

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN UKRAINE AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN THE FACE OF THE FOOD CRISIS PROVOKED BY RUSSIA

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I. IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATION WITH AFRICA, MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE RELATIONS

The Sub-Saharan Africa region unites 49 countries, whose total GDP amounted to \$1.6 trillion in 2017¹. Since 1995 and over the next 15 years, Sub-Saharan Africa has demonstrated unprecedented growth rates: until 2013, the region's GDP had been increasing by an average of 5% annually. However, factors such as fluctuating commodity prices, the COVID-19 pandemic, and political instability in a number of African countries have led to a slowdown in growth. The most economically developed countries on the continent are Nigeria, South Africa, Angola, Ethiopia, and Kenya. According to the World Bank, Africa will remain one of the fastest growing continents and in the future will become the most attractive place for foreign investment.

There are significant deposits of minerals in Africa, which creates a good basis for future development. In particular, the continent possesses 4.9% of the world's oil reserves, 3.4% of the world's gas reserves², 18% of the world's arable land³, 17% of the world's forest area⁴, one fifth of the world's hydro resources.

One of the major factors that created the right conditions for the growth of the region was the relative stabilization of the security situation since the beginning of the 21st century (in the south and east of the continent). This made the African continent attractive for foreign investment and caught the attention of a large number of actors in international relations, both old players (the

¹ World Bank national accounts data // <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD>

² <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Africa/161111katsouris.pdf>

³ Chris Lyddon. Sub-Saharan Africa falling short in grain production // World-graine.com. - <https://www.world-grain.com/articles/10887-sub-saharan-africa-falling-short-in-grain-production>

⁴ African forest resources and their development // <http://www.fao.org/3/a3200e/a3200e03.htm>

United States, former European metropolises) and emerging growth centers (primarily China, India, Türkiye, Brazil). An additional factor in the rise of Sub-Saharan Africa was the increase in prices for raw materials, which is a significant export item for most local states (in particular oil and gas). Economic growth was accompanied by the expansion of the service sector and intensification of domestic production.

International organizations of the regional level have important agents on the continent. First of all, through the African Union, where Ukraine has observer status. At a more local level, in the west of the continent, ECOWAS (a group of 15 West African states from Senegal to Nigeria) has a powerful influence. The member states of this organization demonstrate their intention to become the core of a regional superstate formation with transparent internal borders and a common trade space, a program of unification of the passport system of citizens and the introduction of a single currency—the eco—is being carried out within the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ), some of the WAMZ members are also members of the Mano River Union (including Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea).

In East Africa, the most productive activities are those of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the East African Community (EAC). Also, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is developing on the basis of Kenya and Tanzania. The SADC (Southern African Development Community) is a prominent organization in the south of the continent, where the key role is played by the Republic of South Africa (RSA).

II. MAIN TRENDS

Currently, the presence of world centers of influence in Africa, the impact on economic and political processes is becoming a significant factor of global power for the coming decades. Today, the continent is witnessing a struggle for influence between the West, represented mainly by the United States, the United Kingdom and France, and China. Russia acts mainly as a military and political battering ram against the background of Beijing's economic expansion. In view of this, most governments try to maneuver between the West and its opponents, which is reflected in particular in the UN voting (when the majority remains neutral, in particular in condemning the aggressive actions of the Russian Federation). The main zone of influence of China and Russia is the south of the continent, Sudan, and there are aspirations to spread influence in the Sahel region (the traditional French zone of influence). There is a struggle for influence on Ethiopia. On the other hand, the United States and the United Kingdom have several important partners, including Morocco, Kenya, and partly Nigeria.

The main trend that will determine the development of Africa and to some extent the development of the whole world over the next 30-50 years is population growth and urbanization. According to forecasts, the population of Africa will reach 2.5 billion people by 2050⁵, which is ten times higher than the population of the EU. In the context of food security, this factor becomes particularly critical.

⁵ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1224205/forecast-of-the-total-population-of-africa/>

Human security and the damage from Russia's policy

In recent years, Russia has been paying more and more attention to the most developed countries such as Kenya, Mozambique (primarily because of the newly discovered unique gas fields), Uganda. Lukoil, Severstal, Renova, Evraz, Gazprom are major players in the market. Therefore, the representatives of these countries should be informed about the negative impact of the Russian policy, which uses the tools of chaos and aggravation of conflicts. As an example, we can mention the destructive role in Libya, the Central African Republic, Mali (where peaceful villagers are being killed with the participation of mercenaries from the Wagner Group⁶), support for military coups (cases of Mali in May 2021, Sudan in October 2021).

