

A continent in search of opportunities

In September 2023, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus held a meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on the development of cooperation with the countries of Africa, where the Belarusian government outlined the main directions in this continent: medicine, education, ensuring food security of African countries, supply of agricultural machinery, industrial cooperation. Assessing the objective foreign trade situation, Belarusian Prime Minister R. Golovchenko emphasized that Africa has a huge potential for development, but the accumulated political capital of Belarus has not yet been converted into successful trade and economic projects. In 2022, exports of Belarusian goods to Africa amounted to just over \$200 million and are showing a slight downward trend. For this reason, the government of Belarus has set a clear task - it is necessary to make every effort to find the right tools to reverse the negative dynamics in cooperation with African countries, to form roadmaps, to look for specific projects that can be implemented. What steps are being taken in Belarus in this direction? This is the subject of this proposed study.



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A continent in search of opportunities

*Chronicle of international cooperation between the Republic of Belarus
Belarus with the countries of Africa*

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**Chronicle of international cooperation between
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The starting point is mutual interest

The Republic of Belarus traditionally adheres to unified approaches to the development of relations with all foreign partners, while concentrating its foreign policy efforts on the most important and promising vectors, which include the countries of the so-called "far arc" - in the African, Latin American and African regions, with many of which the Belarusian side seeks to expand and strengthen cooperation, bringing it to the level of strategic partnership.

Belarusian foreign policy is aimed at developing relations with the countries of the "far arc" in two main directions:

First, intensification of political and economic interaction with traditional partners, which official Minsk considers Argentina, Brazil, China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Iran, Cuba, India, Japan, South Africa, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, Vietnam and the United Arab Emirates;

Secondly, establishing a dialog, active entry and consolidation in the markets of states with significant potential for mutually beneficial cooperation, among which the Belarusian side sees Angola, Australia, Bolivia, Cambodia, Colombia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Laos, Qatar, Malaysia, Mozambique, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, and Zimbabwe.

This focus of the Republic of Belarus on active development of interaction with the states of Africa, Latin America, and Asia is explained by the fact that "diversification of trade and deepening of economic cooperation with the countries of these regions of the planet is an important prerequisite for growth of the export-oriented Belarusian economy"¹. And it should be said that over the past few years, the Republic of Belarus has made a lot of concrete steps towards their development in each of the above-mentioned regions.

¹ Countries and regions [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/bilateral/>

Thus, Asian countries are of interest to Belarus as a large, promising, and rapidly expanding market for domestic goods and services, as well as a promising donor to the Belarusian economy. Although the Asian market "is still underdeveloped by exporters from Belarus in terms of promoting many of their products, including those produced by machine-building, electronic and petrochemical enterprises"², Minsk is nevertheless eager to fully implement its ambitious plans to increase supplies of Belarusian trucks, tractors, machine tools, bearings, chemical fibers, electronic and medical devices to this region, as well as to strengthen scientific and industrial cooperation with the Asian countries.

As for Latin America, the development of interaction with the states of this continent is facilitated by strengthening the dialog with priority partners and expanding the geography of bilateral contacts and economic ties in sectors promising for Belarus. This is evidenced by the following fact: "Belarus' trade turnover with Latin American countries increased more than fourfold between 2000 and 2015, with Belarusian exports growing at a faster pace and increasing more than sixfold"³.

In 2016, the events held by Belarus with African countries "contributed both to the intensification of political relations and the promotion of trade and economic cooperation in the supply of Belarusian quarry, truck, road-building and agricultural machinery, and petrochemical products"⁴. This led to more than doubling of Belarusian exports to Africa in 2017, and "it was possible to form strategic approaches to gain a foothold in Southern Africa"⁵. And today,

² Zalessky, B. Belarus - Asia: vector of partnership. Chronicle of mutually beneficial cooperation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2018. - C. 5.

³ Review of the results of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus and the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2016 [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/ea444d5cceb4798d.html>

⁴ Review of the results of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus and the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2016 [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/ea444d5cceb4798d.html>

⁵ Review of the results of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus and the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2017 [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/a8a5169b6e487b3b.html>

at the highest level in the Republic of Belarus, the opinion has already been formed that "Africa is the future of the entire planet. Today and tomorrow the whole world will develop at the expense of Africa"⁶. In 2018, the work to intensify relations with the countries of the African continent was further developed. At the same time, Belarus's rapidly developing partnerships with **Sudan** and **Zimbabwe** look very promising.

Thus, back in August 2017, Belarus and **Sudan** adopted a roadmap for cooperation, in which they outlined the parameters of interaction in the oil and gas, water and electricity, industry and trade, higher education and scientific research, banking and finance sectors. The signed document should ensure the implementation of the agreements reached between Minsk and Khartoum in recent years on the whole range of bilateral cooperation, including joint projects, including "setting up production facilities for Belarusian machinery in Sudan, organizing supplies of road-building, municipal, forestry machinery, grain drying complexes, and carrying out geological exploration in the country."⁷

The very fact that the road map was adopted indicates that the Belarusian side considers Sudan as one of the key partners on the African continent and is "interested in a significant intensification of bilateral cooperation in all sectors"⁸. Statistics show that the volume of bilateral Belarusian-Sudanese trade is clearly dominated by exports from Belarus of tractors, trucks, various types of machine tools, transformers, instrumentation, and tires. Suffice it to say that from 2010 to 2015, trade turnover between the

⁶ Speech before the members of the Parliament of the Republic of Sudan [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vystuplenie-pered-deputatami-parlamentarespubliki-sudan-15402/

⁷ Belarus and Sudan signed a roadmap for cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-sudan-podpisali-dorozhnyu-kartu-razvitija-sotrudnichestva-263976-2017/>

⁸ Alexander Lukashenko congratulated President of Sudan Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-pozdravil-prezidenta-sudana-omara-xasana-axmeda-al-bashira-15252/

two countries grew from \$15.4 million to \$41.3 million, reaching a record high of \$70.8 million in 2013.

Although in 2016 this figure dropped to \$38 million, by the very fact of adopting the "road map" Minsk and Khartoum demonstrated their firm intention to return to the highest level of mutual trade turnover in the near future. Moreover, in recent years, the parties have made a number of concrete steps for this purpose - "introduced annual political consultations, resumed the activities of the intergovernmental commission on cooperation after a ten-year standstill, established direct interaction between the ministries of industry, agriculture, oil and energy, education"⁹ .

An obvious prologue to the adoption of the roadmap for cooperation was the visit of the Belarusian head of state to Sudan in January 2017, during which Belarus expressed its interest in participating in industrial and infrastructure development projects on Sudanese soil and setting up joint ventures to produce agricultural and truck automotive equipment on the basis of existing factories in Sudan. More specifically, "a project to assemble tractors could become a pioneer in this direction"¹⁰ .

The fact is that Minsk Tractor Works has been cooperating with Sudanese partners since 1994. The local company MIG Agriculture is an exclusive distributor of products of Belarusian manufacturers of tractors, trucks, and tires in the Sudanese market. In particular, by selling a number of tractor models, it has become "one of the three best distributors in Sudan"¹¹ . In addition, it has a site that can be used for the assembly of tractors, located just 15 kilometers from Khartoum. In turn, MTZ delivered 123 tractors to this

⁹ Belarus and Sudan plan to sign a treaty on friendly relations and cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-sudan-planirujut-podpisat-dogovor-o-druzhestvennyh-otnoshenijah-i-sotrudnichestve-228043-2017/>

¹⁰ Negotiations with the President of Sudan Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/peregovory-s-prezidentom-sudana-omarom-xasanom-axmedom-al-bashirom-15397/

¹¹ Matveev, V. Assembly production of MTZ tractors may appear in Sudan / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-tractorov-mtz-mozhet-pojavitsja-v-sudane-228348-2017/>

African country in 2016, in the first half of 2017 - another 51 machines, planning to ship at least 80 more units of equipment to this country by the end of the year. As we can see, the trend of increasing exports is evident. But the Belarusian side has set a task to significantly increase the presence of its complex technical products in Sudan, relying on a number of important arguments. First of all, "the plant's designers have adapted the 200-horsepower tractor to the climatic conditions of Sudan; the new model BELARUS-2023.3 is already being tested at the plant. The new tractor can work in 50-degree heat"¹² . Secondly, the assembly plant in Sudan can be used as a platform for Belarusian tractors to reach neighboring countries and the African continent in general.

Among other promising areas of Belarusian-Sudanese industrial cooperation, which were discussed by the business circles of the two countries at a business forum in Khartoum in January 2017, were joint projects "in mechanical engineering, mining, agro-industrial complex, and pharmaceuticals"¹³ . As for mechanical engineering, already in February 2017, the first batch of Minsk Automobile Plant vehicles arrived in Sudan from Belarus - "10 trucks for Petrola, a company operating in the oil sector"¹⁴ . In the spring of 2017, Sudan tested the KZS-575 combine harvester developed by Gomselmash specifically for this country, where sorghum is one of the main cultivated grain crops. In the Sudanese version, it is a question of supplying this equipment to farmers, and the prospects are quite

¹² Sergeeva, V. Assembly production of Belarusian tractors can be established in Sudan / V. Sergeeva // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-belorusskih-tractorov-mozhet-byt-sozdano-v-sudane-263919-2017/>

¹³ Belarus offered Sudan joint business projects [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predlozhila-sudanu-sovmestnye-biznes-proekty-228663-2017/>

¹⁴ Matveev, V. The first MAZ vehicles have arrived in Sudan / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-sudan-pribyla-pervaja-avtotehnika-maz-234543-2017/>

significant, as "sorghum crops cover several million hectares here"¹⁵ . At the same time, the Belarusian side aims not just to supply its machinery to this African country, but to organize assembly on Sudanese soil "under certain conditions to be created by the government of Sudan. Then it will be possible to organize assembly of agricultural machinery here and reach a localization level of about 40%"¹⁶ .

The Belarusian-Sudanese dialogue received an important continuation in December 2018, when President of Sudan Omar al-Bashir paid an official visit to the Republic of Belarus, which "gave a significant impetus to further deepening of the interstate dialogue and realization of the existing potential of Belarusian-Sudanese cooperation"¹⁷ . Such facts testified to the serious potential and enticing prospects of cooperation between Belarus and Sudan: 17 documents - agreements, treaties, contracts - worth about \$250 million were signed during the mentioned visit of the Sudanese head of state to Minsk. The intergovernmental agreement on avoiding double taxation and preventing tax evasion with regard to income taxes, as well as the memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the industrial sector should be singled out among the documents that develop the legal framework of the Belarusian-Sudanese relations. Apparently, this is only a starting point for the development of the whole complex of bilateral relations, since, according to O. al-Bashir, "Sudan is interested in expanding economic cooperation with Belarus"¹⁸ . In order to raise these relations to a new level in the near future, the Sudanese side opened a diplomatic mission in Minsk in December 2018.

¹⁵ Sidorchik, V. "Gomselmash" conducts tests of combine harvester in Sudan / V. Sidorchik // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomselmash-provodit-ispytanija-zernouborochnogo-kombajna-v-sudane-244896-2017/>

¹⁶ Matveev, V. Belarusian-Sudanese agreements for \$50 million signed in Khartoum / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusko-sudanskiedogovorenosti-na-50-mln-podpisany-v-hartume-228714-2017/>

¹⁷ Congratulations to the President of Sudan Omar Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/pozdravlenie-prezidentu-sudana-omaru-xasanu-axmedu-al-bashiru-20193/

¹⁸ Grishkevich, A. Sudan is interested in expanding economic cooperation with Belarus / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL:

Belarus believes that in its relations with Sudan, which is a bridge between Arab civilization and Africa, it should focus on the export of high-tech products with the subsequent establishment of joint assembly plants there, as the increase and diversification of Belarusian exports should "contribute to the economic development of Sudan, the Sudanese side's solution of tasks in the field of industrialization, agricultural development, and training of local highly qualified personnel"¹⁹. While in 2017, for the first time Belarus supplied the Sudanese market with dump trucks, prototypes of a high-tech grain harvester and energy-intensive tractor, road-building machinery, agricultural equipment, and resumed deliveries of trucks, "in the first 10 months of 2018, exports of Belarusian goods to Sudan almost doubled year-on-year"²⁰.

This African country attracts the attention of Belarus not only because of its rich natural resources and good geographical location, not only because of the possibility of supplying Belarusian equipment and training personnel for Sudan, but also because of the promising areas of cooperation, the list of which is quite broad: "This is cooperation in the agro-industrial sector, in the development of minerals, infrastructure development, logistics"²¹.

With regard to industrial cooperation, Belarus and Sudan are already developing and implementing twelve joint projects, which "concern gold mining, the creation of a multi-profile machine-building enterprise for the assembly of tractors, MAZ trucks and Gomselmash machinery"²². The same

<https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/sudan-zainteresovan-v-rasshirenii-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-s-belarusju-328885-2018/>

¹⁹ Negotiations with the President of Sudan Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/peregovory-s-prezidentom-sudana-omaron-xasanom-axmedom-al-bashirom-20033/

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ During the visit of the President of Sudan to Belarus, contracts worth \$250 million were signed [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vo-vremja-vizita-prezidenta-sudana-v-belarus-podpisano-kontraktov-na-250-mln-328785-2018/>

²² Grishkevich, A. Belarus and Sudan emphasize cooperation in the economy and industrial cooperation - Rachkov / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL:

list also includes participation of Belarusian organizations in energy projects, measures to improve oil recovery in Sudanese oilfields, joint ventures to produce meat and dairy products, fodder, vegetables and seedlings.

Speaking about the development of Belarusian-Sudanese cooperation in agriculture, we should first of all mention the framework contract for the supply of 17 grain storage facilities from Belarus to this African country for a total of EUR 60 million. Back in September 2018, Belarusian Lidselmash and Selenergoprom signed the relevant documents with the Agricultural Bank of Sudan. As a result, Lidselmash signed a contract for the supply of eight grain storage facilities with a capacity of 50,000 tons and four with a capacity of 25,000 tons, worth a total of €32.4 million. "Selenergoprom" signed documents for the delivery of five granaries with a capacity of 100 thousand tons for the amount of 27, 25 million euros"²³.

Geological exploration in Sudan is also promising for Belarus. A relevant Belarusian company has already been registered for this purpose. In December 2018, it became known that "Sudan intends in the near future to allocate to Belarus a second area for gold mining, located near the Nile"²⁴. And then Belarusian specialists in this African country will simultaneously carry out geological exploration in two areas. In addition, both countries will soon take measures at the level of parliaments and business circles to "bring the relations between the regions of Belarus and the states of Sudan to a higher level"²⁵, corresponding to the level of strategic partnership.

<https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/belarus-i-sudan-delajut-aktsent-na-sotrudnichestve-v-ekonomike-i-promkooperatsii-rachkov-328692-2018/>

²³ Belarus will supply grain storage facilities worth 60 million euros to Sudan [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-postavit-v-sudan-zernohranilischna-60-mln-evro-318290-2018/>

²⁴ Grishkevich, A. Sudan intends to allocate Belarus a second site for gold mining / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sudan-nameren-vydelit-belarusi-vtoroj-uchastok-dlja-dobychi-zolota-328681-2018/>

²⁵ Interregional cooperation between Belarus and Sudan should be brought to a higher level - Andreichenko [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/politics/view/mezhregionalnoe-sotrudnichestvo-belarusi-i-sudana-sleduet-vyvesti-na-boleev-vysokij-uroven-andrejchenko-328837-2018/>

As for **Zimbabwe**, in January 2019, the President of this country, E. Mnangagwa, paid a visit to the Republic of Belarus, during which the parties agreed to build a strategy and implement a concrete plan for the development of cooperation in the future. Belarus considers this African country, located in the south of the "black" continent, an important partner in the Southern African region, seeking for this reason to gradually move to a strategic level of interaction with it, and sees significant potential in the development of bilateral relations despite the fact that "Zimbabwe is going through difficult times: for almost two decades, the country has been subjected to various economic sanctions and has been virtually isolated"²⁶.

Official Minsk sees significant potential for cooperation with Harare, first of all, in the areas of trade and economy. The fact is that in this African country today "legislation is being actively changed to attract investment, a green light is being given for the establishment of joint ventures"²⁷, concrete steps are being taken for the growth and industrialization of various spheres of the economy, and the main priorities of domestic policy are modernization and mechanization of agriculture, mining, as well as the construction of socio-economic infrastructure. Let us also not forget that "Zimbabwe has abundant natural resources - coal, diamonds, deposits of other minerals. Therefore, there is a need for machinery that is produced in Belarus"²⁸.

It should be recalled that contacts between Belarus and Zimbabwe were significantly intensified and received powerful impulses for development in 2015 after the same E. Mnangagwa visited our country, only then in the status

²⁶ Negotiations with President Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/ofitsialnyj-vizit-prezidenta-respubliki-zimbabwe-emmersona-mnangagvy-20303/

²⁷ Belarus and Zimbabwe can reach large-scale economic cooperation - Sheiman [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-zimbabwe-mogut-vyjiti-na-masshtabnoe-ekonomicheskoe-sotrudnichestvo-shejman-333102-2019/>

²⁸ Matveev, V. New contracts for the supply of Belarusian machinery to Zimbabwe are being worked out / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prorabatyvajutsja-novye-kontrakty-na-postavku-belorusskoj-tehniki-v-zimbabwe-333019-2019/>

of vice-president of this South African state. In Minsk, three and a half years ago, he said that "the Zimbabwean side is interested in expanding trade and economic interaction, as well as cooperation in such areas as infrastructure, agriculture and mining"²⁹ . Speaking about the need to implement large-scale infrastructure projects in their country, high-ranking representatives of Zimbabwe clearly emphasized an important detail for the Belarusian side: "Zimbabweans would like to give preference to machines from Belarus rather than their Western analogues for a number of objective reasons"³⁰ . Since then, the Belarusian-Zimbabwean partnership has been gradually developing and strengthening. It should be noted that until recently, potash fertilizers and spare parts for motor vehicles formed the basis of Belarusian exports to Zimbabwe, while Belarus imported minerals, as well as citrus fruits and vegetables in insignificant amounts.

Back in 2014, the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Belarus supplied dump trucks and loaders to Zimbabwe, which started working at the Hwange coal mine. In 2017, deals were concluded to supply smaller capacity dump trucks to southern Africa. In 2018, Amkodor signed a contract to supply forty units of machinery and spare parts to Zimbabwe for almost four and a half million dollars with financial support from the Development Bank of Belarus and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe. But it is in 2019 that Belarusian supplies to the Zimbabwean market should gain new dimensions. We are talking about the shipment of equipment to this country under earlier contracts - tractors, seeders, products of the Minsk Automobile Plant - tractors, semi-trailers. In particular, the Zimbabwean company "Adjara Trucking" announced its readiness to purchase about two hundred trucks of Minsk Automobile Plant, noting that "Zimbabwe's demand may reach 1

²⁹ Meeting with Emmerson Mnangagwa, Vice President of the Republic of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-vitse-prezidentom-respubliki-zimbabve-emmersonom-mnangagvoj-11803/

³⁰ Zimbabwe is considering the possibility of purchasing a large batch of Belarusian machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zimbabve-rassmatrivaet-vozmozhnost-priobreteniya-krupnoj-partii-belorusskoj-tehniki-5848-2015/>

thousand units. MAZ trucks are planned to be used in the mining industry, for transportation of fuel, grain and fertilizers"³¹ . And the Belarusian Automobile Plant together with the company "Sohra" is now working out the issue of supplying six dump trucks and two loaders. In total, more than 70 BelAZ trucks are already successfully operating at various quarries there. It should also be noted that export financing of supplies of Belarusian machinery to Zimbabwe is planned to be realized with the participation of the pan-African bank The Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank, to which the Belarusian Development Bank "in 2018 opened a credit line of \$70 million for the relevant needs"³² .

Interesting opportunities are also opening up for the Belarusian side in terms of the implementation of joint projects in geological exploration and mining with partners from Zimbabwe. In particular, "Belarus expects to start commercial mining in Zimbabwe in March 2019"³³ . A total of five Belarusian-Zimbabwean joint ventures have already been established in this country. Belarusian geologists have been working in the south of Africa for a year and a half and have found "quite large deposits of minerals"³⁴ .

Speaking about the prospects for cooperation between the two countries, the areas in which Minsk and Harare intend to cooperate most actively include agriculture, construction, energy, as well as science and education. With regard to agriculture, in January 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Belarus and the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Settlements of Zimbabwe signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This document can and should become a prologue to the

³¹ Sergeeva, V. The company from Zimbabwe is ready to buy about 200 MAZ trucks / V. Sergeeva // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/economics/view/kompanija-iz-zimbabve-gotova-zakupit-okolo-200-gruzovikov-maz-333067-2019/>

³² Development Bank will credit supplies of Belarusian machinery to Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/bank-razvitija-prokredituet-postavki-belorusskoj-tehniki-v-zimbabve-333485-2019/>

³³ Belarus intends to start commercial mining in Zimbabwe in March [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-v-marte-namerena-pristupit-k-promyshlennoj-dobyche-poleznyh-iskopaemyh-v-zimbabve-333402-2019/>

³⁴ Ibid.

implementation of a number of projects. In particular, "we are talking about the establishment of joint ventures in Zimbabwe for the production and processing of meat and milk"³⁵. One of them could be an enterprise for the production and processing of meat and milk with the participation of the Machulishchi agro-industrial complex, which has already sent its proposal to the Zimbabwean side. "The cost of the project, if the contract is signed, will exceed \$26 million"³⁶.

In the energy sector, "the participation of Belarusian companies in the construction of hydro-technical facilities and the turnkey construction of a solar panel power plant could be promising"³⁷. A concrete step towards strengthening bilateral Belarusian-Zimbabwean scientific cooperation is the Memorandum of Understanding on Science, Technology and Innovation signed in January 2019 in Minsk between the State Committee for Science and Technology of Belarus and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology of Zimbabwe. This document envisages the establishment of a bilateral commission that will form potential joint research projects. Despite the fact that the Zimbabwean market is a new one for Belarus, nevertheless, we are already talking about the most promising areas of scientific cooperation, proposals for which have already been formed. They speak, in particular, about joint projects "in the spheres of agriculture, medicine, machine and instrument engineering, energy"³⁸.

