

**ADDRESS**

**by Speaker of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation  
H.E.Ms.Valentina I. Matvienko  
at the opening of the plenary session of the Second International  
Parliamentary Conference "Russia – Africa"**

Moscow  
March 20, 2023

Dear Colleagues,

Dear friends,

I am sincerely delighted to welcome all the participants of the Second International Parliamentary Conference "Russia – Africa".

This format is already becoming traditional. This is evidence of our mutual interest and the objectively growing level of cooperation between the Russian Federation and States of the African continent.

It is important that our conference is taking place in advance of Russia – Africa Summit to be held in my hometown of St. Petersburg this July. This means that we will be able to formulate, for the Heads of State, our proposals and ideas on the parliamentary level as to developing our relations, strengthening ties in the political, economic, humanitarian spheres and enhancing the role of parliaments.

Colleagues, we all understand that our time is marked by global, tectonic shifts in the world system.

It can be said that the world is peeling off the remnants of shackles of colonial dependence moving towards true multilateralism, a more just world order. And without Africa, such a world is unthinkable, impossible.

Not only does Russia fully support this process, it is also one of its most active participants.

We have been and remain supporters of the principles of equality, mutual respect, the inalienable right of each State to independently choose its own path of development, its own destiny without outside interference. It is in this vein that our interaction with African countries has been built for many decades, being mutually beneficial and equal.

We have always supported our African friends in word and deed in their difficult national liberation struggle against colonialism and illegal occupation. Our country, the Soviet Union back then, provided political, financial, economic and military-technical assistance in the formation of independent States, built important infrastructure facilities, and provided support in personnel training. In doing all this, I would like to stress, it has never set any conditions or requirements, in contrast to Western countries.

Thanks to courage and conviction in the rightness of their choice, the peoples of the continent succeeded in achieving freedom and sovereignty.

The role of African States is growing today in the global economy.

Africa is a continent with great potential that has yet to be fully tapped. A continent whose population is approaching one and a half billion people. A continent that has made a huge leap in its development, not only in economic, but also in social and scientific one.

The international prestige of the continent is also rising. I believe this a completely objective and natural trend that the countries of the US-led collective West do not want to reckon with. They are trying at all costs to hold on to their exclusivity and the role of a world hegemon which for objective, historical reasons are becoming a thing of the past. They do not want to change their neo-colonial mentality.

They resort to well-known deterrents: sanctions, threats, blackmail, double standards and outright hypocrisy.

And although in words they constantly declare the rejection of the colonialist legacy, in reality they are in no hurry to plead guilty for the genocide

of African peoples, robbery and barbaric exploitation of the natural wealth of African countries, for the crimes committed.

Thus, the compensation issue has not yet been settled for damage caused during the colonial period.

The delegation of the Federation Council has just paid an official visit to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. And I can say that the issue of compensation to the victims of French nuclear tests in the Algerian Sahara is still open and very acute for the Algerian society.

And there are similar problematic points today in many African countries.

I think it is necessary today to raise the issue of compensating damage. I mean the financial payments to all people in Africa who suffered during the colonial period from the European oppressors, from the consequences of colonialism.

I believe that our parliamentary community can rally around this initiative to hold the former colonial powers politically and morally accountable.

During the recent visit of the delegation of the Federation Council to Algeria, we attended the Martyrs' museum. I had a shock from what I saw, from the crimes committed by the colonialists, tortures, numerous victims among the civilians and fighters for independence.

I believe that the parliamentary ties between Russia and African States make for the powerful resource that we should use effectively.

We have notably intensified our contacts recently. Thus, the delegations of the Federation Council paid official visits to a number of African countries. Besides, the senators of the Russian Federation took part in the 145<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union hosted by Rwanda.

In last November, the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation received an observer status at the African Parliamentary Union.

Within the current Russia – Africa conference the delegations from Namibia, Mali, Madagascar and African Parliamentary Union were proposed to

extend their stay in Russia to make official visits under the programme of the Federation Council.

An important contribution to the strengthening of our contacts is made by the activities of the senators of the Russian Federation within the framework of bilateral dialogue mechanisms. The Federation Council has relevant groups on cooperation with their colleagues from the African States. The heads of such groups – the senators of the Russian Federation – take part in the events of our Conference. Of course, we are in tune to make the number of such groups of friendship bigger and to turn their work substantive.

There is no shortage of topics on our agenda. The agenda includes the development of energy capacities of the continent, its transport infrastructure, agricultural sectors; introduction of new technologies in the mining industry, and enhancing the access to modern medical care for the residents of African countries. Interregional cooperation is an important resource here. Most constituent regions of Russia have partners in the regions of African States. The Federation Council will continue to support this format of interaction.

In addition, our joint efforts are aimed at ensuring the security of the continent, at the military and technical cooperation, at providing assistance in the fight against terrorism and natural disasters.

We intend to deepen our humanitarian contacts in the field of culture, science, and education; to contribute to increasing the tourist flows and training of personnel. The number of Russian state scholarship for students from Africa is growing every year.

Our dialogue on the women's agenda is also getting stronger. Taking this opportunity, I would like to especially thank the women leaders of the African continent for their active participation in Eurasian Women's Fora and for the contribution to enhancing the role of women in the lives of our societies, protecting motherhood and childhood.

Both Russia and Africa are well aware of how important it is to think about the future, about the opportunities for our young people. There is a Chamber of Young Legislators operating under the Federation Council. This is a big parliamentary family of young people, a community of those who care, of active and talented young people. They seek today to expand contacts with partners from the African continent. I am convinced that the young parliamentarians of Africa will respond to such an invitation to cooperate.

Dear friends! The historical bonds of friendship and cooperation between our countries and peoples have passed the test of time.

The countries of the African continent have always been reliable partners and true allies for Russia. I am convinced that it will be the same in the future.

Our common task is to change the world for the better, to ensure the wellbeing and prosperity of the people of Russia and Africa. Everything should be done to make hunger, dangerous diseases and regional conflict a thing of the past.

I have no doubt that the parliamentary conference will strengthen our common commitment to these principles.

I would like to wish you all fruitful work, creative state of mind and new achievements for the benefit of our countries!

Thank you.