Russian clout also plays a role in the escalation of the conflict in the Maghreb between Algeria and Morocco. While Morocco is a consistent partner of the United States and a member of the Ramstein Group (in June 2022, the 17th annual exercises of the U.S. Africa Command—AFRICOM⁷—started in Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia), Algeria is increasingly developing military-technical cooperation with China and the Russian Federation.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

A) Priorities

After the loss of the Russian markets, Ukraine begins to reorient itself to the markets of other regions, among which the African region is relatively insignificant, yet the rapid growth dynamics is evident. An important element was and is grain and other types of food, however, competition for them is going on with Russia, India, and Brazil. At the same time, the states, where Russian influence at the political level has been strong since the Soviet times, are often dependent on Ukrainian food.

First of all, such states as Egypt and Ethiopia are at risk, and partly the states of West Africa (French zone of influence, the Russian presence has been strengthening in recent years). Instead, there are more opportunities in working with friendly or more or less neutral countries, where existing capabilities should be developed.

Kyiv should focus on the countries that are most dependent on Ukrainian grain (Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, Gambia, Somalia) and countries that are equally dependent on Ukrainian and Russian food exports (Senegal, Egypt, DRC).

⁶ Elian Peltier, Mady Camara and Christiaan Triebert. 'The Killings Didn't Stop.' In Mali, a Massacre With a Russian Footprint // New York Times. - May 31, 2022. - <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/world/africa/mali-massacre-investigation.html>

⁷ Bomber Task Force mission supports African Lion 2022 and counter-illicit maritime efforts in Mauritania // <https://www.africom.mil/pressrelease/34585/bomber-task-force-mission-supports-african-lion-2022-and-counter-illicit-maritime-efforts>

It is also worth communicating with those countries that may suffer the most from the cumulative impact of the shortage of Ukrainian food, adverse weather conditions, etc. in the future, namely the countries of East Africa and the Horn of Africa, North and Central Africa.

A separate area of focus should be the work with the large states of Sub-Saharan Africa such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya because of their influence on the continent and within regional associations.

B) Regional cooperation

Ukraine should more consistently develop partnership with the institutions of West Africa. The best way to work with them is through the American and British influence on the first two states. Also, the common interest of Nigeria, Morocco and other states in building a new gas pipeline to Europe, which should partially replace Russian supplies, offers a lot of prospects.

The main priority of Kyiv at the regional level should be the development of contacts with ECOWAS and EAC. Cooperation with SADC (Southern African Development Community) is not very promising, as the leading participants are closely dependent on Russia and China (Angola, Zimbabwe), and the elite of the leading state of South Africa traditionally cooperates with agents of Russian influence (we can highlight the role of Russian political technologists who advised the African National Congress during the elections in South Africa in May 2019, supporting the ANC mainly by spreading fake news about the opposition).

C) Grain market

In this area, it is vital to pursue a balanced policy, using food dependence as an argument, but without sharp pressure. For Kyiv, it is important to demonstrate the reliability of supplies to prevent being forced out of the markets.

Direct blackmail by limiting supplies can be harmful, as it will create an image of an unreliable partner. There is also a risk of market capture by Russian grain. The scope for threats to unfriendly regimes is limited, as negative cases can contribute to anxiety among consumers from neutral or positive states.

D) Appeal to responsibility for aggression

It is necessary to emphasize the global experience of combating the consequences of wars and prosecuting the aggressor. This is not only the tradition of Europe or the United States. We can cite examples of the work of the International Court of Justice, in particular the recent decisions on Uganda. In early September, Uganda paid the first \$65 million in reparations to the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The total amount is \$325 million⁸. This is the sum awarded by the International Court of Justice in the UN because of the events that took place two decades ago. The matter is about the deployment of Ugandan troops to Congo in the late 1990s, as part of the Second Congolese War of 1998-2002, during which a huge territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo became the scene of civil war with the concomitant intervention of eight neighboring and not so neighboring states that backed different sides of the conflict. Even

⁸ Uganda pays first installment of \$325m war reparations to DRC // <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/12/uganda-pays-first-installment-of-325m-war-reparations-to-drc>

Ugandan lawyers defended themselves by saying that their army entered after the war had already broken out in the neighboring country and troops from many states had been deployed. However, in February 2022, the verdict was delivered, and the decision recognized the responsibility of the Ugandan army for the deaths of about 10-15 thousand civilians in the eastern region of Ituri. We should draw parallels, pointing out Ukraine's desire to bring Russia to concrete responsibility for crimes against citizens, murders and damage to the economy.