³⁵ Matveev, V. Cooperation with Belarus will provide opportunities for the development of the economy and export potential of Zimbabwe / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sotrudnichestvo-s-belarusiju-dast-vozmozhnosti-dlja-razvitiia-ekonomiki-i-eksportnogo-potentsiala-333049-2019/>

³⁶ Matveev, V. New contracts for the supply of Belarusian machinery to Zimbabwe are being worked out / V. Matveev // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prorabatvvajutsja-novye-kontrakty-na-postavku-belorusskoj-tehniki-v-zimbabwe-333019-2019/>

³⁷ Negotiations with President Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/ofitsialnyj-vizit-prezidenta-respubliki-zimbabwe-emmersona-mnangagvy-20303/

³⁸ Belarus and Zimbabwe plan to establish a commission on cooperation in science and technology [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/society/view/belarus-i-zimbabwe-planirujut-sozdat-komissiju-po-sotrudnichestvu-v-nauke-i-tehnologijah-333035-2019/>

Speaking about the intentions of the parties to develop cooperation in the field of education, one should immediately mention the Memorandum of Cooperation signed in January 2019 between the Ministry of Education of Belarus and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology of Zimbabwe, which concerns cooperation in the field of specialized secondary, higher education, science and technology. Note that "similar memorandums on their areas of cooperation have been concluded with the participation of the Belarusian State University and the Republican Institute of Vocational Education of Belarus"³⁹. The appearance of these documents was dictated by the fact that "the developing trade and economic relations between Belarus and Zimbabwe need to be accompanied by appropriate training of personnel"⁴⁰. Statistics say that today there are only six Zimbabwean students studying in Belarusian higher educational institutions. It is clear that in the near future there can and should be much more of them. Such dynamics should be facilitated by the agreement on mutual recognition of educational documents by Belarus and Zimbabwe, which is being prepared by the parties today.

As we can see, the range of partnership ties between Belarus and Zimbabwe has significantly expanded just over the past few years, which puts the urgent issue of establishing a Belarusian-Zimbabwean intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation, which could "better stimulate the implementation of the planned plans," on the practical agenda of the bilateral relations⁴¹. It should be assumed that 2019 will be the starting point in the activities of this much-needed formation.

³⁹ Belarus and Zimbabwe have signed a package of documents on cooperation in different areas [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-zimbabve-podpisali-paket-dokumentov-o-sotrudnichestve-v-raznyh-sferah-333033-2019/>

⁴⁰ Belarus and Zimbabwe are preparing an agreement on mutual recognition of education documents [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/special/society/view/belarus-i-zimbabve-gotovjat-soglashenie-o-vzaimnom-priznanii-dokumentov-ob-obrazovanii-333074-2019/>

⁴¹ Negotiations with President Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/ofitsialnyj-vizit-prezidenta-respubliki-zimbabve-emmerzona-mnangagvy-20303/

And expanding exports and finding new markets

In May 2022, the third Belarusian-African Economic Forum is to be held in Cairo, where the prospects for the implementation of joint projects in agriculture, engineering, education, and other areas with a number of African countries will be considered. This fact once again testifies to the fact that "intensification of interaction with African countries is one of the important components of the modern Belarusian foreign policy"⁴² . It should be reminded that by the beginning of 2022 the Republic of Belarus had established diplomatic relations with 51 countries of the African continent, four of which - Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and the Republic of South Africa - have Belarusian diplomatic missions successfully operating. "The key area of cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and African states in the trade and economic sphere is the expansion of exports of products and services. Systematic work is underway to develop new markets on the African continent"⁴³ . And an important component of this work is the organization and holding of Belarusian-African economic and business forums.

Thus, the business forum "Africa - Belarus: current situation and new benchmarks for joint business projects", attended by representatives of 17 embassies of African countries, including from Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Morocco, Namibia, Sudan, South Sudan, South Africa, Zambia, and Zambia, as well as more than two hundred Belarusian enterprises, was held in December 2020 in the format of a videoconference. The relevance of this event for the Belarusian side was explained by the fact that official Minsk pays great attention to the development of ties with the countries of this continent, as "Africa is a treasure trove of natural resources, an important source of global labor resources, and a huge undeveloped

⁴² Zalesky, B. Vectors of the far arc. Opportunities for sectoral cooperation / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing: Saarbrücken, 2018. - C. 17.

⁴³ Belarus and the countries of Africa and the Middle East [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/countries_regions/africa_middle_east/

market"⁴⁴ . In this regard, it is important not only to increase mutual trade with the continent's countries, but also to diversify Belarusian exports, deepen economic and industrial cooperation, and actively use the project approach, which consists in the implementation of projects to establish joint ventures and enterprises in Africa, promote industrial and food products, as well as scientific, technical and production developments in the industrial and agricultural sectors, as well as in the fields of energy and transport.

Developing this thesis, the participants of the December African-Belarusian Business Forum noted that "there are three main areas of cooperation with African countries for Belarus from the point of view of business"⁴⁵ . First, everything related to mechanical engineering and the development of the relevant infrastructure. Second, everything related to food production, agrarian technologies, agricultural machinery. Thirdly, everything that includes the concept of "service sector", and especially education, medicine, IT-technologies. Of course, the Belarusian side has already accumulated a certain experience of cooperation in each of these areas, which can be used for further realization of the huge potential for the development of foreign economic relations.

A good example in this regard is the Minsk Tractor Plant, which in the first ten months of 2020 almost three and a half times increased its exports to African countries, opening two new markets - Zimbabwe and Burundi. But the address of the main supplies of Belarusian tractors to the "black continent" was Sudan, where 153 machines were shipped in 2019, and 510 in January-October 2020. This is the result of cooperation between MTZ and the Sudanese company MIG Agricultural Co. Ltd, which started back in 2003,

⁴⁴ Africa is becoming a promising and long-term partner of Belarus - Ulakhovich [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/afrika-stanovitsja-perspektivnym-i-dolgosrochnym-partnerom-belarusi-ulahovich-413176-2020/>

⁴⁵ Belarus offers African countries to cooperate in services, agro-industrial complex and machine-building [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predlagaet-afrikanskim-stranam-sotrudnicat-v-sfere-uslug-apk-i-mashinostroenii-419342-2020>

thanks to which more than two and a half thousand BELARUS tractors are already working in Sudanese fields.

In addition, Minsk Tractor Plant in Africa has also created a certain groundwork for the future in the form of a roadmap for cooperation with the Ministry of Military Industry of Egypt signed back in February 2020, which envisages the organization of assembly production of tractors and engines on the basis of the plant of Helwan Diesel Engines Co. with localization of up to 40 percent in the next three years. It is important that the Egyptian partners have already "received a standard project of organization of assembly production for 500 units of machinery, as well as a list of necessary equipment and tooling. In addition, MTW will prepare and hand over a standard project of assembly production, designed for the production of 10 thousand machines per year"⁴⁶ .

In the first eight months of 2020, OJSC BMZ, the managing company of BMK Holding, increased its supplies to Africa by almost 20 percent, having shipped more than 11 million dollars worth of valves to Africa. This allowed to increase the share of African countries in the total exports of the company to 12 percent. Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin and Ghana are among the main importers of Belarusian metallurgists' products. Interestingly, "shipments to the last listed country [Ghana] in the current [2020] year increased threefold in physical terms"⁴⁷ .

Another African country where the Belarusian presence is growing quite rapidly is Zimbabwe, with whose government an agreement was reached several years ago to supply agricultural machinery from Belarus for \$58 million. And "100 tractors, 20 combine harvesters, 52 seeders, five tractors and five semi-trailers made in Belarus have already been delivered to

⁴⁶ MTZ tripled exports to Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-vtroe-uvelichil-eksport-v-afriku-416304-2020/>

⁴⁷ BMZ increased sales of rebar to Africa by almost 20% [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bmz-uvelichil-prodazhi-armatury-v-afriku-pochti-na-20-407746-2020/>

Zimbabwe. By the end of the current [2020] year, another 370 tractors, 20 combine harvesters and 138 seeders will arrive by sea⁴⁸. The fact is that the agricultural sector is a key segment of this country's economy, along with the mining industry. And mechanization is seen here as the main way of development of national agriculture. For this reason, in September 2020, Zimbabwe at the state level announced the launch of a joint government program with Belarus to mechanize the country's agricultural sector. In this regard, a Belarusian trade and service center was opened in the capital, Harare, where "machinery will be provided to Zimbabwean farmers within the framework of the government program for mechanization of the country's agriculture"⁴⁹. Also. In the near future, efforts to establish ties between Belarus and Namibia will also be significantly intensified. In November 2020, the two countries declared their intention to pay special attention to "the development of a legal framework and the establishment of a joint intergovernmental committee on trade and economic cooperation."⁵⁰.

The Second Belarusian-African Economic Forum, attended by representatives of government agencies, business and financial circles from 14 African states - Angola, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, and Eritrea - was held in Minsk at the junction of spring and summer 2021. On the Belarusian side, the event was attended by more than 175 companies and industrial enterprises interested in establishing contacts with African partners and implementing joint mutually

⁴⁸ Zimbabwe launched a joint program with Belarus to provide farms with agricultural machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-zimbabwe-zapuschena-sovmestnaja-s-belarusiju-programma-obespechenija-ferm-selhoztehnikoj-408853-2020/>

⁴⁹ "Gomselmash" strengthens its position in the market of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomselmash-ukrepljaet-pozitsii-na-rynke-zimbabwe-408968-2020>

⁵⁰ Belarus and Namibia plan to establish a committee for trade and economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-namibija-planirujut-sozdat-komitet-po-torgovo-ekonomicheskomu-sotrudnichestvu-417026-2020/>

beneficial projects. Minsk characterized the forum as an important dialogue platform aimed at further strengthening and developing bilateral and multilateral relations between Belarus and African countries, expanding trade, economic and cooperation ties, and increasing mutual trade turnover. Suffice it to say that "for three years after the first Belarusian-African Forum, the volume of mutual trade between Belarus and African states totaled more than USD 1.8 billion. Belarus and its African partners have gone from an annual trade turnover of \$158 million in the early 2000s to \$553 million in 2020"⁵¹ . This dynamics largely explains why this continent is considered to be one of the important elements of Belarus's multi-vector foreign policy, where Belarus has a lot of opportunities for joint and mutually beneficial movement towards creating new strongholds and strengthening cooperation in a wide range of areas.

It is a fact that Belarus has long been exporting to many African countries. Moreover, "practically half of the states of the southern continent know Belarusian products: from food to machine building"⁵² . For example, Egypt has an assembly plant for Belarusian tractors and trucks, while Sudan and Algeria are already actively working on similar projects. Potash fertilizers and tires are exported to South Africa. "Major projects are being implemented and contracts for the supply of Belarusian machinery and equipment to Zimbabwe and Angola are being worked out"⁵³ .

However, the very fact that the second Belarusian-African Economic Forum was held testified to the fact that the achieved indicators of

⁵¹ About the Second Belarusian-African Economic Forum [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/dd94997d14d9eb8a.html

⁵² Experts link the development of the world economy with Africa. How can Belarus take advantage of this? [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksperty-svjazyvajut-razvitie-mirovoj-ekonomiki-s-afrikoj-kak-etim-mozhet-vospolzovatsja-belarus-443722-2021/>

⁵³ Grishkevich, A. Belarusian dump trucks and agricultural machinery have taken strong positions in the markets of many African countries / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-samosvaly-i-selhoztehnika-zanjali-prochnye-pozitsii-na-rynkah-mnogih-afrikanskih-stran-443820-2021/>

cooperation with African partners can and should be much higher. The existing level of cooperation is just a starting point for the introduction of new forms and methods of trade and economic interaction and diversification of mutual trade. In fact, for this reason, at this economic forum, Belarus offered African countries to use a comprehensive systematic approach in the development of partnerships, from assessing local agricultural conditions to supplying a full range of machinery and equipment. The implementation of such an approach can significantly increase supplies of "Belarusian machinery, equipment and components to Africa within the framework of various forms of industrial cooperation with the possible use of various instruments of financing Belarusian exports"⁵⁴ , as well as accelerate the creation of joint production facilities using Belarusian technologies and the turnkey construction of industrial and agricultural facilities.

It should be noted that Belarusian proposals at the economic forum were met with considerable interest by the African participants. Thus, the Egyptian side, represented by about 35 companies in Minsk, expressing its interest in organizing industrial cooperation with partners from Belarus, suggested promoting trilateral cooperation, under which Belarusian tractors assembled in Egypt could be supplied to other countries of the continent using the opportunities of the free trade zones available there, which would remove a number of tariff barriers. According to Egyptian business, several other vectors of cooperation look promising today. "The first is a Belarusian-made coronavirus vaccine, the second is an electric bus produced by Belarus"⁵⁵ .

As for other African countries, for example, Uganda, which is rich in mineral resources and where oil and gas are extracted, "intends to seriously

⁵⁴ About the meeting of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei with the participants of the Second Belarusian-African Economic Forum [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/cc66b6a8ee1bbd02.html

⁵⁵ Egypt is interested in industrial cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/egipet-zainteresovan-v-promyshlennoj-kooperatsii-s-belarusiju-443740-2021/>

engage in residential infrastructure and construction of hotels to develop tourism. Belarusian partners could help the country in this"⁵⁶ . Among other promising areas of mutual Belarusian-Ugandan interest were oil products processing, information and communication technologies, and education. Congo would like to develop relations with Belarusian partners in order to modernize its agricultural policy. Namibia sees prospects for such cooperation in mining, energy, industry, agriculture, and even fishing.

The interaction of the Republic of Belarus with the Republic of South Africa (RSA) deserves a separate discussion in this context. March 2023 will mark 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. In 2020, trade turnover between the two countries exceeded \$25 million, with Belarusian exports accounting for \$18 million. This was due to supplies from Belarus of quarry automotive equipment and spare parts, oversized tires, potash fertilizers, linen fabrics, X-ray equipment, and certain types of food products. An important point in this case is that "the commodity distribution network of Belarusian enterprises in South Africa includes the trading house of Belshina, a dealer (certified service center) of BelAZ"⁵⁷ .

The revival of trade and economic relations between Belarus and South Africa has become a characteristic feature of the recent interaction between Belarus and South Africa. In particular, "in 2020, after a six-year break, deliveries of BELAZ mining machinery to South Africa resumed"⁵⁸ . And by the end of September 2021, the fleet of these machines in this African country already numbered 49 dump trucks. This fact is an obvious evidence that

⁵⁶ "We can start working right now" - African countries voiced promising areas of cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mozhem-nachinat-rabotat-prjamo-sejchas-strany-afriki-ozvuchili-perspektivnye-sfery-sotrudnichestva-s-443755-2021/>

⁵⁷ Cooperation of the Republic of Belarus with the Republic of South Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/

⁵⁸ Turchin discussed with the Ambassador of South Africa cooperation in agriculture and machinery production [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/turchin-obsudil-s-poslom-juar-sotrudnichestvo-v-oblasti-selskogo-hozjajstva-i-proizvodstva-tehniki-462069-2021/>

Minsk and Pretoria are now starting to gradually return to the full realization of the potential inherent in cooperation between the regions of the two countries. Recall that in 2013, celebrating the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the parties spoke of good prospects for "cooperation in the areas of industry, agriculture, interregional development..."⁵⁹. And in 2021 this aspiration became especially noticeable.

Thus, at the end of September 2021, the head of the South African diplomatic mission in Russia and Belarus, M.D. Maketuka, talked to **the** Minsk Regional Executive Committee about intensifying cooperation with partners from the Free State province. The meeting resulted in the decision to cooperate in two areas: agriculture and machinery production. It should be noted that these regions signed a cooperation agreement back in December 2015. In September 2016, a representative delegation from the Free State visited the Belarusian capital region, where it was particularly interested in the technologies and experience of Minsk region in processing agricultural products. This was explained by the fact that agriculture is central to the economy of this province. In addition, the South African side then expressed great interest "in the assistance of Belarusian partners in personnel training, and they also intend to develop cooperation in construction and health care"⁶⁰. And in November 2020, the partners from South Africa confirmed their willingness to cooperate in various areas, including "in the areas of trade in milk and meat, exchange of students for training"⁶¹, as well as in the development of tourism. Apparently, the time for the realization of all these interaction plans has come.

⁵⁹ Zaleskii, B. International relations and media. View from Belarus / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2014. - C. 539.

⁶⁰ Martyniuk, E. Free State Province of South Africa intends to adopt the Belarusian experience in processing agricultural products / E. Martyniuk // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/provintsija-fri-stejt-juar-namerena-perenjat-belorusskij-opyt-poperabotke-selhozproduksii-211004-2016/>

⁶¹ South Africa is interested in cooperation with Minsk region [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/juar-zainteresovana-v-sotrudnicestve-s-minskoj-oblastiju-417308-2020/>

Another South African province that has noticeably intensified its interest in cooperation with Belarusian partners in 2021 is KwaZulu-Natal, which is the second most populous (11.5 million people) in South Africa and ranks second in the country in terms of economic indicators. Thus, in April, a video conference "Opportunities for trade and investment cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the province of KwaZulu-Natal in the field of textiles and clothing" was held, where "from the South African side there were presented companies working in the field of linen products supply, tailoring of clothes and shoes, designers"⁶². It should be assumed that as a result of the discussion, such Belarusian enterprises as Orsha Flax Factory, Kamvol, Mogotex, and Luch will soon find reliable business partners in the south of the African continent.

This province of South Africa is also interesting for Belarus because it is here that the project to set up an assembly plant for Belarusian tractors is to be implemented in a special economic zone. "The parties to the project are Nqawana Holdings and the administration of the Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone (RBIDZ) on the South African side, and MTZ OJSC and Round Bay LLC on the Belarusian side"⁶³. In August 2021, the technical details of this project were already discussed here and concrete steps were outlined to implement the agreements reached.

An interesting example of partner regions from Belarus and South Africa is Mogilev Oblast and Mpumalanga Province, one of the most industrially powerful in the country, where mining, telecommunications services, and energy are well developed, and where about 40 percent of South Africa's forest land is concentrated. The two sides signed a memorandum of

⁶² About the videoconference "Opportunities for Trade and Investment Cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Province of KwaZulu-Natal in the Field of Textiles and Clothing". [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/b561f2d89c659bd7.html>

⁶³ On the visit of Ambassador A. Sidoruk to Richards Bay [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/ad33cd30a4281477.html>

cooperation in December 2016. In it, they expressed interest in developing partnerships in trade and industry, agriculture, education, sports, tourism and culture. The province also expressed interest in developing not only projects in the agro-industrial complex, but also in training specialists in agriculture, forestry, medicine, and information technology in Belarusian universities. In addition, they talked about the possibilities of "cooperation in woodworking, creation of joint ventures for processing agricultural products and food production"⁶⁴. Let us hope that it is time for these regions to return to the partnership plans once adopted in order to successfully implement them today.

Kenya is another country on the African continent where mutually beneficial cooperation with Belarus has great potential. It may be recalled that in August 2019, Nairobi hosted the Belarus-Kenya Business Forum, during which the participants outlined promising growth points for bilateral trade and economic cooperation. At the same time, the parties' attention was focused on the prospects for joint projects that would contribute to the implementation of the Kenyan government's strategic "Big Four Program", which includes "food security and nutrition, universal health coverage, affordable housing and manufacturing"⁶⁵. As a result, agreements were signed at the forum for the construction of a reinforced concrete plant on Kenyan soil and the establishment of a fish farm at a total cost of more than one hundred million dollars. Agreements were also reached on the supply of motor tractor machinery and equipment from Belarus to Kenya for almost twenty million dollars with the subsequent establishment in this African country of an assembly plant of Belarusian tractors with an annual capacity of up to five thousand units.

⁶⁴ Kulyagin, S. Mogilev region and Mpumalanga province of South Africa signed a memorandum of cooperation / S. Kulyagin // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/mogilevskaja-oblast-i-provintsija-mpumalanga-juar-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-222724-2016/>

⁶⁵ About the Belarusian-Kenyan business forum [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://kenya.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/e02ca9530a8dcc63.html>

These facts testify to the fact that the business forum was an important concrete step towards the establishment of bilateral cooperation between Belarus and Kenya, which established diplomatic relations almost 30 years ago. It is true that the legal framework for Belarusian-Kenyan cooperation is still in the process of formation. However, it is encouraging that the parties are now preparing to sign a number of joint documents regulating bilateral relations in various areas, including agriculture, higher education, science, and technology.

A positive trend of recent years in the development of partnership ties between the two countries is the rapid growth - more than forty percent - of mutual trade turnover in 2018, which came close to \$50 million. "Traditional items of Belarusian exports to Kenya are: potash and mixed mineral fertilizers, newsprint, and printing products. The basis of Kenyan imports to Belarus is formed by supplies of flowers and buds, nuts, vegetables and fruits, coffee, tea"⁶⁶. And this gives grounds for the Belarusian side to predict at the highest level that "Kenya will soon become one of the key partners of Belarus in Africa"⁶⁷.

The seriousness of the Belarusian side's intentions to thoroughly explore the Kenyan market is confirmed by the fact that Belarus organized its first national exposition at the FoodAgro International Food, Hospitality and Agriculture Exhibition held in Nairobi in early August 2019. Minsk is confident that participation in this exhibition, which is part of the largest exhibition event in East Africa - Kenya International Trade Exhibition, "will promote Belarusian agricultural machinery and equipment, fertilizers, food, agricultural products to the Kenyan market, as well as become a launching

⁶⁶ Belarus - Kenya [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: http://kenya.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/

⁶⁷ Lukashenko expects Kenya to become one of the key partners of Belarus in Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-rasschityvaet-cto-kenija-stanet-odnim-iz-kljuchevyh-partnerov-belarusi-v-afrike-328984-2018/>

pad for Belarusian companies to enter the KOMECA countries (integration association of Eastern and Southern Africa)"⁶⁸ .

In the Kenyan capital, the enterprises of Belgospisheprom Concern, Lidselmash Holding Management Company, Gomselmash, MTZ, MAZ, Bobruiskagromash, Lidakhlebproukt, and Smarhon Bread Products Combine unitary enterprise presented their products. The participation of these Belarusian exporters in the said exhibition is explained by the fact that Kenya is an agrarian country where "more than 35% of GDP is accounted for by the agricultural sector"⁶⁹ , where in December 2017 a new program of planned economic development of the country until 2022 was launched with a focus on the development of national production, food security, and construction of affordable housing. In this regard, with a competent approach, Belarusian producers can realistically claim to increase supplies of their agricultural equipment, fertilizers, and chemical plant protection products here. The development of meat and dairy production is also promising in this African country, as "the range of such products in Kenya is not wide, so they respond with interest to proposals for the creation of meat and dairy complexes, poultry complexes, meat processing lines, cheese production"⁷⁰ . This fact is also interesting. There are many manufacturers working in Kenya today who assemble tractors, tractors and cars here. There is a company that assembles three models of Volkswagen cars on its premises. It would like to expand the range of vehicles assembled there by adding Belarusian tractors.

