vital to the region both economically and as a center of attraction for tourists and pilgrims from all over the world, including our country. I take this

opportunity to express solidarity with the Ethiopian government's plans to reconstruct the region as quickly as possible.

We are ready, inter alia, to assist in the restoration of tourist exchange between our countries. This will undoubtedly be facilitated by the resumption of direct passenger flights between Moscow and Addis Ababa in November this year. It is worth noting that along with ancient monuments there are now new tourist attractions. The efforts of authorities in Addis Ababa to beautify the capital contribute greatly to this. We have witnessed the inauguration of beautiful recreational areas, such as Unity Park, Friendship Park and Entoto Park. I am convinced that this experience can be successfully applied in other regions of the country.

I want to use this opportunity to express my warmest congratulations to the editorial board and staff of the Ethiopian Herald newspaper as well as to all its readers on the occasion of New Year and Christmas. I wish you good health, happiness, joy, and prosperity. May the coming year become a year of success, new achievements, peace and unity.