E) Communicating the consequences of Russia's policies

An important message to deliver to foreigners should be about the consequences of Russia's policy in Ukraine, and the real cause of the food crisis. This will help to refute one of the most common narratives of Russian propaganda in Africa that sanctions and Ukrainians are to blame for the food crisis, and not the actions of Moscow itself.

The target categories are:

- Foreign journalists who will disseminate information for citizens of African countries;
- Political and diplomatic representatives of African countries and regional organizations of this continent;
- Representatives of academic and business circles with relevant scientific or professional interests.

What exactly should be covered:

- Direct actions in Ukraine, with an emphasis on atrocities against civilians, genocide committed by Russia in the occupied territories. These phenomena took place in the history of African countries and can be perceived in the right light for Ukraine.
- Russia's actions to obstruct the harvest, sowing in Ukraine, bombing of ports, warehouses with grain, actions in the Black Sea, that is, everything that directly affects the supply of grain and food from Ukraine to African countries.
- The projected impact of such actions on African countries in terms of rising food prices, etc.

What communication channels should be used:

- Dissemination of information for local media;
- Organization of discussions, round tables, conferences for representatives of science and business;
- Advocacy of relevant messages by Ukrainian diplomatic institutions, joint events for the diplomatic corps and politicians of African countries.

It is necessary to refer to the conclusions made at the level of the UN and international food programs, and use them if possible.

Important is the dissemination of reports of international organizations, leading think-tanks that cover the situation with food security and emphasize the positive impact of Ukraine's actions. In this way, the sources will be perceived as independent, unbiased and having the appropriate credit of trust.

In particular, the following should be emphasized:

- Reduction of food prices by 8% since the ports were unblocked⁹;
- How many ships and where they were sent;
- What are the positive consequences of receiving food (percentage solution of the food problem, price reduction and improved access to food for vulnerable populations in specific countries, etc.).

These should be spread through African media, social networks, academia.

F) Soft power, work with the media

An essential direction is work with local media. Russia is known for its information operations in a number of African countries, active cooperation with local media and opinion leaders, which allows it to influence the opinion of the African population and form the image necessary for the Kremlin. In addition, Russia often organizes various online campaigns in social networks to spread relevant propaganda narratives (in particular, regarding the situation with African students during the evacuation from Ukraine).

The main countries where such activities should be carried out are those most dependent on Ukrainian grain (Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, Gambia, Somalia) in order to retain these markets, as well as countries that are equally dependent on Ukrainian and Russian food exports (Senegal, Egypt, DRC).

The most meaningful narratives for dissemination should be:

- Ukraine's actions regarding grain exports (how many ships and where they were sent, assistance to African countries and free grain transfers);
- Reports on the work of Ukrainian farmers during the war;
- Reports with high-ranking Ukrainian officials with the spread of the necessary messages and focusing on the African audience;
- Personal stories of Ukrainians, military, farmers, as such personal storytelling is perceived more sympathetically.

These materials can be prepared by Ukrainian journalists from state news agencies, and translations of these materials into French and English will need to be distributed among the media of African countries through the efforts of Ukrainian diplomats, in partnership with foreign media. Some African media can publish these materials for an appropriate financial fee, which is the practice when publishing materials on European topics in the continent's media.

Another key task is to seek access to African think tanks, academic circles and so-called idea factories, to encourage discussions on Ukraine's activities to eliminate the food crisis in Africa, which will subsequently be published in African media.

⁹ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-08-18/secretary-generals-opening-remarks-the-press-lviv-ukraine-press-conference>

A separate focus should be the organization of press conferences of Ukrainian officials with journalists from different African countries. It is important to choose journalists for such events not only from the countries that support Ukraine, but also from those that demonstrate a neutral position, as it is an opportunity to convey truthful information.

High quality analytical materials, which should be prepared by Ukrainian journalists in an accessible and engaging form, should be spread on African resources. Online media should be the first potential distributors of such materials due to their popularity among the local population. Some relevant materials can be disseminated on a barter basis or by paying a fee to the media. In the field of work with African media, personal contact with editors and journalists is crucial, as it will secure a more preferential attitude to the materials offered by the Ukrainian side.

It is vital to cooperate with Poland, the United Kingdom, other partners, their embassies to provide access to networks of media contacts in the information struggle. This requires prior agreement at the highest levels (from the leaders of states to the Foreign Ministries). First of all, this is a task for the central level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which should convey these tasks to the Cabinet of Ministers, the Office of the President, so that they offer cooperation during negotiations with our partners. The argument is the need to curb Russian impact in the region, which threatens further destabilization, growth of migration risks. It also allows the Kremlin to use additional levers of influence.

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