It should be noted that the exhibition in Nairobi was a continuation of the Belarusian side's course of active participation in various business events

⁶⁸ The national exposition of Belarus opened at the FoodAgro exhibition in Kenya [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnaja-ekspozitsija-belarusi-otkrylas-na-vystavke-foodagro-v-kenii-356957-2019/>

⁶⁹ FoodAgro exhibition will allow Belarus to expand its presence in the Kenyan market - Sadoho [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vystavka-foodagro-pozvolit-belarusi-rasshirit-svoe-prisutstvie-na-rynke-kenii-sadoho-349941-2019/>

⁷⁰ Demand for Belarusian agricultural machinery in Kenya is constantly growing [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/spros-na-belorusskiju-selhoztehniku-v-kenii-postojanno-rastet-349964-2019/>

held on the African continent in the pre-pandemic period - in 2019. Thus, in March of the same year, Belarus' national exposition was organized for the first time at the International Exhibition of Agriculture and Livestock, Food, Beverages and Packaging Technologies Agrofood, which was held in the Nigerian city of Lagos. And in April, the Made in Belarus exposition was presented at the 60th Zimbabwe International Trade Fair 2019 in the Zimbabwean city of Bulawayo - one of the largest in the southern African region. Apparently, 2022 should become a new "starting point" in this issue in the post-pandemic era. This is evidenced by the Plan of National Exhibitions of Belarus in Foreign Countries for this year, which talks about the demonstration of the national expositions of our country in Africa at least at two international exhibition forums: in the first half of the year - Kenia International Trade Exhibition in Nairobi (Kenya); in the second half - Zimbabwe International Trade Fair in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe). These events, along with the third Belarusian-African Economic Forum in Cairo in May 2022, should give new powerful impulses to systematic work to expand Belarusian exports and develop new markets in Africa.

From point cooperation to full-scale partnership

The Republic of Belarus intends to increase supplies to the countries of the far arc. At a meeting in the Council of Ministers back in July 2022, the task to reorient export flows in the amount of at least \$16 billion was set. "The volumes of Belarusian exports to the countries of the far arc at the end of 5 months are still quite modest. <...> A comprehensive strategy of cooperation with the countries of the far arc, plans of interaction between embassies and industries have been adopted..."⁷¹. In this context, such an actively developing continent as Africa is currently of great interest for Belarus.

Note that "by the beginning of 2022 the Republic of Belarus had established diplomatic relations with 51 countries of the African continent"⁷². Statistics state that for 2021, Belarus' trade turnover with African countries amounted to half a billion dollars, of which 480 million dollars are Belarusian exports. "First of all, our country supplies engineering products, agricultural, quarry, and truck equipment. The products of the Belarusian Metallurgical Plant are also in demand now"⁷³. It is understandable. For the Belarusian industry, the African market is one of the most promising for the supply of its products. Suffice it to say that "over the period of January-November 2022, exports of the Ministry of Industry's products to the African continent increased by more than 1.5 times. <...> Belarusian-made agricultural machinery is very popular with African consumers, who note the high quality of Belarusian tractors and other agricultural machinery"⁷⁴. For reference, from 60 to 80 percent of the population of African countries are engaged in

⁷¹ Roman Golovchenko: Belarus intends to increase supplies to the countries of the far arc [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10368>

⁷² Zalesky, B. Perimeter of the far arc. The potential of sustainable partnership in solving the multivector interaction. / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023. - C. 177.

⁷³ Nikolaychik: Belarus systematically and purposefully expands its presence in Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nikolajchik-belarus-planomerno-i-tselenapravlenno-rasshirjaet-svoe-prisutstvie-v-afrike-547784-2023/>

⁷⁴ Industrial enterprises of Belarus signed a package of documents on cooperation in Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prompredprijatija-belarusi-podpisali-v-zimbabve-paket-dokumentov-po-sotrudnichestvu-547368-2023/>

the agricultural sector, so its modernization, mechanization, ensuring food security, and technologies in this area play an important role for them. Another promising area of ties with African partners is education services. "Now about 1.6 thousand students from African countries are studying in Belarus. <...> They are primarily interested in training in medical, technical, agricultural specialties"⁷⁵ .

As for the diplomatic presence of the Belarusian side, there are currently five embassies of the Republic of Belarus operating in Africa, which generally cover the key regions of the continent. In West Africa - Nigeria, which is the economic leader in the region. In East Africa - Kenya, where Belarus also has certain prospects for increasing trade turnover and the whole range of cooperation. In North Africa - Egypt, where we are talking about the project of the Minsk Automobile Plant to set up assembly production. In South Africa - the Republic of South Africa (RSA), where a project for the assembly of Minsk Tractor Plant's machines, which will enter the market under the local brand, is already being implemented in 2021. Finally, between South Africa and East Africa is Zimbabwe, where the Belarusian embassy appeared in 2022. All these African regions have one important feature: there are "a fairly large number of minerals, natural resources, including rare-earth metals, which are of interest to large states and not only. Such countries as Russia, China, and the USA are quite actively involved in the realization of various projects in Africa"⁷⁶ . Thus, Belarus' presence on the African continent is of a systemic nature. All the more so because a new large consumer market is already being created there, including for the export of Belarusian goods and services.

⁷⁵ Together with the Foreign Ministry, we are assessing the potential for cooperation with Africa. What are they interested in us? [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/vmeste-s-mid-otsenivaem-potentsial-sotrudnichestva-s-afrikoj-cto-im-interesno-u-nas-547795-2023/>

⁷⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Belarusian missions cover key regions of Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/mid-predstavitelstva-belarusi-ohvatyvajut-kljuchevye-regiony-afriki-547191-2023/>

For example, in 2022, a large batch of tractors and attachments of Bobruiskagromash, sprayers of Lidagropromash, and combines of Gomselmash were under consideration for delivery to **Nigeria**. Belarus is "interested in the markets of South Sudan, Zambia, Malawi, and Egypt. Belarusian municipal and forestry machinery, as well as special-purpose machinery are in demand here"⁷⁷ . An interesting promising area of cooperation with African countries is the construction of grain drying complexes, as well as the creation of assembly plants for agricultural, automotive and road machinery.

The Bellesbumprom Concern's enterprises are also systematically exploring the markets of African countries, actively expanding the geography of supplies. In 2022, the Concern's organizations shipped products to **Tunisia for the first time**. The mastering of African markets began in 2015 with **Egypt**. "The Concern's enterprises also supply products to Algeria, Kenya, Morocco. Among the key commodity positions are paper and cardboard. Exports in 2022 compared to 2021 in monetary terms increased by 20%."⁷⁸ .

Another interesting example is **Zimbabwe**. A few years ago, this country set a course for modernization of agriculture. Since 2020, Belarus has been supplying machinery as part of the agricultural mechanization program in this southern African country. A company that not only sells but also services machinery has already been set up there. In 2022, "we [the Belarusian side] actually finished the second phase of this program. There is already an agreement that we will participate in the third phase as well. Again for tens of millions of dollars. <...> The second direction of machinery supplies is connected with the fact that in addition to the agrarian sector, Zimbabwe has an

⁷⁷ Parkhomchik, P. Belarusian industry under sanctions / P. Parkhomchik // [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/beloruskaja-promyshlennost-v-uslovijah-sanktsij-ministr-o-borbe-s-novymi-vyzovami-planah-po-proizvodstvu-i-8121/>

⁷⁸ Enterprises of the concern "Bellesbumprom" systematically develop the markets of Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/predprijatija-kontserna-bellesbumprom-planomerno-osvaivajut-rynki-afriki-547390-2023/>

actively developing mining industry. The first BELAZs were delivered more than five years ago and are still successfully operating at the quarries"⁷⁹ .

A new stage of cooperation with this South African state began in late January 2023, when a Belarusian delegation led by the President of Belarus paid a state visit to Zimbabwe. As part of the visit, contracts were signed for the supply of about four thousand units of Belarusian tractors, agricultural and other machinery to this African country, with the total economic effect estimated at \$200 million. During the visit, Belarus signed a package of important bilateral documents, which includes basic economic agreements designed to promote industrial cooperation and economic cooperation with South Africa. In particular, the intergovernmental agreement on settlement of tax relations will help to solve such tasks as "distribution of taxation rights between states, elimination of double taxation, exchange of information between tax services"⁸⁰ . To further expand cooperation, a bilateral joint standing commission has been established, and a coordinating body - a task force of the ministries of agriculture of the two countries - will begin work.

At the same time, the second Belarusian-Zimbabwean business forum "Expanding Horizons: Dynamic Solutions for Economic Development" was held in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, where 33 Belarusian companies participated and where it was noted that the most promising areas for bilateral cooperation are healthcare, food, light industry, machine-building, metallurgy, fuel and energy, mining, chemicals, and woodworking. For reference, we note that "trade turnover between Belarus and Zimbabwe has increased 7 times since 2018 and reached \$39 million as of January-November last year

⁷⁹ Ambassador of Belarus on cooperation with Southern Africa: one should come here seriously and for a long time [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/posol-belarusi-o-sotrudnichestve-s-jugom-afriki-sjuda-nado-prihodit-serjezno-i-nadolgo-547179-2023/>

⁸⁰ Belarus and Zimbabwe have agreed on cooperation in the tax sphere [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-zimbabwe-dogovorilis-o-sotrudnichestve-v-nalagovoj-sfere-547558-2023/>

[2022]"⁸¹ . During the forum, industrial enterprises of Belarus signed a package of documents with partners from Zimbabwe. In particular, memorandums and cooperation agreements between the official dealer - AFTRADE DMCC - and Lidselmash OJSC, Gomselmash OJSC, Bobruiskagromash OJSC and Minsk Motor Plant Holding Management Company OJSC were adopted to develop cooperation in the field of agriculture in order to sell the products of these enterprises in the market of this country. MTZ and AFTRADE DMCC also adopted a document on strategic partnership to promote BELARUS machinery in Zimbabwe. For this purpose in 2023-2024 Minsk Tractor Plant will supply 3575 machines to the Zimbabwean market, and in the future the number of machines and terms of supply will be determined by the results of negotiations. It should be noted that "between 2018 and 2022, Minsk Tractor Plant supplied more than 1,800 units of machinery to Zimbabwe"⁸² . And a multifunctional service center with branches in Mutare and Bulawayo and a spare parts warehouse to service the supplied machinery has been established in Harare. And MTW together with the partner on a permanent basis trains consumers on the peculiarities of operation of BELARUS tractors. Another interesting fact is the "signing of a memorandum of intent between BELAZ, SOHRA Overseas FZE and Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company Pvt Ltd with a view to implementing agreements on supplying Belarusian machinery and equipment to the mining industry of Zimbabwe"⁸³ .

Cooperation in the industrial sector with Zimbabwean partners has great potential in other areas as well. For example, a contract was signed to

⁸¹ Transcontinental Bridge, Investments and Belarusian Ice Cream in Africa. Details of the business forum in Harare [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/transkontinentalnyj-most-investitsii-i-belorusskoe-morozhenoe-v-afrike-podrobnosti-biznes-foruma-v-547289-2023/>

⁸² MTZ will supply more than 3.5 thousand BELARUS tractors to Zimbabwe within two years [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-postavit-v-zimbabwe-bolee-35-tys-traktorov-belarus-v-techenie-dvuh-let-547284-2023/>

⁸³ Industrial enterprises of Belarus signed a package of documents on cooperation in Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prompredpriyatija-belarusi-podpisali-v-zimbabwe-paket-dokumentov-po-sotrudnichestvu-547368-2023/>

supply Belarusian-made equipment for the construction and modernization of grain storage complexes in Zimbabwe. The fact is that the authorities of this country have announced plans to allocate farmland to Belarusian state-owned companies for agricultural complexes for growing wheat, soybeans, meat and dairy products, and poultry farming. And the Belarusian side has already received 10 thousand hectares of land "in Mbire County for the cultivation of corn, soybeans and construction of a meat and dairy farm. At the same time, a line for processing milk and meat will be launched with further realization of finished products through trade networks"⁸⁴ . It is planned that the list of cultivated crops will be supplemented by rice and wheat, as well as Belarusian specialists will plant orchards. Another fact is that "a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in supplying Belarusian-made machinery and equipment for the forestry industry to the Republic of Zimbabwe has been signed"⁸⁵ . The two countries are also mutually interested in cooperation in the light industry. In particular, Bellegprom Concern will study the possibilities of supplying cotton from this African country, and "on the margins of the Belarusian-Zimbabwean business forum in Harare, the two countries discussed the possibilities of cooperation in the textile and leather sectors of the light industry"⁸⁶ .

As for the interaction between the regions of the two countries, during the state visit of the Belarusian delegation, the two capitals - Minsk and Harare - signed an agreement on the establishment of twinning relations, which already outlines promising areas "in the energy sector, in the areas of health care, education, water supply, water treatment, and municipal

⁸⁴ Abukhovich, Y. Trade, agriculture, mining. On the prospects of cooperation with Zimbabwe and the UAE / Y. Abukhovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/torgovlja-selskoe-hozjajstvo-dobycha-poleznyh-iskopaemyh-o-perspektivah-sotrudnichestva-s-zimbabve-i-oae-8585/>

⁸⁵ Rogozhnik: industrial cooperation with Zimbabwe has a huge potential [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rogozhnik-sotrudnichestvo-v-promyshlennoj-sfere-s-zimbabve-imeet-ogromnyj-potentsial-547600-2023/>

⁸⁶ Belarus and Zimbabwe are interested in cooperation in the light industry [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-zimbabve-zainteresovany-v-sotrudnichestve-v-sfere-legproma-547603-2023/>

equipment."⁸⁷ . And, to all appearances, in the near future, the agreement will be followed up by the signing of action plans that will further strengthen the bilateral Belarusian-Zimbabwean regional relations, including in trade and economic cooperation between the two capitals.

A separate conversation is about the interaction between the two countries in the field of education. At the end of January 2023, Belarus and Zimbabwe signed a memorandum of understanding between the parties on mutual recognition of educational documents in Harare. And they see quite great prospects for cooperation in various areas of inter-university interaction. "This applies to the training of specialists with higher education in such areas as agro-industrial complex, mechanical engineering, medical technologies. Something that is in demand in any country. Given that today Zimbabwe is a very dynamically developing country, first of all they need personnel"⁸⁸ . During the visit of the Belarusian delegation to this African country, the parties discussed the training of specialists both for science and high technology, as well as for middle-level specialists in working specialties, as it is relevant for Zimbabwe given the supplies of high-tech equipment from Belarus to this country and the development of industrial cooperation. It should be reminded that on the initiative of the President of this country Emmerson Mnangagwa "the Vision-2030 program is being implemented, which includes specific measures for mechanization, industrialization of Zimbabwe, improvement of educational level, quality of medical services, living standards of the population as a whole"⁸⁹ . So Belarusian services in the field of education will be very useful in this country.

⁸⁷ Minsk and Harare became sister cities. What's next? [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minsk-i-harare-stali-gorodami-pobratimami-cto-dalshe-547593-2023/>

⁸⁸ Ivanets sees great prospects for cooperation between Belarus and Zimbabwe in the field of education [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/ivanets-vidit-bolshie-perspektivy-dlja-sotrudnichestva-belarusi-i-zimbabve-v-sfere-obrazovanija-547599-2023/>

⁸⁹ Nikolajchik: we managed to significantly increase the intensity and efficiency of contacts with Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/nikolajchik-nam-udalos-znachitelno-narastit-intensivnost-i-effektivnost-kontaktov-s-zimbabve-547791-2023/>

For example, a wide range of scientific and innovative cooperation with Zimbabwean partners was presented by the Belarusian State University (BSU) at the business forum "Expanding Horizons: Dynamic Solutions for Economic Development" in the capital of Zimbabwe. BSU cooperates with this African country within the framework of the memorandum of understanding signed in 2019 with the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education, Science and Technological Development. Today, this interaction is intensifying. In Harare, BSU signed six memorandums of understanding with Zimbabwean higher education institutions at once: 1) University of Zimbabwe; 2) Zimbabwe Open University; 3) Lupane State University; 4) National University of Technology and Science; 5) Harare Institute of Technology; 6) Chinhoyi University of Technology. In these documents, the parties plan to "develop academic exchange of students and specialists, participate in research and educational projects, exchange materials, plans, publications and other relevant information"⁹⁰.

As for cooperation proposals, BSU has initiated more than 20, which concern the fields of medicine, pharmaceuticals, water resources management, water treatment, geology, mineral exploration, biotechnology, ecology, soil science. These include the production of pharmaceuticals, ultrasonic gas meters, services for solving applied problems of the mining industry, and treatment of polluted water, among others. "In the field of agriculture, joint projects to study the impact of soil salinization on plants and crops, the impact of climate change on the environment may become promising. Interaction in the field of education is seen in the training of Zimbabwean citizens at the Institute of Further Education, training in English

⁹⁰ The first agreements of BSU and universities of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://bsu.by/news/pervye-dogovorennosti-bgu-i-vuzov-zimbabwe-d/>

at master's, postgraduate and adult education programs"⁹¹ . The development and implementation of joint educational programs, participation in scientific conferences, organization of guest lectures, internships of teachers and students from Zimbabwe are also proposed.

The Belarusian National Technical University (BNTU) also signed memorandums with leading Zimbabwean universities. The fact is that the economy of this country needs specialists trained by BNTU, so the interest in the Belarusian university is particularly high. The parties are interested in joint scientific research, technology transfer and transfer of experience in the organization of BNTU technopark, in the creation of technology parks in universities of Zimbabwe. In addition, "the implementation of joint educational programs is planned in such promising areas as architecture, civil engineering, mechanical engineering and robotics, and in the future cooperation in other sectors is possible"⁹².

The Belarusian State Technological University (BSTU) signed memoranda of cooperation with leading educational institutions of the Republic of Zimbabwe - National University of Technology and Science, Harare Institute of Technology, Chinhoyi University of Technology, University of Zimbabwe, Lupane State University, Open University of Zimbabwe - in January 2023. ⁹³Interaction with these partners involves the development of such forms of cooperation as "exchange of experience in the field of education and promotion of exchange of students, master's and postgraduate

⁹¹ Cooperation is intensifying. BSU signed six memorandums with universities of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belsta.by/society/view/sotrudnichestvo-aktiviziruetsja-bgu-podpisal-shest-memorandumov-s-vuzami-zimbabve-547721-2023/>

⁹² Technology transfer and joint research. How BNTU plans to cooperate with universities in Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belsta.by/society/view/transfer-tehnologii-i-sovmestnye-issledovanija-kak-bntu-planiruet-sotrudnichestvo-s-vuzami-zimbabve-547979-2023/>

⁹³ Rector of BSTU Igor Voitov signed Memorandums of Cooperation with the universities of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belstu.by/news/university/university/ректор-bgtu-igor-vojtov-podpisal-memorandumyi-o-sotrudnichestve-s-universitetami-zimbabve>

students; development of exchange of teaching staff; development of joint research projects in areas of mutual interest; training of citizens of the Republic of Zimbabwe under joint educational programs; training in master's and postgraduate studies, doctoral studies; internships; training of citizens of the Republic of Zimbabwe under joint educational programs; training in master's and postgraduate studies, doctoral studies; internships in the Republic of Zimbabwe.

All these facts show that Belarus is attractive for Zimbabwe with its intellectual potential. So, cooperation between the educational institutions of the two countries can be multifaceted and have good results.

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The key to cooperation is concrete projects

In September 2023, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus held a meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on the development of cooperation with African countries, at which the Belarusian government outlined the main areas of focus on this continent: medicine, education, ensuring food security of African countries, supply of agricultural machinery, and industrial cooperation. Assessing the objective foreign trade situation, Belarusian Prime Minister R. Golovchenko emphasized that Africa has a huge development potential and is a driver of international growth, but the accumulated political capital of Belarus has not yet been converted to a proper extent into successful trade and economic projects. "In 2022, exports of Belarusian goods to Africa amounted to just over \$200 million and show some downward trend. The maximum volume of exports - over \$400 million - was reached in pre-Kovy 2019..."⁹⁴. Note that this continent is home to more than one and a half billion people. For this reason, the government of Belarus has set a clear task - every effort should be made to find the right tools and formula to reverse the negative dynamics in cooperation with the countries of this continent. The tools include "forming road maps, looking for concrete projects that can be implemented"⁹⁵. And then a practical result will be obtained.

It is important to note that the Belarusian side tries to come to African countries with its own technologies, trains them, and provides service and maintenance of the supplied machinery. In particular, especially large machinery from Belarus extracts various minerals that this continent is rich in. For example, Belarusian dump trucks operate in Zimbabwe, the Republic of South Africa, Angola, Algeria, and Morocco. Among the new potential partners is Kenya,

⁹⁴ Roman Golovchenko on cooperation with Africa: The potential is huge, we need to ensure significant growth of exports [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10698>

⁹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs: it is necessary to form roadmaps for cooperation with African countries [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mid-nuzhno-sformirovat-dorozhnye-karty-sotrudnichestva-so-stranami-afriki-591013-2023/>

where the first agricultural machines were delivered about six months ago. Serious dialog begins and continues with such countries as Nigeria, Egypt, Algeria, Sudan. Even "the distant South African Republic has received our tractors of Minsk Tractor Plant, now they are being tested and there is confidence that the supply of our machinery there will increase dramatically"⁹⁶ .

The Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Belarus pays special attention to the development of supplies to African countries, as the industry offers "the entire range of machinery of the machine-building complex - tractors, combines, trucks. It is also household appliances - TV sets produced by Gozizont Holding, refrigerators"⁹⁷ . For example, "Gomselmash" plans to supply a large batch of its equipment to these countries. Currently, already 80 units of Gomselmash machinery are working mainly in Zimbabwe and Kenya. And up to 80 more units will be shipped to the African region in the near future. Moreover, "a center of Belarusian machinery has been created in Africa, which accompanies and maintains all the equipment that is supplied to the continent"⁹⁸ . And on the way out - a contract for delivery to Zimbabwe. Contacts are being worked out in Togo and Malawi.

Another African country that is paying attention to Belarusian trucks is Ethiopia. In August 2023, it became known that Minsk Automobile Plant may set up an assembly plant for trucks in this African country, as "Ethiopia has a high demand for trucks, which is currently not fully satisfied"⁹⁹ . And Ethiopian firm Ethio - Engineering Group is interested in organizing the

⁹⁶ Technique, training, export: Parkhomchik told about cooperation with African countries [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tehnika-obuchenie-eksport-parhomchik-rasskazal-o-sotrudnichestve-s-afrikanskimi-stranami-587303-2023/>

⁹⁷ Combines, tractors, TV sets. Rogozhnik told about the range of industrial products for delivery to Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kombajny-tractory-televizory-rogozhnik-rasskazal-ob-assortimente-promproduktcii-dlja-postavok-v-afriku-586805-2023/>

⁹⁸ "Gomselmash" plans to supply a large batch of machinery to the African region [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomselmash-planiruet-postavit-krupnuju-partiju-tehniki-v-afrikanskij-region-586884-2023/>

⁹⁹ MAZ can create assembly production of trucks in Ethiopia [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/maz-mozhet-sozdat-sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-gruzovoj-tehniki-v-efiopii-582045-2023/>

assembly of Belarusian cars from the supplied vehicle components at the company's existing facilities. In the same August this year, Belarusian holding AMKODOR and Ethiopian company Epitychia General Trading discussed the prospects of cooperation and possibilities of joint production in Minsk. During the talks, "it was decided to return to the discussion after a deeper analysis of the construction machinery market, which can most effectively support the needs of projects in Ethiopia"¹⁰⁰.

