

### Russia discusses African nuclear power prospects

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**Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is this week discussing the prospect of closer economic and political ties, including nuclear energy projects, in a number of African countries. Lavrov has so far visited Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, and will complete his trip to the region in Ethiopia tomorrow.**



The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID) said that, following talks with his Angolan counterpart, Manuel Augusto, in Luanda on 5 March, Lavrov had told reporters their two countries are developing cooperation in mineral resources, that "good prospects are taking shape" in the oil and gas sectors, and that they have "ambitious plans" for the high-tech industries and in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. He also met with Angolan President Joao Lourenco.

In an interview with the *Hommes d'AFrique* magazine the same day, Lavrov said: "Our economic cooperation is not as far advanced as our political ties. However, it has improved over the past few years. Our trade with Sub-Saharan countries amounted to USD3.6 billion in 2017, compared with USD3.3 billion in 2016 and USD2.2 billion in 2015."

Lavrov said his tour is aimed at strengthening links in various fields and searching for new opportunities for cooperation in trade, science, technology and humanitarian work. He also said Moscow placed great importance on boosting ties with Africa's regional and sub-regional

organisations, first and foremost, the African Union. He added that economic cooperation between Russia and African states was "not as active as political interaction [but] our economic cooperation has shown some growth in recent years".

Russian companies are working in the exploration, mining, energy and petrochemical sectors in Africa and are taking part in national programmes to build natural gas pipelines and storage facilities and provide technical maintenance for hydropower plants, he said, as well as carrying out feasibility studies for the construction of nuclear power plants and nuclear research and technology centres.

"In addition to mining, Russia and African countries are cooperating in high-technology. Rosatom is considering a number of projects of interest to Africans, for instance the creation of a nuclear research and technology centre in Zambia. Nigeria has a similar project. There are good prospects for cooperation with Ghana, Tanzania and Ethiopia. Talks are under way on the construction of a nuclear power plant in South Africa," Lavrov said.

Also on 5 March, Lavrov held talks in Windhoek, Namibia, with that country's deputy prime minister, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah. According to the transcript of Lavrov's opening remarks, published on MID's website, the foreign minister said the Joint Russian-Namibian Intergovernmental Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation is working well, adding, "We would like it to be action-oriented".

Addressing Nandi-Ndaitwah directly, he noted Namibia's interest in uranium mining and that the African country and Rosatom are finalising their agreement on cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This will open up opportunities for the two countries to cooperate not only in the uranium sector, but also in medicine, technology and the potential construction of a nuclear power plant, Lavrov said.

Namibia holds about 7% of the world's uranium reserves, which are mined to fuel nuclear power stations around the world. Now the government has committed to a policy position of supplying its own electricity from nuclear power. The country faces severe challenges in power supply.

In January last year, the Namibian government announced the lifting of a ten-year moratorium on new applications for exploration licences on nuclear fuel minerals. Referring to this decision, Nandi-Ndaitwah said Namibia was looking forward to the implementation of joint projects in exploration, mining and processing of uranium ore in the country.

She thanked Lavrov for Russia's support of Namibia's application to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group, adding that she looked forward to continued assistance as Namibia positions itself to optimise the advantages of its natural resources.

"In this context, we welcome the ongoing negotiations between Namibia and Russia to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy," she added.

During his visit to Addis Ababa tomorrow, Lavrov is to hold talks with Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn Boshe, President Mulatu Teshome Wirtu and Foreign Minister Workneh Gebeyehu. He is to meet with the chairman of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, at the African Union Headquarters.

MID said: "There are plans to discuss a wide range of bilateral cooperation issues with the Ethiopian leaders while focusing on the trade and economic components, including the implementation of joint energy, nuclear energy, high-tech, science and education projects in Ethiopia."

Lavrov told *The Ethiopian*: "Our plans include organisation of an Ethiopian centre for nuclear science and technology, based on a Russian research reactor."

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Lavrov noted that Ethiopia and Russia have enjoyed 120 years of diplomatic relations.

"We are pleased to see that Russia and Ethiopia are paying special attention to this anniversary and celebratory events will continue throughout the year," he said.

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