

First Ministerial Conference of Russia-Africa Partnership Establishes New Platform for Cooperation

by Helen Borodina

Helen Borodina is an independent Russian journalist who attended the First Ministerial Conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum in Sochi. EIR has edited the article for publication here.

Nov. 15—Even though human civilization began in Africa about 3 million years ago, the population of the continent has seen all possible forms of injustice over the centuries, such as colonization, slavery, epidemics, hunger, poverty, mass emigration, and deception by Western elites; but today, Africa takes back the lead within its constantly expanding, mutually beneficial partnership with Russia, which is causing yet another shift in the world at large. However, the successful and fruitful First Ministerial Conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum

held in Sochi, November 9-10, 2024, has turned yet another page in the global history book.

The conference was prompted by the success of the Second Russia-Africa Summit held in Saint Petersburg on July 27-28, 2023 (where *EIR*'s Sébastien Périmony, director of the African office of the French Schiller Institute, [provided comprehensive coverage](#) and conducted a series of expert interviews). This month's summit brought together the heads of foreign policy departments of the Russian Federation and the states of the African continent, as well as ministers, leaders of the African Union Commission, regional integration associations, financial institutions, business and scientific circles, as well as journalists from 22 African countries.

Experts from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mau-



Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Group photo of the First Ministerial Conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum held in Sochi, Russia, November 9-10, 2024.

ritania, Madagascar, Mali, Nigeria, Tunisia, Uganda, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, and other African countries worked in the format of round tables and panel discussions, addressing the current topics outstanding on the Russian-African agenda today. The work was consolidated and intense, with more than 20 events held on the first day. The experts discussed digitalization in public administration; collaboration in trade, economics, and education; information security; and other matters pertaining to cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and African countries.

The Conference welcomed 1,500 participants, more than 40 government ministers of foreign affairs, education and science, digital development and technology, economy, industry, healthcare, and youth policy from participating countries.

Anton Kobayakov, advisor to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Executive Secretary of the Organizing Committee responsible for holding events dedicated to the Russian-African collaboration, said during a press conference at the end of the first day that Russia's interactions with African states were determined by the First Russia-Africa Summit, held in Sochi in October 2019, followed by the establishment of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum. "We created bilateral intergovernmental trade, economic, scientific and technological cooperation commissions in joint partnership with a large number of African countries. Russia will expand the presence of its embassies and trade missions in Africa," he said, expressing assurance that the ministerial conference would strengthen these ties, becoming another outstanding event in modern history.

The event was widely covered by international news outlets by attending journalists from Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burundi, Gabon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Libya, Mauritania, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, the Central African Republic, and Equatorial Guinea, along with their colleagues from Russia and locally based international media correspondents.

The conference program included 20 panel sessions, where the heads of leading Russian and African universities analyzed the achievements and future prospects of humanitarian cooperation in education, and discussed demands and approaches to educating a new

generation of international relations specialists. Representatives from many African countries also looked at new possibilities in the field of education within the Russia-Africa partnership programs.

The participants shared their views on digitalization in public administration in a separate session, while the panel discussion "Russia-Africa: Standing Together Against Terror" focused on maintaining a strong framework for international security and human rights protection. Other sessions were dedicated to the agricultural, food, and medical sectors, discussing new ways and best practices of working effectively in these fields for the future of humanity. One panel was also dedicated to the young generation, who will play a defining role in the shape the world will take in the coming decades and centuries. Titled "Russian and African Youth: a Look into the Future," panelists addressed the part played by the young generations in their countries in the social sphere and in the formation of development strategies, domestically as well as internationally.

The session titled "Russia-Africa: a Struggle for Truth," the last to be held on November 9 before Anton Kobayakov's press conference concluding the events of the day, stood out among the rest, its subject being quite possibly the most controversial and the most challenging of the other topics on the agenda. Why? Because historical truth and availability of accurate information are the first and the ultimate prerequisite for enabling successful collaboration between the countries themselves, and what was said during the panel session confirms this statement in full. This panel saw the participation of Director of the Information and Press Department and official representative of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maria Zakharova; Deputy of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Coordinator of the Deputy Group for Relations with the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa and Parliaments of Other African Countries Nikolai Novichkov; Director of the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences Irina Abramova; Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali, Abdoulaye Diop; Pan-Africanist, political activist and business owner Natalie Yamb; RT Editor-in-Chief Margarita Simonyan; and Vice-President of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Elena Panina.

The central feature of the event was the plenary

session, with the participation of the heads of 54 official delegations of African countries, and regional integrational unions and their representatives. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov presided at this session, which was opened by the reading of a greeting to the participants from President Putin and the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani, who is also the current Chair of the African Union.

According to the official Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs press release, Lavrov held a series of meetings during the conference with most African delegations. Mikhail Bogdanov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Middle East and Africa, also met with several ministers and deputy ministers of African countries in the course of the conference. Resulting from these meetings, an extensive number of memoranda and agreements were signed by the Russian and the African officials.

[Four joint statements](#) were released, namely, the Joint Statement of the First Ministerial Conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum, Joint Statement of the First Ministerial Conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum on the implementation of the Declaration of the Second Russia-Africa Summit on strengthening cooperation in the fight against terrorism, Joint Statement of the First Ministerial Conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum on current issues of exploration and use of Outer Space for peaceful purposes, and Joint Statement of the First Ministerial Conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum on measures to create a fair and equitable system of International Information Security.

On the second day of the conference, Russian and African officials inaugurated a Garden of Russian-African Friendship, where participants unveiled 65 new olive trees, symbolizing the total number of African countries and regional integration organizations that took part in the conference.

Arts and Culture

Arts and culture were an integral component of the event. Live concerts of folk and classical music and dance were held; in the hall hung African and Africa-inspired paintings, featuring an exhibition of portraits and daily life scenes created by the famous Russian artist Anastasia Nikolajeva-Berg during her trip to Senegal in 2022.

A fully equipped on-site media center, complete with a lounge, coffee break area, and restaurant, facilitated the work of the journalists. All press representatives had the opportunity to follow top government-level events through online broadcasts and attend the round table meetings, plenary sessions, and Kobaykov's press conference.

The journalists met with the head of council of the Sirius Federal Territory, Elena Shmeleva, and were given a press tour of the venue of the conference, the Sirius Scientific and Educational Center in which it was held. The students of the Sirius music school performed a concert of classical works for the journalists.

Russia and Africa have yet again demonstrated exemplary joint work based on shared values such as mutual trust, equality, and respect, to achieve peace, security, and prosperity through continuous development.