The African region is one of the promising and quite familiar destinations for food and agricultural exports from Belarus. Suffice it to say that "in January-April of this [2023] year, Belarusian products were supplied to such African countries as Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda. The nomenclature of export supplies includes dried dairy products, horned hoof raw materials, offal, beef, poultry meat, alcoholic beverages and other products"¹⁰¹. This year, Belarus continues to discuss with its African partners promising areas of cooperation in agriculture. The discussion is not only about mutual trade, but also about mechanization, irrigation, fertilizers, cooperation in education and science, including training of students from African countries in Belarus.

In particular, in June 2023, a communiqué was signed between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Belarus and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment of Kenya, in which the parties agreed to further cooperation in agriculture. The fact is that in this African country there are no problems with food, but there are problems with its storage. Also, they have a lot of small farmers, but no large farms. In addition, "another problem is the

¹⁰⁰ "AMKODOR" and representatives of Ethiopia discussed the possibilities of joint production [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/amkodor-i-predstaviteli-efiopii-obsudili-vozmozhnosti-sovmestnogo-proizvodstva-581985-2023/>

¹⁰¹ Export of products, cooperation in education. Ministry of Agriculture and Food on the work with the regions of Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/eksport-produktsii-sotrudnichestvo-v-obrazovanii-minselhozprod-o-rabote-s-regionami-afriki-573991-2023/>

small percentage of cultivated land¹⁰². That is why Kenyan partners are interested in mechanization of agriculture in the country and, accordingly, in increasing its efficiency, as well as in Belarus's experience in agricultural mechanization and personnel training in order to "equip the industry with machine systems, carry out mechanization and provide our [Belarusian] agricultural technologies¹⁰³, create enterprises for processing and storage of products. Apparently, representatives of the country's leading regions will soon come from Kenya to further build trade and economic relations.

Zimbabwe has also become a new market for Belarus. In June 2023, at the first meeting of the Belarusian-Zimbabwean working group for cooperation in agriculture in Minsk, the leadership of the Belarusian Ministry of Agriculture and Food said that it looked forward to long-term cooperation with Zimbabwean partners. In particular, "another important area of cooperation is the development of dairy cattle breeding"¹⁰⁴ in Zimbabwe, as well as the supply of Belarusian agricultural machinery and equipment, the use of advanced Belarusian experience and technologies in the establishment of agro-industrial enterprises on Zimbabwean soil. In addition, "the Zimbabwean side was particularly interested in grain dump trucks and tractor-trailers with semi-trailers"¹⁰⁵.

To expand the geography of supplies from Belarus, domestic exporters continue to work to ensure access of agricultural products, machinery, and

¹⁰² The supply of tractors and potash fertilizers from Belarus to Kenya was discussed in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/postavku-tractorov-i-kalijnyh-udobrenij-iz-belarusi-v-keniju-obsudili-v-minselhozprode-570585-2023/>

¹⁰³ Mechanization of agriculture, processing plants. What Kenya is interested in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mehanzatsija-selskogo-hozjajstva-pererabatyvajuschie-zavody-chem-v-belarusi-zainteresovalas-kenija-570564-2023/>

¹⁰⁴ Brylo: Belarus counts on long-term cooperation with Zimbabwe in the sphere of agro-industrial complex [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/brylo-belarus-rasschityvaet-na-dolgosrochnoe-sotrudnichestvo-s-zimbabve-v-sfere-apk-571063-2023/>

¹⁰⁵ Zimbabwe is interested in dump trucks-grain trucks and truck tractors MAZ [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zimbabve-zainteresovano-v-samosvalah-zernovozah-i-sedelnyh-tjagachah-maz-571222-2023/>

equipment to promising markets of the "black" continent. In February 2023, OJSC "Managing Company of Bobruiskagromash Holding" signed a contract with Bemaco from Madagascar for the supply of 24 units of machinery of the Belarusian company - mounted plows, disk harrows, universal pneumatic seeders. And "in the near future it is planned to expand the range of Belarusian machinery supplied to the Republic of Madagascar, including new samples of plows, seeders, trailers and harrows"¹⁰⁶ . At the same time, Bemaco was awarded a certificate to extend the status of the official dealer of Bobruiskagromash for 2023.

Another African country that is interested in expanding trade and economic cooperation with Belarus is Ghana. In June 2023, the two states celebrated the 31st anniversary of the establishment of Belarusian-Ghana diplomatic relations. And the parties expressed their common mood for intensive work to expand contacts at all levels. Recall that Ghana is the largest producer of high-quality fruits and cocoa and is ready to supply the Belarusian market in any volume. As for Belarus, it is "ready to participate in Ghana's agricultural mechanization programs, supply this country with a wide range of municipal and municipal equipment, medicines, introduce the latest technologies in the agro-industrial complex, train Ghanaian students in Belarusian universities in various specialties"¹⁰⁷ .

And one more interesting point. At the end of November 2023, an exposition of Belarusian producers Made in Belarus will be organized in West Africa - the city of Accra (Ghana) - as part of the 6th international exhibition Agrofood Ghana, where exporters "in the fields of agriculture, food processing and packaging, ingredients, bakery and confectionery, food and

¹⁰⁶ "Bobruiskagromash" will supply more than 20 units of machinery to Madagascar [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bobrujskagromash-postavit-bolee-20-edinits-tehniki-na-madagaskar-549344-2023/>

¹⁰⁷ Pivovar, E. Belarus is ready to participate in the programs of mechanization of agriculture in Ghana / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-gotova-uchastvovat-v-programmah-mehanizatsii-selskogo-hozjajstva-gany-570335-2023/>

hospitality in West Africa" will be presented¹⁰⁸. Last year, 98 exhibitors from 22 countries, namely Belgium, Burkina Faso, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, India, Iran, Italy, Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Poland, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and the United States of America participated in the forum. This time in Accra, suppliers from Belarus will also show their "goods face", and hopefully, they will get a good practical result from this exhibition forum.

In short, Belarusian supplies in this direction are growing. It is believed that in the next two or three years, with the help of African countries, it is possible to achieve food exports in general within ten billion dollars. For reference, we note that "based on the results of work for nine months [2023], Belarusian agricultural exports amounted to about \$5 billion"¹⁰⁹.

Finally, another African country that appeared on the map of Belarus's business partners in 2023 was Equatorial Guinea. The fact is that in June 2023, a very important event took place in the Belarusian-African relations: it was the first ever visit of Belarusian Foreign Minister S. Aleinik to this country. Aleinik's first ever visit to this country. The visit resulted in the signing of a Joint Statement on the development of political dialogue, as well as "cooperation in trade, economy and investment, cooperation in trade, economy and investment, cooperation in cooperation, food security, health care, medicine, maternal and child welfare, education, science and technology, mining and petrochemical sector, security and defense"¹¹⁰. The parties outlined practical steps to expand the contractual and legal framework

¹⁰⁸ Belarus will present its exposition at the agricultural exhibition in Ghana [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predstavit-ekspozitsiju-naselskohozjajstvennoj-vystavke-v-gane-587952-2023/>

¹⁰⁹ Hare: exports of Belarusian agricultural products amounted to about \$5 billion in nine months [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zajats-eksport-beloruskoj-selhozproduksii-za-devjat-mesjatsev-sostavil-okolo-5-mlrd-597077-2023/>

¹¹⁰ About the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus S. Aleinik to Equatorial Guinea. Aleinik's visit to Equatorial Guinea [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/fa2023a57e9ef156.html

of bilateral relations, where agreements on cooperation in agriculture and agro-industrial complex will also be developed. And in September 2023, President of Equatorial Guinea Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo paid his first visit to Belarus, during which seven documents were signed aimed at developing relations across a wide thematic spectrum, from the economy to the humanitarian sphere, including the establishment of the Joint Permanent Commission between the two states.

At the first meeting of the commission in October 2023, where from the African side "more than 20 representatives of practically all key ministries, agencies, including 8 heads of ministries came"¹¹¹, the participants in the discussion decided to create a number of subcommissions or working groups to achieve results as soon as possible in the main sectors of Belarusian-Equatoguinean interaction. "These are the spheres of industry, agriculture, science and technology, health care and pharmacology. These four priority areas have been identified and highlighted separately"¹¹². The two sides agreed to ensure continuous growth of trade turnover to bring it in line with the potential of the two countries, as well as to promote specific projects in the areas of industry, technological development, agriculture, health, science, technology, education, culture, and construction. Minsk and Malabo identified as priority areas of cooperation "agriculture; healthcare; industry; construction; woodworking and forestry; cooperation in the oil and gas sector; cooperation in banking, finance and taxation; digitalization of the economy; cooperation in the field of culture, including museum, archive, library;

¹¹¹ "A good start of cooperation has been given". Aleynik on the first meeting of the intergovernmental commission with Equatorial Guinea [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/dan-horoshij-start-sotrudnichestvu-alejnik-o-pervom-zasedanii-mezhpravkomissii-s-ekvatorialnoj-gvineej-594724-2023/>

¹¹² Transcript of the approach to the press by Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Aleinik following the meeting of the Permanent Joint Commission of Belarus and Equatorial Guinea (October 19, 2023, Minsk) [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ed7ba0f461785b44.html

cooperation in the field of tourism; cooperation in the field of sports; and environmental protection, among others"¹¹³ .

In particular, with regard to industry, the Belarusian side is already working on supplies of cargo, passenger, trailer, special-purpose machinery, and dump trucks for the needs of Equatorial Guinea's growing economy, as the country's task is to shift from the raw materials sector to a more technological, knowledge-intensive, and innovative path of development. Belarus is also ready to "supply optoelectronic products, multifunctional unmanned aircraft, robotic systems, create closed-cycle enterprises for the production and processing of meat and dairy products"¹¹⁴ .

African partners are interested in the Belarusian experience of efficient livestock breeding, improvement of veterinary services and food quality control, development of crops with the highest resource potential, and creation of a high-quality and effective system of personnel training. Especially since "Equatorial Guinea has a great need for dairy and meat products, which we [Belarus] produce in sufficient quantities"¹¹⁵ . In addition, this country is very promising for the enterprises of Belgospisheprom Concern. For example, in mid-September 2023, "the first batch of products [malt] was shipped to Equatorial Guinea. This is a trial batch, this market is new and interesting for us"¹¹⁶ .

¹¹³ Joint communiqué on the results of the first meeting of the Permanent Joint Commission for Cooperation between Belarus and Equatorial Guinea (October 19, 2023) [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: https://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/cba05c3a89729e69.html

¹¹⁴ Speech by Minister S. Aleinik at the opening of the meeting of the Joint Commission for Cooperation between Belarus and Equatorial Guinea (October 18, 2023, Minsk) [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c32017cdfb25123b.html

¹¹⁵ Belarus is ready to help Equatorial Guinea in the development of agro-industrial complex and training of agricultural specialists [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-gotova-pomoch-ekvatorialnoj-gvinee-v-razvitii-apk-i-podgotovke-selhozspetsialistov-586755-2023/>

¹¹⁶ Zhidkov: African continent is promising for export of Belarusian food products [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zhidkov-afrikanskij-kontinent-perspektiven-dlja-eksporta-beloruskoj-pischevoj-produktsii-588012-2023/>

As for medicine, in accordance with the agreement on cooperation in healthcare signed in Minsk during the first meeting of the commission, it is planned to establish a training center at one of the medical universities of Belarus to train students from Equatorial Guinea and other African countries, as well as to improve the qualifications of doctors. The parties identified cooperation in forestry and environmental protection as one of the new areas of cooperation.

In addition, in this African country "it is planned to create a production and logistics hub of Belarusian products"¹¹⁷, which will be used, among other things, to supply and promote products from Belarus to the neighboring countries of Central and West Africa. After all, Equatorial Guinea is one of the leading economies in Africa, which ranks third in oil production on the continent and has a developed port infrastructure. Over the past quarter century, its gross domestic product has increased more than 52 times and ranks among the leading per capita economies in Africa. In addition, "Equatorial Guinea is a member of the African Continental Free Trade Area, which brings together 54 States, as well as the Economic Community of Central African States, which includes 11 States"¹¹⁸.

In short, the first meeting of the Belarus-Ekwatoguinea Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation showed that the parties intend to expand long-term cooperation and develop and adopt the Roadmap to 2030 by the end of this year. In addition, plans have been outlined to develop the legal framework and sign new bilateral agreements in order to reach the level of trade turnover of at least \$100 million by 2030 in terms of economic activity.

¹¹⁷ Aleinik: the issue of creating a hub of Belarusian products in Equatorial Guinea is under consideration [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/aleinik-prorabatyvaetsja-vopros-sozdaniya-v-ekvatorialnoj-gvinee-haba-belorusskoj-produktsii-594535-2023/>

¹¹⁸ Machine building, roadmap, opening of embassies. Minsk and Malabo have defined the prospects of cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/mashinostroenie-dorozhnaja-karta-otkrytie-posolstv-minsk-i-malabo-opredelili-perspektivy-594759-2023/>

From economics to education

The Republic of Zimbabwe is an African country with which the Republic of Belarus established diplomatic relations back in April 1992. The new stage of cooperation with this South African state dates back to January 2023, when a Belarusian delegation paid a state visit to Zimbabwe. At that time, "a package of important bilateral documents was signed, which includes basic economic agreements that are designed to ensure the development of industrial cooperation and economic cooperation..."¹¹⁹. The two governments then approved a roadmap for the implementation of the agreements. "The document includes 65 measures in various areas: political-diplomatic, trade and economic, agricultural, military-technical, health care and medical science, investment, energy, supply and maintenance of equipment. In addition, Belarus will continue to participate in the program to modernize and mechanize Zimbabwe's agriculture"¹²⁰.

Speaking about the economic component of this partnership, "the trade turnover between Belarus and Zimbabwe has increased eightfold since 2018"¹²¹. At the same time, the parties have significantly expanded trade and economic interaction, established humanitarian cooperation and strengthened the legal framework of bilateral relations. As for the 2022 figures, "Belarus and Zimbabwe traded more than \$39 million, which is almost 57% more than the level of 2021. At the same time, Belarusian exports amounted to almost \$30 million. Belarus supplied Zimbabwe with tractors and tractors, machines

¹¹⁹ Zalesky, B. Export growth strategy. Opportunities and challenges of open economy in modern conditions / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023. - C. 30.

¹²⁰ Frederick Shava: Zimbabwe has achieved a lot in terms of food security thanks to Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/frederik-shava-zimbabwe-mnogogo-dostiglo-v-plane-prodovolstvennoj-bezopasnosti-blagodarja-belarusi-557640-2023/>

¹²¹ Parkhomchik: the trade turnover between Belarus and Zimbabwe has grown eight times since 2018, it is important to maintain the dynamics [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/parhomchik-tovarooborot-belarusi-i-zimbabwe-s-2018-goda-vyros-v-vosem-raz-vazhno-sohranit-dinamiku-586362-2023/>

and mechanisms for harvesting and threshing of crops, parts and accessories for cars and tractors"¹²². In addition, a single center of Belarusian enterprises has been established on Zimbabwean soil, which provides a whole range of services for all types of machinery supplied from Belarus and where one can get education in the field of vehicle management, necessary recommendations, purchase spare parts, and services for performing routine maintenance on Belarusian machinery.

In March 2023, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe F. Shava visited the Belarusian capital. During his official visit, he said that the Zimbabwean side was interested in identifying additional opportunities for economic cooperation with Belarus. As for official Minsk, it "wants to bring the relations with Zimbabwe to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership"¹²³. Following the talks at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, the parties adopted a joint statement and reviewed the implementation of agreements in the trade and economic sphere, in particular, the progress in the implementation of contracts for the supply of agricultural and firefighting equipment to Zimbabwe, construction and modernization of grain storage facilities, as well as discussed cooperation in industry, agriculture, energy, mining and light industry. In particular, Belarus will continue to make its significant contribution to the achievement by the Government of Zimbabwe of the goals of the long-term development strategy of this southern African country "Vision 2030".

In addition, the parties continued to expand the legal framework of the Belarusian-Zimbabwean bilateral relations, which already includes more than

¹²² The meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and Zimbabwe was held in Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/vstrecha-ministrov-inostrannyh-del-belarusi-i-zimbabve-prohodit-v-minske-557558-2023/>

¹²³ Belarus wants to bring relations with Zimbabwe to the level of comprehensive strategic partnership [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-hochet-vyvesti-otnoshenija-s-zimbabve-na-uroven-vseobjemljushego-strategicheskogo-partnerstva-557622-2023>

twenty intergovernmental and interdepartmental agreements. In March 2023, this list of documents was supplemented by the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Centre for Marketing and Price Study of the Republic of Belarus and the National Organization for the Promotion and Development of Trade in Zimbabwe "Zim Trade", which "will become an additional incentive and support for the intensification of interaction between business circles, enterprises and economic entities of the two countries"¹²⁴ .

Speaking about the nearest plans, more than 130 fire trucks will be delivered by the end of 2023, "they are now at different stages of delivery. Contracts were signed for the delivery of 3,161 tractors, 80 harvesters, by the end of the year we [the Belarusian side] will start to fulfill these contracts, and we will try to solve these issues in 2023-2025. We have also reached agreements on the delivery of grain drying complexes there"¹²⁵ . In the medium term, Belarusian exporters are only ready to increase their supplies to the Zimbabwean market. For example, the Belarusian Automobile Plant is interested in developing fruitful cooperation with mining companies in Zimbabwe, as the mining industry of the country, which has large reserves of minerals, including coal, copper, gold, diamonds, is developing rapidly. After all, 55- and 130-ton dump trucks from Belarus are now involved in mining of coal and diamonds in Zimbabwean quarries, Belarusian special-purpose machinery - bulldozers, loaders, tractors and irrigation and drainage machines - is also in operation. And "BELAZ is ready to offer for the mining industry of Zimbabwe not only efficient quarry machinery, but also ready-made

¹²⁴ Transcript of the approach to the press of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus S. Aleinik following the talks with the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe (March 27, 2023). Aleinik following the talks with the Head of the Foreign Ministry of Zimbabwe (March 27, 2023, Minsk) [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/fd375850144e9b08.html

¹²⁵ Parkhomchik: exports of Belarusian goods to Zimbabwe increased eightfold [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/parhomchik-eksport-belorusskihtovarov-v-zimbabve-velichilsja-v-vosem-raz-587300-2023/>

complex solutions for the supply of machines with all the necessary infrastructure, equipment and software on a turnkey basis"¹²⁶ .

Belarusian manufacturers of agricultural machinery also have interesting plans to export to this South African country. After all, agricultural mechanization in this region of Africa is now receiving increased attention. Suffice it to say that "last year [2022] Zimbabwe harvested a record wheat crop for the last 25 years thanks to Belarusian-made agricultural machinery"¹²⁷ . And there are plans to promote joint projects to provide agricultural machinery from Belarus, including tillage units, cotton growing machines, and tractor trailers. It should be noted that only Minsk Tractor Plant "in 2023-2024 it is planned to supply 3,575 tractors to Zimbabwe, their shipment has already begun"¹²⁸ . In addition, this year, the use of improved agricultural machinery from Belarus has made the harvesting season in this country problem-free. The fact is that in Zimbabwe in 2023, a record harvest of cereals is expected, which will exceed 440 thousand tons. As of early November, wheat harvesting is almost complete across the country. "To harvest faster before the rainy season, the government has deployed 249 state-of-the-art Belarusian combine harvesters. The flagship GS12 combine harvester handles at least 40 hectares a day"¹²⁹ . So the purchase of machinery from Belarus has been a success.

¹²⁶ BELAZ is interested in developing cooperation with mining companies in Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belaz-zainteresovan-v-razvitijsotrudnichestva-s-dobyvajuschimi-kompanijami-zimbabve-581975-2023/>

¹²⁷ "Bobrujskagromash" and the Ambassador of Zimbabwe discussed projects to provide the region with Belarusian agricultural machinery [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bobrujskagromash-i-posol-zimbabve-obsudili-proekty-po-obespecheniju-regiona-belorusskoj-selhoztehnikoj-582296-2023/>

¹²⁸ MTZ intends to continue cooperation with partners from Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-nameren-prodolzhit-sotrudnichestvo-s-partnerami-iz-zimbabve-581256-2023/>

¹²⁹ Belarusian machinery helps to harvest a record harvest in Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusskaja-tehnika-pomogaet-ubirat-rekordnyj-urozhaj-v-zimbabve-597984-2023>

Another relevant topic of Belarusian-Zimbabwean interaction is the establishment of joint ventures for food production. Back in May 2023, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Belarus discussed with partners from Zimbabwe the issues of organizing supplies of Belarusian foodstuffs, as well as "setting up joint ventures for processing dried milk into whole milk products"¹³⁰. In addition, the issues of beef and poultry meat processing were discussed. And in Grodno region last spring with Zimbabwean partners discussed the issue of cooperation in the field of baby food. "At the first stage it can be the supply of ready-made baby food with the subsequent transfer of part of technological operations to the territory of Zimbabwe with the subsequent possibility of building a full-fledged production and performing the whole list of works"¹³¹. And taking into account the capacities of the Hrodna plant Bellakt, the geographical location of Zimbabwe and active interaction with its neighbors, it would be possible to consider the possibility of joint production, which would cover not only the needs of Zimbabwe, but also other African countries.

Another example. In June-July 2023, the first deliveries of Zimbabwean cotton fiber arrived in Belarus. The partners from South Africa are ready to cooperate on other issues as well. For example, "Zimbabwe has a school program and about 2 million schoolchildren dress in business style. Zimbabwe imports fabrics only from China, so we [Belarusian specialists] showed the Zimbabwean representative a number of samples of polyviscose fabric and fabric with a wool content of 20-30%"¹³².

¹³⁰ The Ministry of Agriculture and Food will discuss with Zimbabwe the creation of joint ventures for the processing of milk powder [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minselhozprod-obsudit-s-zimbabwe-sozdanie-sovmestnyh-predpriyatij-po-pererabotke-suhogo-moloka-566042-2023/>

¹³¹ "Bellakt" plans to create the production of dry infant formulae in Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bellakt-planiruet-sozdat-proizvodstvo-suhih-detskikh-smesej-na-territorii-zimbabwe-560414-2023/>

¹³² The first deliveries of Zimbabwean cotton to Belarus are expected in June-July 2023 [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervye-postavki-v-belarus-zimbabvijskogo-hlopka-ozhidajutsja-v-ijune-ijule-2023-goda-557867-2023/>

Another interesting idea in cooperation between the two countries, which may well materialize in the not-too-distant future, is that "Zimbabwe may become a major hub in South Africa for trade in Belarusian products"¹³³. For this purpose, the Belarusian-Zimbabwean initiative with the participation of another state in Southeast Africa - Mozambique - could be realized. This is a country that is washed by the Indian Ocean. "The most promising area of Belarusian exports to the markets of Mozambique could be mechanization of the agricultural complex of this country with subsequent servicing of Belarusian machinery"¹³⁴. The introduction of knowledge-intensive technologies, electrification and improvement of railroads, creation of the necessary logistics infrastructure, and promotion of renewable energy sources could also be key points on the way to diversifying Belarusian exports to Mozambique. Given the high demand for medicines, niches for the promotion of pharmaceutical products remain in the country. In short, the Southern African market is very promising for Belarusian exports and can further increase activity in various areas.

A special talk is about the interaction between Minsk and Harare in the educational sphere. In May 2023, Belarus and Zimbabwe signed a roadmap for 2023-2025 in the field of higher education and university science, which identified the development of joint educational programs and training of Zimbabweans in Belarusian universities in demanded specialties as promising areas of Belarusian-Zimbabwean cooperation. "Also among the promising areas are the organization of resource centers for vocational education and training, expansion of joint scientific, scientific-technical and innovative projects, including in the field of geomechanics, biotechnology, biomechanics"¹³⁵.

¹³³ Frederick Shava: Zimbabwe can become a major hub for the supply of Belarusian equipment in South Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/frederik-shava-zimbabwe-mozhet-stat-krupnym-habom-po-postavke-belorusskoj-tehniki-v-juzhnoj-afrike-557809-2023/>

¹³⁴ Mozambique [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://export.by/mozambique>

¹³⁵ Belarus and Zimbabwe signed a road map for 2023-2025 in the field of higher education and science [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i->

In addition to the roadmap, the Belarusian and Zimbabwean sides also signed over 40 bilateral agreements in the field of education in May. It should be noted that "this is a very serious legal framework for training specialists for a wide range of specialties in industry, agro-industry, health care, and energy"¹³⁶. It is expected that in this connection between the educational institutions of the two countries will be implemented a program of training not only specialists at the level of higher education, but also on the creation of centers of competence in the territory of Zimbabwe to train specialists in working professions. For this purpose, a center for studying Russian as a foreign language is being established, where Zimbabwean citizens will be able to undergo training in order to both work at joint ventures in Zimbabwe and continue their studies in Belarus.

The Belarusian State University (BSU) is an active participant of interaction with Zimbabwean partners. In 2019, it signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education, Science and Technological Development of Zimbabwe. In February 2023, BSU became a partner of six universities of this country at once. And in May this year it expanded the range of existing agreements. In particular, a Cooperation Agreement with the Harare Institute of Technology and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Midlands State University were signed, which will allow developing academic exchanges, conducting fundamental and applied research, joint scientific conferences, exhibitions, symposiums and seminars. In addition, "initiatives on cooperation in the field of ecology, soil science, biology were voiced. The possibility of developing modern digital technologies, geoinformation systems, soil conservation

[zimbabwe-podpisali-dorozhnuju-kartu-na-2023-2025-gody-v-sfere-vysshego-obrazovanija-i-nauki-565748-2023/](https://www.belta.by/society/view/bolee-40-dvustoronnih-soglashenij-v-oblasti-obrazovanija-budet-podpisano-po-itogam-vizita-v-belarus-566871-2023/)

¹³⁶ More than 40 bilateral agreements in the field of education will be signed following the visit of a delegation from Zimbabwe to Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bolee-40-dvustoronnih-soglashenij-v-oblasti-obrazovanija-budet-podpisano-po-itogam-vizita-v-belarus-566871-2023/>

measures and technologies on lands subject to erosion processes was considered"¹³⁷. The opening of a BSU distance learning center in Zimbabwe will also be a serious step towards lasting cooperation.

Also in May 2023, Brest State Technical University (BrSTU) signed cooperation agreements with five Zimbabwean universities, which will develop cooperation with the Harare Institute of Technology, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Lupane State University, Midland State University and the University of Zimbabwe. The Brest university will implement joint educational programs, engage in joint scientific research to be carried out in the field of Industry 4.0, digital industry and agriculture, IT-technology, on issues related to the creation of various engineering systems. In a word, "cooperation can be established in all areas in which Brest residents specialize. Three students from Zimbabwe are currently studying at BrSTU: two guys and a girl"¹³⁸. It should be assumed that in the near future Brest will have many more students from this South African country.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Minsk between the Belarusian State Technological University and the Midland State University. This document provides for cooperation in sharing experience in education and facilitating the exchange of students, master's and PhD students, teaching staff, as well as the development of joint research projects in areas of mutual interest. Specifically, "in the fields of forestry, wood processing, industrial ecology, energy efficient technologies, and fertilizer technology"¹³⁹. The Belarusian National Technical University signed several international

¹³⁷ BSU activates cooperation with universities of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/bgu-aktiviziruet-sotrudnichestvo-s-vuzami-zimbabwe-566857-2023/>

¹³⁸ Brest Technical University concluded cooperation agreements with five universities of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/brestskij-tehnikeskij-universitet-zakljuchil-soglashenija-o-sotrudnichestve-s-pjatju-vuzami-zimbabwe-566589-2023/>

¹³⁹ Discussion of cooperation, signing a memorandum: BSTU will be visited by the delegation of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/obsuzhdenie-sotrudnichestva-podpisanie-memoranduma-bgtu-posetit-delegatsija-zimbabwe-566182-2023/>

documents with Zimbabwean partners this spring. First, a cooperation agreement with Harare Polytechnic College. Secondly, with the Midland State University. Thirdly, "a road map between the Belarusian National Technical University and the University of Zimbabwe was signed"¹⁴⁰ , and eight joint educational programs with various universities of this country, including those in Harare, Chinhoyi, Lupane, were approved. And in October 2023, the Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno and the Polytechnic College of Harare agreed to cooperate, outlining mutual interests "in the areas of joint scientific, innovative and educational activities, as well as in the monitoring of natural resources"¹⁴¹ . Finally, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Education, Science and Technological Development of Zimbabwe agreed to sign a memorandum of intent and "identified a number of promising areas for cooperation: space technologies, new materials, technologies and complexes for processing of mineral raw materials and ores, agro-industrial complex, training of scientific personnel..."¹⁴² .

Recall that in January 2023, Belarus and Zimbabwe signed a memorandum of understanding between the parties on mutual recognition of educational documents in Harare. "And they see quite great prospects for cooperation in various areas of inter-university interaction. This applies to the training of specialists with higher education in such areas as agro-industrial complex, mechanical engineering, medical technologies"¹⁴³ . So, with the

¹⁴⁰ BNTU signed agreements on cooperation and implementation of joint educational programs with universities of Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://times.bntu.by/news/13451-v-bntu-podpisany-soglasheniya-s-universitetami-zimbabwe>

¹⁴¹ Scientists of SDSU and Harare Polytechnic College agreed on cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/uchenye-grgu-i-politehnicheskogo-kolledzha-harare-dogovorilis-o-sotrudnichestve-592885-2023/>

¹⁴² Space technologies and new materials: the NAS of Belarus discussed cooperation with Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/kosmicheskietehtnologii-i-novye-materialy-v-nan-belarusi-obsudili-sotrudnichestvo-s-zimbabwe-566338-2023/>

¹⁴³ Zaleskii, B. Window of Opportunity and New Ideas. Realization of the features of economic multifaceted cooperation / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023. - C. 23.

signing of the roadmap for 2023-2025 in the field of higher education and university science, it seems that the educational services of Belarus in Zimbabwe will be in demand in all areas that develop the economy of this southern African country, and will become the most important element of Belarusian-Zimbabwean relations. As for the prospects of bilateral trade and economic, industrial-cooperative and scientific-educational interaction, they are seen for quite a long time. And not only in these areas, but also in other areas.

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A roadmap will outline partnership priorities

Algeria is one of the countries of the African continent in which Belarus sees "significant potential for the development of bilateral relations"¹⁴⁴. In February 2018, the first visit of the African country's foreign minister to Belarus in the history of Belarusian-Algerian relations, established back in October 1995, took place, during which the parties agreed to establish economic relations between the countries and make them more intensive, and signed the first intergovernmental documents in the history of bilateral relations, among which the agreement on the establishment of the Joint Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation should be highlighted. The first meeting of this new formation should be held back in 2018 to agree on a roadmap for Belarusian-Algerian cooperation.

Belarus' interest in Algeria is explained by a number of serious circumstances. First of all, "this state is the largest by area on the African continent and borders with several countries, which opens up great opportunities for Belarus in the trade and economic sphere"¹⁴⁵. In terms of population - more than 40 million people - Algeria ranks second among the Arab states after Egypt. The country is rich in mineral resources, including natural gas and oil (9th and 16th in the world, respectively), which form a significant part of the gross domestic product and most of the exports. In addition, Algeria's most developed industries include the production of electrical products, including smartphones, televisions, washing machines, and the manufacture of medicines and foodstuffs. As a result, "Algeria's

¹⁴⁴ Congratulations to the President of Algeria Abdelaziz Bouteflika on Revolution Day [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/pozdravlenie-prezidenta-alzhira-abdeljaziza-buteflika-s-natsionalnym-prazdnikom-10092/

¹⁴⁵ Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria Abdelkader Messahel [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/search_ru/getExtendedResults/?query=&search_type=type_all_words&roup=0&from_day=20&from_month=2&from_year=2018&to_day=20&to_month=2&to_year=2018&search_type_sort=desc&search_ok.x=34&search_ok.y=8&search_mode=&search_node=news&search_node_id=374&search_title_name=events

significant fuel and raw material potential, rapidly growing population, and its stable and dynamic economy place the country among the new leaders of the Arab-Muslim world"¹⁴⁶ .

This current trend in the development of this African state is eloquently complemented by the fact that, politically, "Algeria remains one of the few countries in the Arab world that has not been affected by destabilization and has retained the ability to conduct an independent foreign policy"¹⁴⁷ . The new Algerian government, formed after the May 2017 parliamentary elections, has prioritized the country's economic development in order to put "more effort into diversifying the economy in the near future, as it cannot be completely dependent on rising oil prices on international markets"¹⁴⁸ . In this connection, the pragmatism of the visit of Algerian Minister A. Messahel to Belarus and the establishment of the Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, which "will serve as a basis for further development of economic cooperation between our states"¹⁴⁹ .

Statistics on the Belarus-Algerian trade and economic interaction shows that the maximum trade turnover between the parties was recorded in 2012, exceeding \$22 million. Belarusian exports to this African country reached a record high of over \$18 million a year earlier. At that time, it was based on trucks, tractors, rolled metal products, nitrogen fertilizers, oil products, and tires. It is believed that "among Belarusian companies, MTZ OJSC is currently the most successful in the Algerian market - for several years, assembly production of Belarus tractors has been operating in Algeria,

¹⁴⁶ Zherlitsyna, N.A. Strategic partnership between Russia and Algeria in crisis conditions: potential and challenges / N.A. Zherlitsyna // University Bulletin. - 2015. - №8. - C. 24.

¹⁴⁷ Balmasov, S. Algeria: Russia's "anti-crisis" partner in the Arab world / S. Balmasov // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: https://islam-today.ru/islam_v_mire/bliznij-vostok/alzir-antikrizisnyj-partner-rossii-v-arabskom-mire/

¹⁴⁸ Algeria's new prime minister prioritized the country's economic development [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: http://russian.news.cn/2017-05/26/c_136318214.htm

¹⁴⁹ Transcript of the approach to the press of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei following the meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria A. Messahel (February 20, 2018, Minsk) [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/a52a6923d31941bf.html

which are then sold in the local market"¹⁵⁰ . To be absolutely precise, the assembly production of Belarusian tractors was organized in 2011 on the basis of the Algerian company Belarus Motors Algerie in the Algerian governorate of Setif. However, in the following years, the trade turnover between the countries became negative, which made the parties approach the issue of restoring the previous positions in interaction in a much more systematic manner. The establishment of the Joint Belarusian-Algerian Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation is only the first step on this path.

The next step in this direction is to build up inter-parliamentary ties so that "parliamentarians of the two countries actively form the legal framework for Belarusian-Algerian cooperation"¹⁵¹ . And such a step will be made soon, as "the convention on avoiding double taxation, agreements on trade, economic, military-technical and investment cooperation, as well as agreements on cooperation in agriculture and sanitary veterinary medicine"¹⁵² are already being "worked out for signing", which should contribute to the intensification of bilateral relations, as well as to the increase in supplies from Belarus. Among the growth points of Belarusian exports to this African country are such domestic goods as tractors and other agricultural machinery, trucks, buses, dump trucks, nitrogen fertilizers, tires, meat and dairy products, milk powder, and timber.

We would like to emphasize that the Belarusian side is particularly interested in agriculture, since "Algeria is the world's second largest importer of dairy products"¹⁵³ , which buys tens of billions of dollars worth of these products annually. Consumption of dairy products of various kinds is

¹⁵⁰ National exposition of Belarus in Algeria [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belinterexpo.by/about/news/nacionalnaya-ekspoziciya-belarusi-v-alzhire.html/>

¹⁵¹ Savko, S. Myasnikovich offers Algeria to intensify interparliamentary cooperation / S. Savko // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/politics/view/mjasnikovich-predlagaet-alzhiru-aktivizirovat-mezhparlamentskoe-sotrudnichestvo-290692-2018/>

¹⁵² Belarus - Algeria [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: http://egypt.mfa.gov.by/ru/blr_algeria/

¹⁵³ Belarus Algeria perspectives [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://belarus24.by/news/economics/belarus-alzhir-perspektivy/>

traditional here and forms a significant part of the daily diet of the population. Households spend up to a quarter of their budget on the purchase of dairy products. It is a fact that a significant part of dairy products in Algeria is produced from milk powder imported in large quantities from abroad. At the same time, work is being done here to develop its own dairy industry. That is why "under the current conditions, it would be advisable for Belarusian enterprises to focus not only on the promotion of finished dairy products, but also on the creation of joint ventures whose products can be sold both in the domestic Algerian market and in the markets of neighboring countries"¹⁵⁴ .

Another promising area of cooperation is education, as since Soviet times "Belarusian educational institutions have trained more than 400 Algerian specialists with higher and specialized secondary education, as well as 14 candidates of science"¹⁵⁵ . And today there are all the prerequisites to continue this cooperation, within the framework of which the Belarusian side is ready to provide personnel training and organize internships in specialties of interest to the Algerian side, including engineering and technical ones, as well as in such areas as agriculture, medicine, and military science.

One of the important areas of actualization of Belarusian-Algerian cooperation in 2018 should also be the intensification of exhibition and fair activities of the parties. In particular, as part of the already mentioned visit of Algerian Foreign Minister A. Messahel to Belarus, Belarusian exporting enterprises were "invited to exhibitions that take place in Algeria"¹⁵⁶ . At the same time, the Algerian side expressed its firm intention to take part in the upcoming Belagor international exhibition in Minsk in summer 2018.

¹⁵⁴ Algeria [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://export.by/algeria>

¹⁵⁵ Belarus - Algeria [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: http://egypt.mfa.gov.by/ru/blr_algeria/

¹⁵⁶ Grishkevich, A. The first meeting of the Belarusian-Algerian Commission will be held this year in Algeria / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/politics/view/pervoe-zasedanie-belorussko-alzhirskoj-komissii-projdet-v-etom-godu-v-alzhire-290659-2018/>

The actualization of the exhibition and fair vector in the development of the Belarusian-Algerian partnership seems to be explained by the successful holding of the first National Exposition of the Republic of Belarus at the 50th International Exhibition FIA-2017, which took place in Algeria in May 2017 and gathered "about 1 thousand companies from 40 countries"¹⁵⁷. The fact is that this exhibition is really the largest and most authoritative exhibition event in Algeria. In addition to Belarus, the Czech Republic, China, Cuba, France, Germany, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Italy, Cuba, Poland, the United States of America, Turkey, the Czech Republic, South Africa, Japan, and the United States of America were represented at it with their national expositions alone. In total - 28 countries. Russia was chosen as the guest of honor of the exhibition.

The Belarusian national exposition at FIA-2017 included such large industrial enterprises as Gomselmash OJSC, MAZ OJSC - the managing company of BELAVTOMAZ Holding, V.I. Kozlov Minsk Electrotechnical Plant OJSC, and Minsk Tractor Plant OJSC. In particular, with regard to the machinery of Belarusian automakers, "representatives of the municipal services of Algeria noted the achievements of the Minsk plant in the field of design and assembly of municipal machinery, in particular <...> the MAZ-4926W2 ditch washer"¹⁵⁸.

The collective stand of the Belarusian State Committee for Science and Technology presented more than 120 scientific and technical developments created in subordinate organizations: the Ministry of Education - Belarusian State University, Scientific and Technological Park "Polytechnik" of the Belarusian National Technical University, Belarusian Institute of System Analysis; the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus - Institute of Powder

¹⁵⁷ Belarus and Algeria have all prerequisites for expanding cooperation - Rachkov [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-alzhir-imejut-vse-predposylki-dlja-rasshirenija-sotrudnichestva-rachkov-247000-2017/>

¹⁵⁸ FIA-2017 exhibition in Algeria [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://avtotehnolog-tula.ru/fia-2017>

Metallurgy, NPO Center JSC, Scientific and Research Center of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus on Mechanization of Rural Agriculture, RUE "Institute of Powder Metallurgy", Scientific and Technical Center of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

Only Belarusian State University presented more than 20 developments of scientific and technical products within the framework of the national exposition. The visitors were particularly interested in such of them as: a complex of equipment for production of products from elastic, integral and rigid polyurethane foams and application of sealing contour from polyurethane and silicone compositions; veterinary preparations based on recombinant regulatory proteins of animals; technology of pre-sowing treatment of vegetable, grain, medicinal crops and seeds of forest plantations. "Visitors were also actively interested in the possibility of education at BSU. During the exhibition more than 40 negotiations were held with representatives of enterprises, organizations, scientific institutions, business circles, private persons of Algeria"¹⁵⁹.

The National Exposition of the Republic of Belarus was visited by a considerable number of visitors, ranging from agricultural producers in Algeria to representatives of large companies. "Algerian business circles showed interest in the developments of Belarusian scientists in the fields of agricultural engineering, electrical industry, alternative energy, creation of new materials, production of absorbent materials, and medical preparations"¹⁶⁰. And it gave its concrete results: in total, within the framework of the national exposition "10 protocols of intentions and 3 cooperation agreements were signed"¹⁶¹. In particular, memorandums of

¹⁵⁹ International exhibition "FIA 2017" - results of participation of BSU [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://research.bsu.by/2017/05/17/fia-2017-the-results-of-bsu-participation/>

¹⁶⁰ National exposition of the Republic of Belarus at the international exhibition FIA-2017 in Algeria [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: https://www.cci.by/ru/content/2017_news_99

¹⁶¹ 50th International Industrial Exhibition "FIA 2017" (May 8-13, 2017, Algiers) [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belisa.org.by/ru/actions/exhibitions/b694dbc47be304e0.html>

cooperation were signed between Minsk Tractor Plant OJSC and Belarus Motor Algeria, as well as between the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and potential partners. In addition, the Belarusian State University and the Houari Boumediene University of Science and Technology came to the conclusion that it was necessary to develop an agreement on scientific and technical cooperation, and the structural subdivisions of these universities - the A.N. Sevchenko Institute of Applied Physical Problems and the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Engineering Solutions - signed a protocol of intentions to conduct joint scientific research and development in the field of applied physical problems.

On the whole, participation in the 50th International Industrial Exhibition FIA-2017 allowed the Belarusian side to demonstrate to potential partners from Algeria the high level of scientific and innovative potential of the Republic of Belarus, a wide range of scientific and technical areas that can form the basis of the roadmap for Belarusian-Algerian cooperation that the parties are currently developing. The participation of Belarusian companies and organizations in the Algerian exhibitions in 2018 may bring a lot of new interesting ideas and projects to the interaction between Belarus and Algeria.

One of them, the 51st International Industrial Exhibition FIA-2018, will again bring together about a thousand companies from more than 40 countries at the SAFEX exhibition center in May 2018. Among them are manufacturers of machinery and equipment for metallurgy, mechanical engineering, energy, construction, mining and chemical industry, chemical products for agriculture, construction materials and technologies, products and technologies for pulp and paper, rubber, textiles, railroad vehicles and automobiles.

Such thematic diversity within one exhibition is characteristic of modern Algeria, which needs nowadays "modernization and construction of new facilities for supplying cities and settlements with drinking water,

construction of new sewage treatment plants. The country's government is also planning the development of public infrastructure"¹⁶² . Suffice it to say that in the next few years Algeria is going to invest seven billion dollars in railroads alone. In addition, modernization will affect the existing airports and sea harbors here. The state plans to create joint ventures in the petrochemical field. With the participation of foreign investors, new power plants using natural gas and alternative energy sources as fuel, as well as gas and oil pipelines will be built in Algeria.

It should be noted that, in general, 2018 promises to be a very busy year in terms of organizing international exhibitions in Algeria in a wide variety of thematic areas. As a rule, their venue is the capital, a port city where "the engineering, food, textile, chemical and oil refining industries are developed"¹⁶³ . For example, DJAZAGRO 2018, an exhibition of food, beverages, equipment and technologies for the food industry, is scheduled for the first decade of April, the exposition of which usually presents delicatessen, confectionery and bakery products, food additives and ingredients, technologies of processing and production of products.

The last decade of April is the time for BATIMATEC Expo 2018, the international trade fair for construction machinery and materials, which this year celebrates its 20th anniversary. During this time, it has become "the largest event of the construction industry in Algeria, attended by both major agents, distributors and government representatives"¹⁶⁴ , as it already covers most of the main sectors of the construction industry. Other major sections of its exposition include plumbing and carpentry equipment, climatic systems, wall and floor covering materials, and home security equipment. Three more major exhibition

¹⁶² FIA 2018 - 51st international Algerian industrial exhibition [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.expoclub.ru/db/exhibition/view/6754/>

¹⁶³ Exhibitions by region Algeria [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://worldexpo.pro/region/alir>

¹⁶⁴ BATIMATEC Expo 2018 [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://worldexpo.pro/exhibition/batimatec-expo-2018>

events will take place in this African country in the second half of 2018. In the last decade of September is the third international exhibition of products and services for mines and quarries, MICA 2018, which will bring together more than 70 exhibitors. Alongside it will be the North African Pharmaceutical Industry Forum Maghreb Pharma Expo 2018, where pharmaceutical ingredients and pharma products will be showcased in a wide variety.

Finally, the Algeria Electricity & Water Expo 2018 international exhibition is scheduled for early December, which will be held for the tenth time. This is the largest forum dedicated to the electricity sector in Algeria, the role of which is constantly growing in this African country. The fact is that back in 2002, reforms in the energy sector were launched here, which brought dozens of foreign companies to the Algerian soil. But even at the moment "to maintain and meet the growing demand for electricity, which is increasing by 2-4 percent annually, Algeria needs to add 1,500 MW annually in new generating capacity and related infrastructure such as transmission lines and substations"¹⁶⁵ . Perhaps also for this reason, the Algerian government recently signed a contract with an Egyptian electrical company to erect 550 kilometers of high-voltage transmission lines.

The problem of constant shortage of drinking water is no less urgent for Algeria. It should be reminded that about 80 percent of the country's territory is located in desert zones where the amount of precipitation is practically equal to zero. That is why the forthcoming exhibition in December is of great interest to both producers and consumers in the field of power engineering and water management. It may well be advisable for Belarusian exporters in these areas to take advantage of this interesting opportunity to promote their business interests in the Algerian market.

¹⁶⁵ Algeria Electricity & Water Expo 2018 [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://worldexpo.pro/exhibition/algeria-electricity-water-expo-2018>

From bilateral trade to a relationship of prioritization and strategic partnership

In his April 2014 Address to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly, the head of the Belarusian state characterized the peculiarities of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus pursued in Africa as follows: "Very cautiously and carefully we are trying to move in the African direction as well"¹⁶⁶. Official Minsk needs to be cautious and careful in the "African vector" for a number of reasons. On the one hand, there is still a widespread opinion that all countries of the "black continent" are economically backward to a greater or lesser extent, where hunger, high inflation, poverty, corruption and authoritarian regimes continue to prevail. But there is this data: the cumulative economic growth rate of African countries "averaged 5.7 percent between 2003 and 2010 and fluctuated between 5 percent and 5.5 percent between 2010 and 2011". This places Africa as the second fastest growing economy in the world"¹⁶⁷.

The Republic of Belarus has a pragmatic attitude towards African countries: "Belarus is beginning to develop the African continent. <...> There is a lot of work to be done there, and we are looking for reference points"¹⁶⁸. This approach is explained by the fact that in Africa there is a "significant potential for cooperation in the trade and economic sphere"¹⁶⁹, so "Belarus is aimed at intensifying contacts with the states of the African continent. <...>

¹⁶⁶ Strong economy and honest power are the foundation of the country's independence and prosperity of the nation. President's Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly / SB - Belarus Today. - 2014. - April 23.

¹⁶⁷ Promising prospects for Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2012. - URL: <http://www.ey.com/RU/ru/Issues/Business-environment/RGM--bullish-despite-Eurozone-crisis---The-promise-of-emerging-Africa>

¹⁶⁸ February 21, Alexander Lukashenko considered personnel issues [Electronic resource], - 2012. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/21-fevralya-aleksandr-lukashenko-rassmotrel-kadrovye-voprosy-3700/

¹⁶⁹ Alexander Lukashenko accepted credentials of ambassadors of foreign countries [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-prinjal-veritelnye-gramoty-poslov-zarubezhnyx-gosudarstv-5078/

For every business person there is a sphere of application there. <...> That is where the main resources and reserves of land are. <...> Belarus cannot be on the sidelines of this process"¹⁷⁰ . In Minsk, Africa is assessed not only as a promising market for Belarusian products - a wide range of industrial and agricultural goods demanded in the markets of African countries - but also as an additional source of resources and goods. In particular, "Belarus can receive from the countries of this continent many types of agricultural products of tropical origin, meat and seafood, rare minerals, as well as gain experience in the independent development of deposits of certain minerals necessary for the domestic industry"¹⁷¹ . And if we bear in mind that many African countries are currently implementing large infrastructure programs and projects, then under certain conditions Belarusian companies could invest their knowledge, technologies and experience in their implementation, including in the services sector.

There are also great opportunities for Belarus to increase the baggage of interstate ties with African countries in the fields of science, education, transportation and construction. However, the main direction of bilateral cooperation with African partners is still the expansion of exports of domestically produced goods, which may be dominated by quarry equipment, oversized tires, agricultural machinery, fertilizers, light industry products, laser and optical devices. According to A. Molchan, head of the Belarusian diplomatic mission in the Republic of South Africa, "in order to develop bilateral relations with any state, and with an African state in the first place, it is necessary to ensure three main conditions: to find political support at the level of the country's leadership, to establish contacts with a serious partner with whom business can be organized, and then to attract representatives of

¹⁷⁰ Alexander Lukashenko accepted credentials of foreign ambassadors [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-prinjal-veritelnuyu-gramoty-poslov-inostrannyx-gosudarstv-7610/

¹⁷¹ Trade and economic cooperation with South Africa and other countries of Southern Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/trade_economic/

Belarusian business circles. In addition, accreditation in one or another state is extremely important. <,...> Belarusian-African cooperation has a future that will bring serious dividends to both sides"¹⁷² . For reference, we note that in September 2013, the Republic of Belarus opened its embassy in Ethiopia, "which became the fifth Belarusian diplomatic mission in Africa. As a result, the sphere of responsibility of our embassies has already covered twenty-six states of the African continent"¹⁷³ .

If we talk about the development of bilateral relations of the Republic of Belarus with African countries, we should first of all pay attention to the Republic of South Africa, diplomatic relations with which were established on March 4, 1993. South Africa is the most economically developed African state, which accounts for more than a third of the total gross domestic product of the continent, where more than 50 countries are located. Here are the richest deposits of minerals - diamonds, coal, nickel, lead, zinc, antimony, uranium, iron ore. The country ranks first in the world in the production of gold and platinum group metals. And although "due to the global financial crisis in the economy of the country there was a reduction of 900 thousand jobs and up to 25% of the able-bodied population was unemployed"¹⁷⁴ , among the sectors of the national economy the most actively developing are light industry and mining, ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, energy, automotive industry and agriculture.

The stable political situation in the Republic of South Africa also contributes to this, with the African National Congress party, which won the first general election in 1994, firmly in power, winning about two-thirds of

¹⁷² Sudas, I. Captain of a long voyage / I. Sudas // Narodnaya Gazeta. - 2013. - August 3.

¹⁷³ Review of the results of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus and the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2013 [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/upload/review_MFA_2013.pdf

¹⁷⁴ Belarus - South Africa: the basis of interaction - investments [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: http://export.by/resources/izdaniya_i_publicacii/belarus_%E2%80%94%94_yuar_osnova_vzaimodeistviya_%E2%80%94%94_invest.html

the vote in all subsequent elections. At the same time, the country has an active opposition and a developing civil society. With regard to foreign policy, its main goals and objectives were set in 1994, following the end of the apartheid regime and the country's emergence from international isolation. They included "ensuring recognition of South Africa by the world community and establishing relations with other states, creating a favorable image of South Africa in the world, expanding and diversifying trade and economic relations and attracting foreign investment, strengthening relations between developing countries, promoting their interests in international organizations and changing relations between developing and developed countries"¹⁷⁵ .

Today, it can be stated that the mechanism for ensuring the foreign policy of the Republic of South Africa is already well established and has a sufficiently flexible structure that meets the needs of the changing conjuncture on the world stage. This is especially important in view of the fact that the "new policy of economic growth is expected to create 5 million new jobs in the country and reduce unemployment from the current 25% to 15% by 2020"¹⁷⁶ .¹⁷⁷ If we take into account that the determining factors of the strategy of modern foreign policy of South Africa are the country's location at the crossroads of the most important trade routes, leading role on the African continent, high level of economic development, rich reserves of natural resources, it becomes clear why the economic factor prevails in the bilateral relations of the Republic of South Africa with foreign countries: the country "pursues an active and independent foreign policy, adhering to a pragmatic foreign policy and foreign economic policy of the Republic of South Africa.

¹⁷⁵ Shubin, V. Why South Africa needs BRICS and why BRICS needs South Africa / V. Shubin // Security Index. - 2013. - № 2. - C. 59.

¹⁷⁶ Arkhangelskaya, A.A. Foreign policy of South Africa: the path to multipolarity? / A.A. Arkhangelskaya // Modern Foreign Policy of the Left / Edited by R.V. Kostyuk. - Spb. Poltorak, 2014. - C. 153.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 164.

Minsk believes that the ties between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of South Africa have already outgrown the level of bilateral trade over the twenty years of diplomatic relations, developing on a mutually beneficial basis. And today it is right to raise the issue of joint projects in machine building, agriculture, including in the countries of the region, with which South Africa has partnership relations. In other words, Belarus and South Africa have many points of contact, so "we need to seriously resume our relations and increase them"¹⁷⁸ .

Recall that the peak of bilateral trade in the Belarusian-South African interaction was in 2008, when the trade turnover between the countries amounted to \$62 million with Belarusian exports amounting to \$50 million. The looming global financial and economic crisis in the following years seriously affected these figures: "In 2011, trade turnover with South Africa for all commodity items, including oil products and potash fertilizers, amounted to \$20.8 million, with exports amounting to \$14.7 million. The trade balance was positive in the amount of \$8.6 million"¹⁷⁹ .

Nevertheless, it is 2011 that can be considered the starting point in the intensification of cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of South Africa. Even then, the trade and distribution network of Belarusian exporting companies in South Africa was represented by RUSSO-BALT BELAZ, a dealer of BelAZ RUE, BelTyre Africa (Pty) Ltd, a trading house of Belshina, and Variquip represented the interests of Minsk Tractor Plant. In June 2011, our country was represented by the National Exposition at the South African International Exhibition "SAITEX", where the products and services of 24 Belarusian enterprises and organizations were exhibited.

¹⁷⁸ April 4, Alexander Lukashenko accepted credentials of ambassadors of a number of foreign countries [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/4-aprel/ja-aleksandr-lukashenko-prinjal-veriteInye-gramoty-poslov-rjada-inostrannyx-gosudarstv-5277/

¹⁷⁹ On the presentation by Ambassador Andrei Molchan of credentials to the President of South Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2012. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/cece34f5719d248d.html

Within the framework of the same exhibition, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus signed a number of agreements with South African companies in the field of equipment development in the mining industry. And in October 2011, the second meeting of the Joint Belarusian-South African Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation was held, the participants of which "paid special attention to the search for new forms and methods of interaction in order to increase bilateral trade cooperation"¹⁸⁰ and in this context considered the prospects of cooperation in four areas: industrial production, agriculture, science and technology, and education. At the same time, the parties considered the possibility of setting up an assembly plant for Belarusian automotive tractors in South Africa.

Already in May 2013, the parties noted that Belarus and South Africa are developing "relations of priority and strategic partnership"¹⁸¹, with good prospects for cooperation in the fields of industry, agriculture, interregional development, science and technology, as well as education, "especially from the point of view of South Africa's interest in using the educational potential of Belarus for training technical specialists"¹⁸². The appearance of the provision on the prospects of interregional cooperation in this context may seem rather exotic, given the distances that separate the regions of the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of South Africa.¹⁸³ However, as the repeated meetings of the head of the Belarusian diplomatic mission in South Africa A. Molchan with the responsible representatives of the South African

¹⁸⁰ About the visit of the Belarusian delegation headed by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Aleinik to the Republic of South Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/dc0121f3785cd493.html

¹⁸¹ Materials of the meeting of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus Elena Kupchina with the media representatives on the results of the next round of the Belarusian-South African intermidoval consultations (Minsk, May 13, 2013) [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f20a3072dd863e3c.html

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ About the trip of Ambassador of Belarus to South Africa A. Molchan to the Western Cape province [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/e0de38a9b28a7633.html

province of the Western Cape have shown, if the parties are interested, there may be very tempting prospects for cooperation in the field of agriculture, "including the purchase of Belarusian agricultural machinery and equipment, fertilizers <...>, the use by the South African side of the experience of Belarusian specialists in the construction of agro-towns both in Belarus and abroad" xml-ph-0000@deepl.i.

In short, Belarusian regions are facing serious challenges. After all, "in order to enter the South African market, it is necessary to deeply analyze and develop your marketing strategy, as this market is very saturated with competition"¹⁸⁴. Suffice it to say that the volume of the tractor market in South Africa is seven and a half thousand machines, which are represented here by no less than forty manufacturing companies from a number of countries, including China and India, offering quite low prices for their equipment. Nevertheless, agriculture may become a priority in the interregional cooperation between Belarus and South Africa, as "an agreement has already been reached to concentrate efforts on the development and implementation of joint projects in South Africa on the creation of an agro-town, production of biofuel from sugar cane, construction of a complex fertilizer plant"¹⁸⁵. This is facilitated by the joint statement on cooperation in agriculture signed in March 2013 between the agrarian departments of Belarus and South Africa and the decision of the parties to create a special working group on cooperation in agriculture. It is also worth recalling that in October 2012, South African Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries T. Joumat-Pettersson asked the Belarusian government to "consider the

¹⁸⁴ Africa may be interested in almost any Belarusian products - Molchan [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/economics/Afrika-mozhet-byt-zainteresovana-prakticheski-v-ljuboj-belorusskoj-produksii---Molchan_i_652805.html

¹⁸⁵ On the Ambassador's meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of South Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f195bc5139cd3970.html

possibility of assisting in training South African specialists in Belarusian agrarian universities" .¹⁸⁶

The results of the intensification of Belarusian-South African cooperation were not long in coming. Thus, "in 2012, our trade turnover with South Africa already amounted to almost \$33 million, of which about \$25 million - our exports. <...> We supply South Africa with Belarusian products in 55 commodity items"¹⁸⁷ . This includes supplies of light industry products. Thus, Belarusian "Milavitsa" opened its branded store near Cape Town. Belarusian cattle leather has also become in demand in the South American market. The fact that a branch of the regional office of the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange has been operating in South Africa on the basis of the South African holding Africa Union Holding since 2012 also played a positive role.

In September 2013, South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation M. Nkoana-Mashabane visited Belarus, during which the areas of cooperation where there is potential for developing cooperation were clearly identified. These are such areas as mineral resources development, where, according to the South African minister, "Belarus has the necessary experience and equipment that we can use"¹⁸⁸ . Based on the understanding that the \$33 million Belarusian-South African trade turnover in 2012 is clearly insufficient, the parties agreed "to cooperate closely in specific areas and fields, to work out projects in agriculture, food security, science and

¹⁸⁶ About the meeting of the Ambassador of Belarus to South Africa with the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of South Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2012. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/bc9cc7cc141ea5ab.html

¹⁸⁷ Molchan, A. Belarusian agro-towns may appear in the Republic of South Africa / A. Molchan // Belorusskaya niva. - 2013. - September 3.

¹⁸⁸ Alexander Lukashenko met with Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa Maite Nkoana-Mashabane [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-vstretilsja-s-ministrom-mezhdunarodnyx-svjazej-i-sotrudnichestva-juar-maite-nkoana-6872/

technology, the creation of joint industrial enterprises, and industrial cooperation"¹⁸⁹ .

A concrete step towards the implementation of these September agreements was the third meeting of the Joint Belarusian-South African Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation held in Minsk in November 2013, at which the South African side stated that it "wants to bring our bilateral relations to a strategic level"¹⁹⁰ . This can be facilitated by: the creation of industrial cooperation by organizing production facilities in South Africa to assemble and localize Belarusian agricultural, truck and road-building machinery; building up fertilizer production capacities in South Africa with the participation of the Belarusian potash industry; and setting up food production using Belarusian equipment and technologies. The parties have already started developing specific projects in these areas. In turn, "Belarus is interested in increasing purchases of agricultural and fish products in South Africa"¹⁹¹ .

The Memorandum of Cooperation signed by the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Black Business Council of South Africa in the fall of 2013 in Minsk should also stimulate the actions of the parties on the way to strategic partnership. The purpose of the Memorandum of Cooperation is "to establish an exchange of experience and useful information

¹⁸⁹ Materials of the approach to the press of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus Vladimir Makei following the talks with the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa Maite Nkoana-Mashabane [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c1a7a543b2bf1288.html

¹⁹⁰ Materials of the approach to the press of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus Valentin Rybakov following the third meeting of the Joint Belarusian-South African Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation, November 21, 2013, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f62627c22b94945e.html

¹⁹¹ Markovich, E. Belarus is interested in the establishment of assembly plants of Belarusian special equipment in South Africa / E. Markovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/economics/Belarus-zainteresovana-v-sozdanii-na-territorii-JuAR-sborochnyx-proizvodstv-belorusskoj-spetstexniki_i_652530.html

beneficial to both parties"¹⁹² . It should be explained here that the Black Business Council is an actively gaining authority of the South African business community, established at the initiative of the top political leadership of South Africa in 2012 for wider involvement of the indigenous population of the country in economic activity. Branches of the council are already represented in more than 20 national associations operating in various segments of the South African economy. Based on the mentioned memorandum, in 2014 the parties plan, in particular, to significantly intensify the participation of their companies in industrial forums and agricultural exhibitions held in the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of South Africa.

The results of 2013 eloquently show that the parties have chosen the right benchmarks in their bilateral cooperation. Last year, the trade turnover between Belarus and South Africa amounted to \$42.2 million, with Belarusian exports accounting for \$27.6 million. Belarusian supplies of dump trucks, large-size tires, parts and accessories for cars, electric motors and generators to the South African market helped to achieve such results. In planning to further expand Belarusian-South African cooperation to a strategic level, Minsk assumes that "the dynamic development of bilateral relations, fruitful economic cooperation, expansion of interaction in all areas on the principles of friendship and respect meet the interests of the two states and will contribute to further strengthening of the bilateral partnership"¹⁹³ . In the economic sphere, "industry and industrial cooperation; agriculture (the whole range of issues related to it); energy (construction of new and modernization of old energy capacities); infrastructure development (roads,

¹⁹² Markovich, E. BelCCI and the Council of Black Entrepreneurs signed a memorandum of cooperation / E. Markovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/economics/BelTTP-i-Sovet-chernokozhix-predprinimatelej-podpisali-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve_i_652573.html

¹⁹³ Alexander Lukashenko congratulated President of the Republic of South Africa Jacob Zuma on the national holiday - Freedom Day [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-pozdravil-prezidenta-juzhno-afrikanskoj-respubliki-dzhejkoba-zumu-s-natsionalnym-8587/

bridges, ports, housing, social and industrial construction); mining; transport (especially railroads)"¹⁹⁴ are of particular importance for the Belarusian side in terms of strategic planning for the near and medium term.

It seems that given these promising trends in the relations between Belarus and South Africa, it is time for the media of the two countries to systematically cover the entire thematic spectrum of Belarusian-South African partnership ties. In this regard, it makes sense for Belarusian international journalists to turn to the experience of their Russian colleagues. The fact is that in March 2013, the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Africa adopted a joint declaration establishing a comprehensive strategic partnership, which includes mutual political commitments and a wide range of scientific, technical and economic cooperation. And in this regard, according to authoritative Russian researchers, "the development of comprehensive ties between our countries is impossible without deepening knowledge about each other, without establishing mutual information"¹⁹⁵. We should assume that the organization of media and information ties will become the next stage of intensification of bilateral interaction between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of South Africa, systematically developing, as we have already seen, from simple trade to relations of priority and strategic partnership.

¹⁹⁴ Trade and economic cooperation with South Africa and other countries of Southern Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/trade_economic/

¹⁹⁵ Shubin, V. Why South Africa needs BRICS and why BRICS needs South Africa / V. Shubin // Security Index. - 2013. - № 2. - С. 67.

Forward-looking cooperation

In recent years, the African continent has demonstrated strong economic growth rates, consistently exceeding the global average. The current trends in Africa's development allow us to predict that by 2020 "the total GDP of African countries will reach \$2.6 trillion"¹⁹⁶. Under such conditions, the level of relations with the states of the "black continent" begins to be considered in the modern world as an indicator of the active foreign policy of a country and the breadth of its state interests. In this regard, it should be noted that "Belarus has been closely involved in the development of cooperation with African countries for about 10 years. <...> We will sell our goods there and create joint ventures for the production of relevant goods, we will invest in Africa"¹⁹⁷.

It is also a fact that so far Belarus is clearly not sufficiently aware of the African market, its needs and capacity. However, African countries are also insufficiently aware of the capabilities of potential Belarusian partners. In this regard, an obvious priority in the development of relations between the Republic of Belarus and the countries of the African continent is to strengthen effective information exchange on the opportunities and intentions of the parties to develop mutually beneficial partnership and direct contacts, first of all, between the business circles of the parties. At the same time it is useful to take into account the peculiarity that "in fact, in the modern international economy the competition begins not for the markets of individual countries, but for the markets of individual regional trade agreements. <...> The countries that are members of the RGS are seen as a platform for possible

¹⁹⁶ Bogdanov, M.L. Building up trade and economic cooperation - one of the main priorities of Russia in Africa / M.L. Bogdanov // [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: <http://www.rusemb-nigeria.ru/blog/embnews/urals-africa/>

¹⁹⁷ Alexander Lukashenko met with President of the Trade and Development Bank of Eastern and Southern Africa Admasu Tadesse [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-vstretilsja-s-prezidentom-bankatorgovli-i-razvitiija-stran-vostochnoj-i-juzhnoj-afriki-8431/

work in the market of the entire integration association"¹⁹⁸ . This conclusion is especially relevant for the African continent, where regional integration groupings are seen as "the key direction of economic development of countries freed from colonial dependence, a tool for reforming and integrating national economies into the world economy"¹⁹⁹ .

These groupings are particularly active in sub-Saharan Africa, with regional and subregional groupings such as the East African Community, West African Economic and Monetary Union, Indian Ocean Commission, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Economic Community of West African States, Economic Community of Central African States, Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa, Southern African Development Community, Southern African Customs Union²⁰⁰ . Among them, the most established, sustainable and economically dynamic is the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional grouping, which is "recognized as one of the most economically integrated communities in the world and the leading economic community of the 54 countries of the African Union"²⁰¹ .

The Southern African Development Community was established in 1992 and today unites Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe. Minsk considers SADC to be an association of states that are the most stable compared to countries in other regions of Africa, whose governments work in a coordinated manner on strategic planning and progressive realization of the development goals of the region as a whole. And if we take into account the presence here of significant territorial, natural

¹⁹⁸ Turban, G.V. Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus in the context of the development of regional trade agreements / G.V. Turban // *Belarusian Economic Journal*. - 2013. - № 3. - C. 57.

¹⁹⁹ Kostyunina, G.M. Integration groupings in Africa / G.M. Kostyunina // [Electronic resource]. - 2006. - URL: <http://www.mgimo.ru/files/31193/31193.pdf>

²⁰⁰ Shitov, V. Integration in Sub-Saharan Africa / V. Shitov // [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://mirec.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=48

²⁰¹ Kulkov, I.V. Industrial policy of African countries and international cooperation / I.V. Kulkov. - Moscow, International Scientific Bridge, 2012. - C. 4.

and human resources - about 260 million people, dynamically developing economic potential - the total GDP of SADC countries is 920 billion dollars, then there is every reason to believe that in the next 10-15 years SADC can become a serious economic bloc with a large and growing market and "will be able to compete with the global competition"²⁰² .

Within the Southern African Development Community, the following are being developed today: Free Economic Zone (since 2008), Single Customs Union (since 2011), Common Market (to be established by 2015), Monetary Union (to be established by 2016), Single Afro Currency (to be established by 2018). Here also "the structure of the real sector of the economy is taking shape on the basis of the industrial sector, ensuring reindustrialization of the economy through modernization of the existing industry and construction of new industrial capacities on the basis of innovative projects using the world's modern technologies and scientific and technological achievements"²⁰³ . In other words, SADC member states share the same priorities of national development due to the urgent need to create fully functioning basic sectors of the economy, which, in turn, would contribute to solving such acute social problems as poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. Of course, all these factors should be taken into account by Belarus when building its line of interaction with this regional integration structure of Southern Africa.

It was announced in Minsk back in 2002 that the Republic of Belarus was extremely interested in cooperation with SADC. At that time, the head of the Belarusian state emphasized the closeness of the positions of Belarus and the states of this region in many areas of foreign and domestic policy, as well as the fact that SADC is "a large market, so Belarus is set for long-term cooperation in the field of trade and economy. <...> Our country's interest is

²⁰² Trade and economic cooperation with South Africa and other countries of Southern Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://rsa.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/trade_economic/

²⁰³ Kulkov, I.V. Industrial policy of African countries and international cooperation / I.V. Kulkov. - Moscow, International Scientific Bridge, 2012. - C. 8.

explained, first of all, by the serious needs of the countries of this region for goods that form the basis of Belarusian exports - potash fertilizers, tractors, cars, road vehicles, machine tools, various agricultural machinery"²⁰⁴ . In addition, a serious potential for cooperation in education, science, technology, and military-technical areas was noted. At the same time, the Belarusian side suggested that the SADC member countries "establish a legal framework for bilateral relations through the conclusion of agreements on cooperation in trade and economic issues, avoidance of double taxation, protection of investments, and cooperation in education"²⁰⁵ .

Since that time, the potential of the bilateral relations of the Republic of Belarus with the countries of the Southern African Development Community has developed at different speeds. Thus, only in 2010, a decision was taken to establish diplomatic relations with the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**²⁰⁶ . With **Lesotho, the establishment of** diplomatic relations, the formation of a legal framework, the development of political dialog and trade and economic ties began to be discussed in 2013. The Prime Minister of this southern African country "expressed interest in cooperation with Belarus in the field of agriculture, in particular, in the supply of Belarusian agricultural machinery, in the areas of construction, development of mineral deposits, and implementation of infrastructure projects in Lesotho with the participation of Belarus"²⁰⁷ .

Belarus established diplomatic relations with **Mauritius on** September 26, 2003, and "the volume of bilateral trade turnover at the end of 2012

²⁰⁴ About the meeting of the President of Belarus A. Lukashenko with the ambassadors of Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa. Lukashenko with the ambassadors of Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa (report by the press service of the President) [Electronic resource]. - 2002. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/dd90cc4be287893e.html

²⁰⁵ Mikhail Khvostov met with the ambassadors of the countries of Southern Africa in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2002. - URL: <http://afn.by/news/i/18198>

²⁰⁶ Oreshko, A. Belarus has established diplomatic relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo / A. Oreshko // [Electronic resource]. - 2010. - URL: <http://news.21.by/politics/2010/11/16/195212.html>

²⁰⁷ About the trip of Ambassador of Belarus to South Africa A. Molchan to the Kingdom of Lesotho [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d6e92bf92867d362.html

amounted to \$2.29 million"²⁰⁸ , which indicates significant untapped resources for strengthening and developing trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. The Belarusian side announced its readiness "to intensify mutually beneficial cooperation with Madagascar"²⁰⁹ in January 2014. As for **Angola**, moving towards a significant intensification of bilateral ties with it in all areas of cooperation, including trade and economic cooperation, Belarus in 2014 emphasized the provision of opportunities for students of this country to study at its universities. It is expected that the relevant agencies of the parties will soon sign a document regulating interaction in this area. The intensification of the Belarusian-Angolan partnership in this area is based on Angola's confidence in the high quality of Belarusian education. For this reason, Angola chose our republic "as a partner in this area, as we know that you can get a good education in Belarus"²¹⁰ .

The Belarusian side is ready for a qualitative breakthrough in the development of economic cooperation and broad interaction in the field of industrial cooperation with **Zambia**, which Minsk views as a promising partner in Southern Africa. So far, the overall potential of Belarusian-Zambian interaction has not been fully utilized, therefore, "at the first stage, trade and education may become priority areas"²¹¹ , as well as the establishment of mutually beneficial contacts by representatives of business circles. Significant potential, which has already begun to be realized, exists in the relationship between Belarus and **Namibia**, where the parties intend to

²⁰⁸ About the meeting of the Ambassador of Belarus to Russia I. Petrishenko with the Ambassador of Mauritius to Russia [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ebf3b0f63cfb2b52.html

²⁰⁹ Alexander Lukashenko congratulated Eri Rajaonarimampianina [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-pozdravil-eri-radzhaonarimampianinu-7768/

²¹⁰ Angola counts on cooperation with Belarus in the field of education [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/society/Angola-rasschityvaet-na-sotrudnichestvo-s-Belarusju-v-oblasti-obrazovanija_i_665633.html

²¹¹ Alexander Lukashenko accepted credentials of foreign ambassadors [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-prinjal-veritelnye-gramoty-poslov-inostrannyx-gosudarstv-7610/

"intensify the creation of a legal framework between the two states, as well as the formation of institutional foundations for Belarusian-Namibian cooperation in areas of mutual interest"²¹². In 2014, the parties plan to expand bilateral cooperation not only in education and health care, but also "in industrial cooperation, agriculture, supplies of Belarusian complex technical products, participation of the Belarusian side in projects for the development of rural areas of Namibia"²¹³.

Joint projects in agriculture, industrial cooperation, exploration and extraction of minerals can be very mutually beneficial in Belarus's cooperation with **Zimbabwe**, which established diplomatic relations with the country back in 1992. This was discussed during the visit to Minsk in April 2011 of the vice-president of this South African country D. Nkomo, who called the meetings held on the Belarusian soil an opportunity for Zimbabwe to "open a new page in relations with Belarus"²¹⁴. Indeed, the Belarusian side proposed to "consider not just commodity cooperation with Zimbabwe, such as the sale of agricultural machinery, cars, fertilizers, but also to address issues of joint production"²¹⁵. Especially since this South African country has certain experience and serious potential in the mining industry, and our country produces equipment for this industry. Agriculture may also become a priority area of partnership, as 80 percent of Zimbabwe's population is engaged in agriculture and there is a strong interest in purchasing Belarusian machinery for use in this sector. So far, the trade turnover between the two countries remains low: at the end of 2010 it amounted to only \$2.7 million

²¹² On the presentation of credentials to the President of Namibia [Electronic resource]. - 2012. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d8a7189889a0e8ec.html

²¹³ . About the trip of the Ambassador of Belarus to South Africa A. Molchan to Namibia [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ecd7728176e5b0ea.html

²¹⁴ President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko met with Vice President of Zimbabwe John Nkomo [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/9-aprelja-aleksandr-lukashenko-vstretilsja-s-vitse-prezidentom-respubliki-zimbabwe-dzhonom-nkomo-5272/

²¹⁵ M. Myasnikovich praises the potential of cooperation between Belarus and Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/3709>

with Belarusian exports accounting for \$0.1 million. Nevertheless, Minsk is confident that the traditionally friendly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries will continue to be successfully strengthened in all areas, and "by joint efforts we will be able to realize the significant potential of Belarusian-Zimbabwean interaction for the benefit of the citizens of our countries."²¹⁶ .

Belarus's relations with **Mozambique** are also characterized by significant unrealized potential for bilateral cooperation. A noteworthy fact: in May 2013, the president of this South African country A. Guebuza noted his "interest in establishing close cooperation with Belarus, especially in such areas as agriculture, industrial cooperation, implementation of joint infrastructure projects, as well as rural development"²¹⁷ . Here it should be clarified that the modern economy of Mozambique is characterized by such trends as reduction of inflation, stabilization of the exchange rate, privatization of state enterprises, reduction of trade barriers. ²¹⁸Among the clear advantages of the country, compared to other states of the Southern African Development Community, are also "great potential for energy development (mainly due to hydro resources, coal, natural gas and biomass); heavy sands (containing ilmenite, zirconium, rutile, titanium); wildlife, including national parks and safari parks (a base for the development of tourism business); developed transport infrastructure; availability of conditions for successful development of agriculture (water resources, the possibility of cultivation of a variety of agricultural crops); a wide range of

²¹⁶ Alexander Lukashenko congratulated President of the Republic of Zimbabwe Robert Gabriel Mugabe on the national holiday - Independence Day [Electronic resource]. - 2012. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-pozdravil-prezidenta-respubliki-zimbabve-roberta-gabrielja-mugabe-s-natsionalnym-8520/

²¹⁷ On the presentation of credentials [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/a1ade14fe7fa4fbb.html

²¹⁸ Rosario, M.K.. Modern economy of the Republic of Mozambique and the peculiarities of its development / M.C. Rosario. Rozario // [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: <http://www.dissercat.com/content/sovremennaya-ekonomika-respubliki-mozambik-i-osobennosti-ee-razvitiya>

natural resources (water resources, the possibility of cultivation of a variety of agricultural products); a wide range of natural resources (water resources, the possibility of cultivation of a variety of agricultural crops); a wide range of natural resources (water resources, the possibility of cultivation of a variety of agricultural crops). However, Mozambique's agriculture is characterized by such problems as dependence on climatic conditions, low level of mechanization, underdeveloped irrigation, lack of financial resources. But even in these conditions, according to the Mozambican leader, "our traditional sector - agriculture, here productivity is increasing. This is already an important step, it dictates the need to develop the agro-industry, as well as the necessary infrastructure"²¹⁹ .

In other words, in Mozambique, where almost a quarter of the gross domestic product is generated by agricultural production, the government's goal is to move from small-scale farming to large-scale commercial agriculture. And for this purpose the country needs trained personnel and new technologies. The need for them dictates the necessity to intensify Belarusian-Mozambican ties both in this and other areas of bilateral cooperation. And the facts are as follows. Back in October 2012, a joint venture BelAfrica LLC was registered in Mozambique, co-founded by AfriRent and Promagroleasing, and the portfolio of orders already amounts to \$30 million. In May 2013, a permanent exhibition and sale of Belarusian machinery and equipment was opened in Maputo, the capital of this southern African country. At the same time, Prime Minister of Mozambique A. Vakina "expressed the interest of the Mozambican side in the establishment of joint assembly plants for Belarusian machinery"²²⁰ . In 2013, the trade turnover between the two countries increased 3.4 times, exceeding \$9 million. This was due to a sharp increase in

²¹⁹ Gebuza, A. EU support is not a magic wand / A. Gebuza // [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <http://ru.euronews.com/2014/04/22/president-guebuza-of-mozambique-the-eu-has-no-magic-solution-for-africa/>

²²⁰ On the visit of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Rybakoŭ to Mozambique [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d76597adcc332b47.html

Belarusian exports of potash fertilizers, tractors and tractor-tractors, road-building machinery and mechanisms for ground works. And, according to Minsk, these figures can be increased tenfold, as in the future it can be not only about supplying agricultural, road-building, and municipal machinery, but also about organizing its assembly: "We consider assembly production not only as the construction of factories to meet the needs of Mozambique, but also as a platform for the subsequent supply of machinery to the states of Southern and Central Africa"²²¹ .

In April 2014, a high-level delegation from Mozambique, headed by the country's Foreign Minister O. Baloy, visited Minsk for the first time to search for new forms and methods of Belarusian-Mozambican interaction in order to build up bilateral trade and economic cooperation. The Memorandum of Cooperation between the foreign ministries of the two countries signed during the visit laid the foundation for the creation of a legal framework for the relations between Belarus and Mozambique. It is also important that the parties agreed on the establishment in the near future of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, "which could meet regularly and discuss specific areas of our cooperation and concrete projects in various spheres"²²² . Another topical aspect that was brought to the attention of the parties during the visit of the Mozambican minister was "the prospects for cooperation between Belarus, including as a member of the Customs Union, and the Southern African Development Community and the African Union"²²³ . The actions of the Belarusian side in this direction are very timely given the integration trends in the post-Soviet

²²¹ Vladimir Semashko met with the delegation of Mozambique [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/5518>

²²² Materials of the approach to the press of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus Vladimir Makei following the meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Mozambique Oldemiro Baloy (April 15, 2014, Minsk) [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b09e5c8363e4d00c.html

²²³ About the meeting of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique O. Baloi [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/cc826f99218f1db9.html

space. All the more so because Russian companies in Mozambique are currently showing interest in "joint projects in a number of areas, including oil and gas exploration, development of mineral resources, as well as in agriculture, transportation, infrastructure, telecommunications"²²⁴ . That is why Minsk expresses its interest in "further expansion of political dialog with Mozambique, as well as intensification of cooperation in trade and economic sphere"²²⁵ , as they see in it a significant potential for mutually beneficial partnership in various areas, primarily in agricultural and industrial production, education.

Returning to the topic of Belarus's interaction with the countries of the Southern African Development Community as a whole, it should be noted that the main goal of SADC is the liberalization of trade relations between member countries. Currently, the community has significantly reduced customs duties and made significant progress in eliminating non-tariff restrictions in mutual trade relations. Therefore, the most important factor in the effective promotion of Belarusian interests in Southern Africa is the opening of commercial representative offices of major Belarusian enterprises in the countries of the region, investment in the creation of dealer and service networks, advertising and other types of media and information support for foreign economic activities, including international journalism.

²²⁴ Speech and answers of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergey Lavrov to the questions of the media during the joint press conference on the results of negotiations with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mozambique O. Baloi, Maputo, February 12, 2013 [Electronic resource]. - 2013. – URL: <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-rafr.nsf/89414576079db559432569d8002421fc/c32577ca001743fd44257b110022bc3f!OpenDocument>

²²⁵ Alexander Lukashenko congratulated President of Mozambique Armando Emilio Guebuza on Independence Day [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-pozdravil-prezidenta-mozambika-armandu-emiliu-gebuzu-6360/

The search for new partners continues

The intensification of interaction with African countries is one of the important components of the modern Belarusian foreign policy. Thus, to date, the Republic of Belarus has established diplomatic relations with 48 out of 54 states of this continent, including: in 2012 - with the Republic of Niger and the Central African Republic, in 2013 - with the Republic of South Sudan and the Republic of Djibouti. And there are Belarusian diplomatic missions in four African countries - in Egypt, Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Republic of South Africa. As for prospects, "Belarus plans to strengthen and expand the boundaries of foreign economic cooperation with allies and partners in Africa"²²⁶.

West Africa - the largest subregion of the "black" continent south of the Sahara, both in terms of population - more than 280 million people, and the number of countries - 16: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

West Africa is known to be highly controversial. On the one hand, the sub-region "accounts for 80% of the world's reserves of chromite, 76% of phosphate, 60% of manganese and cobalt, about 50% of bauxite, 40% of diamonds, and 37% of gold"²²⁷. On the other hand, "reducing the demand for stolen oil, curbing the supply of low-quality medicines, curtailing the processing of illicit goods in free trade zones, regulating the market for used electronic equipment, regularizing the status of seasonal labor, strengthening transparency in financial transfers - bringing order to these global commercial flows will greatly alleviate West Africa's suffering"²²⁸. In addition, countries

²²⁶ Transcript of the press conference of Vladimir Makei, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, held on September 9, 2014 in Abuja during his official visit to Nigeria [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ac49e96598bf8b43.html

²²⁷ Shitov, V. N. West Africa (economic review) / V. N. Shitov // [Electronic resource]. - 2008. - URL: <http://www.mgimo.ru/files/114369/114369.pdf>

²²⁸ Maertens, F. West Africa - a central hub for smuggling? / F. Maertens, A. F. de Andres // [Electronic resource]. - 2009. - URL:

in the subregion are plagued by piracy, drug trafficking, terrorism and other international criminal activities. Here "there is a low rate of youth employment. This plays into the hands of organized criminal networks"²²⁹ .

But it is also a fact that one of the most effective integration groupings in Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), established as early as 1975, operates in this subregion. The objectives of the organization are: to promote cooperation and integration in economic, social and cultural activities to eventually create an economic and monetary union through the full integration of the national economies of the member states of the community; to improve the standard of living of the population of the member states; to maintain and strengthen economic stability, good-neighborly relations between the member states; to contribute to the progress and development of the African continent. Thanks largely to ECOWAS, "the average annual growth of economic activity in West African countries amounted to 5.3% in 2014 and 4.8% in 2013. The Economic Community plans to increase these figures, making West Africa the most dynamic business community with an expected average growth rate of 6.3%"²³⁰ .

In other words, ECOWAS activities are an important link in the pan-African integration processes, where in the future they set the task of creating on its basis "a kind of federation of West African states with the introduction of a unified passport"²³¹ . A number of joint programs are being implemented here, including liberalization of intra-zonal trade with the introduction of

http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2009/Organized_Crime/Transnational_Trafficking_West_Africa/RU/index.htm

²²⁹ West Africa prepares for a new electoral season amid social instability [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/russian/archives/169999/#_VNkc4CzQPUc

²³⁰ Kasyanova, L. 15 African countries will introduce biometric passports in a year / L. Kasyanova // [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <http://www.cnews.ru/news/top/index.shtml?2014/12/18/591032>

²³¹ Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) [Electronic resource]. - 2009. - URL: <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-rafr.nsf/0f0b8bac14338411432569d8002c13c4/b14d293bfb4b29b443256a240034e5d8!OpenDocument>

unified tariff rates, measures are being taken to develop agriculture, industry, cross-border transport and energy infrastructure, and promising projects for laying new railway lines are being worked out.

However, for the sake of objectivity, it should be noted that in the 40 years of its existence, ECOWAS has not been able to fully implement its plans. Difficulties with their implementation are related to the different level of development of the states, the homogeneity of national economic structures, different approaches to the use of power and market levers to solve economic and financial problems. Nevertheless, the post-Soviet republics believe that the voluminous domestic market and the availability of fossil resources in West African countries "create an attraction for the CIS member states to develop trade and economic ties"²³².

All this gives grounds for the Belarusian side to see West African countries as potential partners for cooperation in such areas as: agriculture, machine building, petrochemical, food and light industry; export of Belarusian quarry and road-building machinery; launch of assembly lines for the production of industrial goods; export of agricultural machinery on the basis of leasing; military cooperation; public transportation; regional cooperation and cooperation between trade and industry organizations; and cooperation between the two countries in the field of trade and industry. It is encouraging for the Belarusian side in this regard that in working contacts the ECOWAS leadership "shows interest in expanding cooperation with the countries of Eastern Europe, expresses support for the participation of Eastern European companies in the implementation of economic projects in the subregion"²³³.

Speaking about the system of priorities of bilateral cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and West African countries, perhaps the main

²³² The main integration associations of the world: goals and prospects of development (informational and analytical note). - M., 2014. - C. 28.

²³³ Makarevich, S.S. The role of ECOWAS in the regional integration of West African countries / S.S. Makarevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/print/international_agenda/b1173e797c7c9e5b.html

attention of official Minsk is focused today on **Nigeria**, the largest country in the subregion, which is the leading African oil exporter and which the Belarusian side considers a pillar "on the huge African continent, where we decided to work very seriously"²³⁴. The main objectives of the foreign policy of this African state include security, unity of the continent's countries and economic integration as a means of accelerated development in the face of the challenges dictated by globalization. In doing so, "Nigeria is committed to diversifying its relations with the outside world. At the present stage, its foreign policy is driven primarily by pragmatic considerations. The country's foreign policy is gaining weight in "economic diplomacy". <...> The aspiration to play the role of Africa's leader remains a priority of Nigerian foreign policy"²³⁵.

Taking into account these factors, the Belarusian side is building mutually beneficial cooperation with Nigeria in various areas, drawing attention to "the importance of developing the legal framework and the need to intensify contacts between both government institutions and business circles of the two countries"²³⁶. The Belarusian diplomatic mission was opened in the Nigerian capital Abuja in 2011 for this purpose. Considering this country, with which diplomatic relations were established back in August 1992, as a future base for the development of Belarus's presence in West Africa, Minsk seeks to develop cooperation in a very wide range of areas, realizing that hundreds of large British, French, German, and American companies are already operating here. Nevertheless, Belarusian business is

²³⁴ Alexander Lukashenko accepted credentials of foreign ambassadors [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-prinjal-veritelnye-gramoty-poslov-zarubezhnyx-gosudarstv-5078/

²³⁵ Chikerenwa, A.S. Features of the political process and foreign policy of Nigeria in the conditions of globalization / A.S. Chikerenwa // [Electronic resource]. - 2008. - URL: <http://www.dissercat.com/content/osobennosti-politicheskogo-protssesa-i-vneshnyaya-politika-nigerii-v-usloviyakh-globalizatsi>

²³⁶ On the presentation of credentials to the President of Nigeria [Electronic resource]. - 2012. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b7606bad0279cb93.html

tasked with finding its own niches in this promising market. And, as the practice of recent years shows, there are opportunities for this.

In 2012, Belarusian exports to Nigeria totaled \$17.5 million. At the same time, its nomenclature expanded and the volume of supplies of complex technical products increased. Nitrogen and potash fertilizers, various types of printing and metallurgical products, trucks and special-purpose vehicles, buses, trailers and semi-trailers, and whey. The Belarusian Trade House, established in mid-2014 in Lagos on the basis of Aulik Naijiriya Ltd, which is the official representative in Nigeria of such Belarusian companies as Minsk Tractor Plant, Belagromash, Amkodor, Keramin and Atlant, is aimed at expanding Belarusian exports: "There is currently an exposition of MTZ tractors, mounted and trailed agricultural equipment, and other Belarusian products within the Belarusian Trade House"²³⁷

It is expected that the next step in the development of Belarusian-Nigerian interaction will be the intensification of bilateral production cooperation. Certain steps in this direction have already been made. As far as the oil industry is concerned, in December 2011, a memorandum of cooperation was signed by Belorusneft Production Association and New Fields Oil and Gas Services Limited, a Nigerian company. This document "considers the development of residual recoverable oil reserves by Belarusian specialists, provision of service and scientific consulting services for field development, provision of domestic technologies for enhanced oil recovery" as promising areas of cooperation²³⁸ .

But perhaps the most promising is the establishment of joint production of Belarusian tractors in Nigeria. The fact is that in this West African country, whose population, according to 2010 data, exceeded 150 million people,

²³⁷ On the opening of the Belarusian Trade House in Nigeria [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d0d7ad63385092ea.html

²³⁸ Belarus - Nigeria: a new direction of business interests [Electronic resource]. - 2012. - URL: http://export.by/resources/izdaniya_i_publicacii/belarus_%E2%80%94_nigeriya_novoe_napravleni_e_biznes_inte.html

agriculture is not characterized by high efficiency. Food here is produced mainly in small farms, the vast majority of which do not have modern technologies and equipment. That is why back in 2012, a project was initiated to set up an assembly plant for Belarusian tractor machinery in Nigeria with an initial capacity of up to 1,000 units per year. It is expected that "the products of the assembly plant, as well as the supplied finished machinery will be sold not only in the domestic market of Nigeria, but also in the agricultural markets of neighboring countries - Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali"²³⁹ . Belarusian producers of food products, especially dairy products, also have an opportunity to gain a foothold in the Nigerian market. Back in 2009, Bellakt sent prototypes of dry dairy products to Nigeria.

Another real area of Belarusian-Nigerian interaction is education, where cooperation has a half-century history. "Since 1965, Nigerian specialists have been trained in Belarus in the following specialties: mechanical engineering, automotive and tractor industry, architecture, electric power engineering, civil engineering, metalworking, energy construction, robotics"²⁴⁰ . In 2010/2011 academic year, 94 Nigerian citizens studied in Belarusian universities, while in 2011/2012 - 130 Nigerian students. And "today there are about a thousand Nigerian citizens in Belarus, and many of them study in our universities"²⁴¹ .

In September 2014, Belarusian Foreign Minister V. Makiej paid his first visit to Nigeria in the history of bilateral relations, during which an agreement was reached to further develop interaction between the two countries in all areas "in order to bring Belarusian-Nigerian cooperation to the

²³⁹ On trade and economic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Federal Republic of Nigeria [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://nigeria.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/trade_economic/

²⁴⁰ Science and education [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://nigeria.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/scientific/

²⁴¹ Transcript of the press conference of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, Vladimir Makei, held on September 9, 2014 in Abuja during his official visit to Nigeria [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ae49e96598bf8b43.html

level of strategic partnership"²⁴² . Such a goal obliges the parties to a lot. In this case, we are talking not only about the establishment of assembly plants for Belarusian tractor, agricultural and automotive machinery in Nigeria, but also about the prospects for investment cooperation, where practical scientific developments in chemistry, information and laser technologies, genetic engineering, livestock breeding, production of equipment of increased reliability and durability, powder metallurgy, and the creation of joint ventures that could produce pharmaceuticals are of particular interest. It is no less important and promising to intensify today the interaction with Nigeria in the spheres of tourism and culture, strengthening inter-parliamentary, inter-municipal and inter-regional ties, which, as we know, only contribute to the development of open and friendly relations. And certain steps are already being taken in this regard.

Thus, the expansion of the Belarusian-Nigerian business partnership is facilitated by the Agreement on Cooperation between the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mining, and Agriculture, signed in September 2014, which provides for intensified work to prepare and conduct mutual visits of business circles, search for trade and economic partners, and exchange commercial offers. According to the Belarusian side, one of the serious problems hindering more active interaction between Belarus and Nigeria is the lack of both information and experience in bilateral cooperation. Undoubtedly, representatives of the international segment of the national Belarusian and Nigerian journalism should already play an important role in overcoming these obstacles. And in this regard, the proposal of the head of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry V. Makei, voiced by him in the Nigerian capital in September 2014, deserves the closest attention: "Perhaps we should

²⁴² On the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei to Nigeria [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c91194a71cfa9dd7.html

also organize an exchange of trips of journalists from both countries"²⁴³. It is believed that the practical implementation of this idea could launch Belarusian-Nigerian interaction in the media sphere, in particular, and give new impulses to bilateral cooperation between Belarus and Nigeria, in general.

Ghana is another country that is a member of the Economic Community of West African States, with which the Republic of Belarus plans to cooperate intensively and considers as a promising partner in the whole range of relations. In 2011, the Belarusian side declared its readiness "to make a qualitative breakthrough in the development of economic cooperation, broad interaction in the field of industrial cooperation and supplies of goods of social importance for Ghana"²⁴⁴.

It should be recalled that back in March 1957, Ghana became the first African country south of the Sahara to declare its independence from Great Britain. Today it is considered one of the most stable democracies of the "black" continent with a rapidly developing economic system. In 2013, the growth of gross domestic product here amounted to 7.4 percent. And the country's foreign policy is "focused on ensuring the most favorable external conditions for economic development, as well as maintaining and strengthening regional and subregional security"²⁴⁵.

With regard to the domestic economic policy of Ghana, which has significant reserves of gold, diamonds, bauxite, manganese, oil, gas, silver, timber, fish, the Government of Ghana pursues a policy of diversifying the use of available mineral and resources, seeking to supply the external market not with extracted raw materials or semi-finished products, but with finished

²⁴³ Transcript of the press conference of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, Vladimir Makei, held on September 9, 2014 in Abuja during his official visit to Nigeria [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ae49e96598bf8b43.html

²⁴⁴ April 4, Alexander Lukashenko accepted credentials of ambassadors of a number of foreign countries [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/4-aprelja-aleksandr-lukashenko-prinjal-veritelnye-gramoty-poslov-rjada-inostrannyx-gosudarstv-5277/

²⁴⁵ About Ghana [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <http://www.ghana.mid.ru/ghana.html>

products with a high share of added value. Thus, in February 2011, the leadership of Ghana declared its interest in creating a developed bauxite industry in order to extract more value from the natural resources of the state. At the same time, "Belarusian specialists, design institutes, and engineering companies could also take part in the implementation of these plans. In addition, Belarusian techniques and technologies, materials and equipment could be in demand in Ghana's mining industry"²⁴⁶ .

Belarus and Ghana established diplomatic relations in June 1992. For many years, the volume of their mutual trade did not exceed \$10 million. The situation began to change in 2011, when the country became one of the leaders in Africa in terms of the number of Belarusian products purchased. The volume of exports from Belarus then exceeded 33 million dollars. In the same year, one of the largest agro-industrial fairs in the Economic Community of West Africa, AGRIFA-2011, held in Accra, the capital of Ghana, was attended by the Bobruisk Plant of Tractor Parts and Units, which demonstrated to numerous visitors of this business forum a small-sized tractor Belarus-321 and a semi-trailer PMT-30, chosen not by chance, but "taking into account the conditions of agricultural production in Ghana"²⁴⁷ .

The fact is that about 80 percent of all agricultural products in this country are produced by small family-type farms, which, in order to increase crop yields and labor productivity, need large quantities of mineral fertilizers to be applied to the soil and modern technologies for cultivating agricultural land, as well as productive machinery. It is clear that in such a situation the potential for cooperation between the two countries in the agro-industrial sphere can be simply huge. In this regard, the fact concerning the forum

²⁴⁶ Ghana - a promising market for Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2012. - URL: http://export.by/resources/izdaniya_i_publicacii/gana_%E2%80%9494_perspektivnii_rinok_dlya_belarusi.html

²⁴⁷ Kulyagin, S. Bobruisk tractors went to conquer West Africa / S. Kulyagin // [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/economics/Bobrujskie-tractory-otpravilis-pokorjat-Zapadnuju-Afriku_i_576112.html

"AGRIFA-2011" is very characteristic, when "the tractor-exhibitor, which had traveled from the seaport to the exhibition on its own, was sold even before arriving at the fair"²⁴⁸ .

Statistics state that in the following years the volume of mutual trade between Belarus and Ghana slightly decreased: "Trade turnover in 2013 amounted to \$ 35.2 million"²⁴⁹ . But in the same year, the parties intensified their efforts to intensify bilateral political dialog, increase trade and economic cooperation, and form a full-fledged legal framework. In May 2013, the Belarusian ambassador to Nigeria was accredited in Ghana. In this regard, Ghanaian President D. D. Mahama noted that the decision to accredit the first Belarusian ambassador to Ghana should "significantly intensify bilateral contacts in the political and trade-economic areas"²⁵⁰ .

In particular, the Ghanaian side has already expressed interest in attracting Belarusian industrial and agricultural technologies, machine-building products, and the experience of Belarusian specialists in the field of public utilities to the country's economy. Cooperation between the metropolitan regions of the two countries may also turn out to be interesting. Thus, Greater Accra expressed "interest in the participation of Belarusian enterprises in the implementation of joint projects in the field of agriculture, transport infrastructure, energy, household waste management and water treatment in Accra"²⁵¹ . All of these declared intentions of the parties suggest that in the near future the relations between Belarus and Ghana may see very

²⁴⁸ Ghana - a promising market for Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2012. - URL: http://export.by/resources/izdaniya_i_publicacii/gana_%E2%80%9494_perspektivnii_rinok_dlya_belarusi.html

²⁴⁹ Pivovar, E. Belarus intends to expand the range and volume of product supplies to Ghana / E. Pivovar // [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/economics/Belarus-namerena-rasshirit-nomenklaturu-i-objemy-postavok-produksii-v-Ganu_i_692719.html

²⁵⁰ On the presentation of credentials [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/de29f97cf47a5b0a.html

²⁵¹ About the meetings of Ambassador of Belarus V. Beskosty in Ghana [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d4830e79b1d82a1c.html

significant shifts in the expansion of mutually beneficial cooperation for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries.

Another country of the Economic Community of West Africa, where the first ambassador of Belarus was accredited in 2013, was the **Gambia**, whose leader Y. Jammeh expressed hope that the bilateral economic and political contacts would intensify. On this occasion, Jammeh expressed hope for the intensification of bilateral economic and political contacts, noting "the Gambia's interest in attracting Belarusian technologies and supplies of products, including agricultural, truck, bus, and road construction equipment."²⁵² .

This country, which gained independence from Great Britain in 1965, is one of the smallest on the African continent, with a population of less than two million. In foreign policy it adheres to the principle of non-alignment, as well as the development of friendship and cooperation with all world powers. Being agrarian, Gambia develops more production of vegetables and fruits, which together with peanuts play an important role in the country's exports. As for industry, it is represented by small and medium-sized enterprises in the processing of agricultural products, fish and seafood, peanut cleaning, production of canned meat and vegetables, and palm oil.

Having established diplomatic relations in 2002, Belarus and the Gambia came to a real intensification of contacts eight years later, when M. Tangar, the Gambian Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad, visited Minsk. Being at the very beginning of the development of relations, the parties tried to identify the areas of interaction that could be the most productive. They identified the development of the industrial base, agriculture, technical and educational potential of the Gambia, as well as cooperation in the development of natural resources of this country.

²⁵² On the presentation of credentials by Ambassador of Belarus V. Beskosty to President of Gambia Y. Jammeh [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/bc11522a6a70a4a3.html

At the same time, the Belarusian side declared its readiness "to work not only on simple trade, exports and imports, but also on projects that would entail the creation of assembly plants, technology transferring plants, training of labor force and engineers."²⁵³ .

Given the fact that the Gambia is particularly interested in the purchase of Belarusian tractors, Belarus also expressed its serious interest in training specialists for Gambian agriculture. It should be noted here that the foundation for the development of cooperation in education between the two states was laid half a century ago: in 1963, Belarus already trained Gambians, providing them with the opportunity to receive higher education.²⁵⁴ Shortly after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two states, the Ministry of Education of Belarus and the State Department of Education of the Gambia signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in March 2003, which envisaged the establishment and development of direct interaction between educational institutions, as well as "the admission of teachers and researchers from Belarus to work in educational institutions of the Gambia, the admission of students, postgraduates and interns from the Gambia to study in educational institutions of Belarus, mutual exchange of visits of universities and universities of the Gambia to the Gambia.

In 2014, the parties intensified efforts to form a legal framework, planning to prepare for signing the most important agreements - on trade and economic cooperation, on avoidance of double taxation, on cooperation in agriculture. Mutual trade has also moved forward: "The total volume of exports in 2013 to Gambia amounted to 1594.7 thousand dollars (a 35-fold

²⁵³ Materials of the approach to the press of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Martynov within the framework of the visit to the Republic of Belarus of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad of the Republic of Gambia Mamadou Tangar (August 26, 2010, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus) [Electronic resource]. - 2010. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/fc5e62c05b88a301.html/

²⁵⁴ Vanina, Y. Belarus and Gambia intend to intensify cooperation in education / Y. Vanina // [Electronic resource]. - 2010. - URL: http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/society/Belarus-i-Gambija-namereny-aktivizirovat-sotrudnichestvo-v-sfere-obrazovanija_i_522628.html

increase compared to 2012) due to the supply of hot-rolled bars of non-alloy steel"²⁵⁵ . Prospects for supplies of Belarusian tractor equipment for the needs of agriculture in Gambia have also started to emerge. In particular, the parties have already "worked out a step-by-step mechanism for further negotiations on this issue"²⁵⁶ , and Minsk Tractor Plant and Minsk Automobile Plant held presentations of their products in this West African country.

Noting the friendly nature of the existing Belarusian-Gambian ties, official Minsk is convinced that "the progressive development of dialogue and cooperation between Belarus and the Gambia will contribute to the realization of the significant potential of the bilateral relations and prosperity of the two countries"²⁵⁷ . And the beginning of this forward movement has already been laid.

Belarus established diplomatic relations with another member of the Economic Community of West Africa - the **Republic of Togo** - only on September 28, 2010, but three years later it accredited its ambassador to that country. President of Togo F. E. Gnassingbé welcomed this step of the Belarusian side, "expressing hope for the expansion of bilateral economic and political contacts"²⁵⁸ , as until then the opportunities for the presence of Belarusian producers-exporters in the Togolese market were practically not used. If in 2010 the volume of mutual trade came close to one and a half million dollars with the share of Belarusian exports amounting to 1.3 million dollars, in 2011 Belarusian-Togolese export-import operations were not

²⁵⁵ Bilateral cooperation in the political and socio-economic spheres [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <http://nigeria.mfa.gov.by/ru/accreditation/10/>

²⁵⁶ About the meeting of the Belarusian delegation with the Head of the Presidential Administration of the Gambia [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/a64c907d273b2532.html

²⁵⁷ Alexander Lukashenko congratulated President of the Republic of Gambia Yaya Jammeh on Independence Day [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-pozdravil-prezidenta-respubliki-gambija-jajja-dzhamme-s-dnem-nezavisimosti-8042/

²⁵⁸ On the presentation of credentials to the President of Togo by Ambassador of Belarus V. Beskosty [Electronic resource]. - 3013. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ddc519dec4b5ec87.html

carried out at all. The year 2012 was not very pleasant either, when the trade turnover between Belarus and Togo amounted to 63.8 thousand dollars. And this is despite the fact that this West African country has an interesting potential for Belarus.

This state is a narrow strip of ocean coastline 600 kilometers deep into the African continent. And its main city - Lomé - is the only border capital in the world: only a few hundred meters separates the palace of the president of Togo from the border with Ghana. The basis of economic activity of the country is agriculture, transshipment of sea cargoes and re-export of goods from Europe and Asia to neighboring African countries. Thus, agriculture employs two thirds of the population and accounts for approximately 46 percent of the gross domestic product. The transshipment of maritime cargo takes place here in the large deep-water port of Lomé, built as early as 1984 with German assistance. Togo's main industrial component is the phosphate industry, which even has a special port, Klemé, for its exports.

In addition, dolomite, marble, table salt, chromium, bauxite, manganese and iron ore are mined here. There are large reserves of limestone, small deposits of oil and natural gas. But the development of the Togolese mining industry is constrained by the problem of insufficient exploration of mineral resources available on the territory of the country. Due to the lack of full-fledged exploration of deposits of natural resources it is problematic to identify the areas of their greatest concentration here. The low level of technical equipment, including the lack of highly productive machinery, technologies and equipment, as well as the lack of experience in carrying out such works and low qualification of specialists seriously affect the solution of

this issue. That is why "Belarusian producers and organizations can provide substantial assistance in solving these problems"²⁵⁹ .

A number of facts show that, in order to realize the existing economic potential, the Togolese leadership, interested in expanding bilateral contacts with foreign partners, is taking concrete steps to meet the level of a regional commercial and transport hub in ECOWAS. In particular, to improve the business climate and further reform the economy, the country adopted a new Investment Act in January 2012. In the same year, "in order to reduce the level of state bureaucracy, a three-year comprehensive program "Electronic Government" was launched"²⁶⁰ . And the country's government is also implementing several state programs to create jobs for young people.

The intensification of the bilateral Belarusian-Togolese economic and political dialog led to the fact that the trade turnover between the countries exceeded \$3.2 million in the first three quarters of 2013, with the volume of exports from Belarus exceeding \$3.1 million. Discussing the possibility of organizing supplies of Belarusian tractor, automotive and road-building machinery to Togo, as well as the establishment of assembly plants with Belarusian partners, the Togolese side stressed "the need to establish closer ties between Belarus and Togo in the field of agriculture, as well as to organize mutual visits of delegations of the ministries of agriculture and interested Togolese and Belarusian companies"²⁶¹ . So, there are reasons to believe that in the coming years the relations between Minsk and Lomé will make effective progress in terms of expanding and deepening the mutually beneficial partnership.

²⁵⁹ Belarus - Togolese Republic: entering West Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://export.by/resources/izdaniya_i_publicacii/belarus_%E2%80%9494_togolezskaya_respublika_v_hozhdenie_v_z.html

²⁶⁰ Socio-economic situation [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: <http://nigeria.mfa.gov.by/ru/accreditation/25/>

²⁶¹ About the meetings of the Ambassador of Belarus to Togo V Beskosty [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c9d2d6d3a9241426.html

The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, a country with a population of over 20 million and an economy that is considered to be quite developed compared to most other West African countries, has been identified as another anchor point for geographical diversification of Belarusian exports in Africa. In particular, Cote d'Ivoire ranks first in the world in cocoa bean harvesting and third - after Brazil and Colombia - in coffee harvesting, and is also Africa's largest exporter of palm oil and natural rubber.

The Republic of Belarus established diplomatic relations with this country in September 1998. Minsk believes that "the two states have significant prospects for expanding mutually beneficial bilateral relations"²⁶². Indeed, Belarusian fertilizers, tractors and tractor-tractors are in steady demand in this West African country. While in 2009 the mutual trade turnover between the two countries amounted to \$10.9 million, in 2011 the supplies of nitrogen fertilizers to Cote d'Ivoire from Grodno Azot alone amounted to \$11.9 million. In 2012, the volume of bilateral trade grew to \$46.9 million, and in 2013 Belarusian exports amounted to \$20.5 million.

And this in a situation when, after the November 2010 presidential elections in this West African country, an acute political crisis broke out, which was accompanied by an armed confrontation between the supporters of former President L. Gbagbo and A. Ouattara, whose victory in the elections was recognized by the international community. In these conditions, Côte d'Ivoire's foreign policy was predetermined by "the need to resolve the political crisis, to solve the economic problems associated with the protracted civil confrontation, and to seek external financial assistance"²⁶³. That is why the country began to liberalize trade and banking activities.

²⁶² Alexander Lukashenko is confident that Belarus and Côte d'Ivoire have significant prospects for expanding relations [Electronic resource]. - 2011. - URL: <http://www.open.by/politics/59016>

²⁶³ Socio-economic situation [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <http://nigeria.mfa.gov.by/ru/accreditation/18/>

Plans to develop the industrial sector and, consequently, increase gross domestic product are associated with the development of mineral deposits and increasing their extraction, which, in turn, increases demand for machinery and equipment designed for this purpose, as well as stimulates the continuation of geological exploration, where Belarusian specialists, organizations, and enterprises can be involved in these projects. If we also take into account that agriculture in this country is in great need of modern machinery and equipment, and that local businesses are interested in purchasing them to increase productivity and production, then an option for long-term cooperation between Belarus and Côte d'Ivoire "could be the organization of assembly production of machinery in this country"²⁶⁴.

It is also important that the government of Côte d'Ivoire has decided to create a modern transportation infrastructure in the country by 2020, so close cooperation with Belarus in this area would allow Belarusian manufacturers of agricultural machinery, trucks, and buses not only to gain a foothold in the local market, but also to enter the markets of neighboring West African countries. That is why one of the most pressing issues in terms of boosting trade and economic cooperation between Minsk and Yamoussoukro today is the preparation and signing of a number of bilateral agreements creating framework conditions for such effective interaction.

The Republic of Belarus also considers such a West African state as the Republic of **Mali** as a starting point for expanding the presence of Belarusian producers in the African market and intensifying contacts at all levels. Diplomatic relations with the Republic of Mali were established in November 1993, but the legal framework is still in the process of formation. Nevertheless, the Belarusian side is confident that "friendly relations between

²⁶⁴ Belarus - Côte d'Ivoire: the actual direction of export diversification [Electronic resource]. - 2012. - URL: http://export.by/resources/izdaniya_i_publicacii/belarus_%E2%80%94_kot_d%E2%80%99ivuar_a_ktualnoe_napравlenie_di.html

our countries will fruitfully develop and bilateral cooperation will gradually expand in all areas"²⁶⁵ .

The potential for cooperation with Mali can be considered in a number of areas. First, this country is the third largest gold producer in Africa, so the development of gold deposits is of paramount importance, as it brings 20 percent of gross domestic product and provides 75 percent of the state's foreign exchange earnings. The richest deposits of uranium are also found here: "The predicted uranium resources in Mali are estimated at 100 thousand tons"²⁶⁶ . At the same time, the Malian authorities expect further development of gold and mineral deposits, which opens up opportunities for "supplying Belarusian quarry equipment here and the development of this part of the African continent by the BelAZ company"²⁶⁷ . And for Belarusian geological explorers it may be of particular interest that international experts have recognized the possibility of discovering new reserves of gold, uranium ores, oil and natural gas in Mali, and therefore additional research will be needed to assess such prospects and develop already discovered deposits. That is why the country's leadership is counting on the assistance of its foreign partners and specialists in this matter.

Secondly, Mali's economy is based on agriculture, which employs about 80 percent of the country's able-bodied population, totaling about 15 million people. It is clear that in order to provide them with food, it is necessary to constantly increase the returns from agricultural production and improve labor productivity. The facts show that Belarusian agricultural machinery manufacturers are making their contribution to this task.

²⁶⁵ Alexander Lukashenko congratulated President of the Republic of Mali Ibrahim Baboukar Keita [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/aleksandr-lukashenko-pozdravil-prezidenta-respubliki-mali-ibragima-bubakara-kejtu-9843/

²⁶⁶ Filippov, V.R. Mali: Battle for Uranium // V.R. Filippov // [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: <http://mir-politika.ru/4392-mali-bitva-za-uran.html>

²⁶⁷ Mali: Belarusian interests in West Africa [Electronic resource]. - 2013. - URL: http://export.by/resources/izdaniya_i_publicacii/mali_belorusskie_interesi_v_zapadnoi_afrike_.html

Agricultural machinery and potash fertilizers are the main commodity items in the nomenclature of Belarusian exports to this country, which exceeded \$16 million in 2012.

Of course, the domestic political crisis that broke out here in 2012 could not but affect the state of bilateral Belarusian-Mali relations. It came to the point where a United Nations peacekeeping contingent was introduced into the country in April 2013. The worsening economic situation has also led to a decline in exports from Belarus by almost five million dollars. However, the Malian side is still interested in increasing supplies of Belarusian mineral fertilizers and various machinery. All the more so because political contradictions are gradually receding under the pressure of the growing capacity of the Malian market and the needs of its economy, which makes it possible to count on the promotion and development of new niches for Belarusian goods, including products of mechanical engineering, electronic and petrochemical industries, pharmaceuticals, and consumer goods. There are already examples of Belarusian exporters developing such niches. For example, in 2010, products of the Belarusian Metallurgical Plant entered the Malian market. In 2011, supplies of Belarusian truck tractors and nitrogen fertilizers produced by Grodno Azot increased. The trend of expanding the presence of Belarusian products in the Mali market was also observed in the following years, which gives reason to hope for further strengthening of cooperation between the two countries in other areas as well. At least, Minsk and Bamako are ready for such a positive development of interaction.

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