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The Russia-Africa Summit, 23-24 October 2019

PROCEEDINGS REPORT

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In the run-up to the Russia-Africa Summit, set to take place from 23-24 October 2019, in Sochi, Russia, the Institute for Global Dialogue co-hosted a round table discussion with the Embassy of the Russian Federation to South Africa and the University of Pretoria Department of Historical and Heritage Studies. The round table discussion featured: H.E. Mr Ilya Rogachev, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to South Africa; Dr Philani Mthembu, Executive Director, Institute for Global Dialogue; Ms Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive, South African Institute of International Affairs; and Prof Thulasizwe Simpson, Associate Professor, Department of Historical and Heritage Studies, University of Pretoria. This report covers the presentations of the round table, as well as the key outcomes from the Russia-Africa summit.

This report is compiled by **Ms Arina Muresan**, Researcher at the IGD.

Introduction

The world is in constant flux, given the trend to renegotiate agreements and leverage current positions, it is an optimum time for both Africa and Russia to further explore their relationships. Russia and Africa draw from a history supportive of one another, however Russia's engagements in Africa have over the past two decades held a lower profile in comparison to other global powers. Although much criticism exists for a renewed-but-different scramble for Africa, Africa indeed is a point of geostrategic interest for the world and there are vast opportunities for mutual engagement on: energy and mineral exploration; resource securitization; technology, transport and other infrastructure development; and cooperation in peace and security. The Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) partnership has been one example of a strategic forum where Russia has been able to engage with African countries on a bi-lateral level through South Africa's regional outreach and focus on economic partnerships. While Russia's relationships with Africa have been more developed with North African countries, it is anticipated that the Russia-Africa Summit, to be held from 23-24 October 2019 in Sochi, will encourage a deeper understanding and cooperation with sub-Saharan African countries, which will dovetail with Russia's 2020 chairship of the BRICS partnership.

Keynote address

H.E. Ambassador Ilya Rogachev, Embassy of the Russian Federation to South Africa

Russia's re-emergence in Africa is based on a Russian vision of a **better world**. Africa is a strategic point for the world and there are opportunities for **mutual engagements** on economic and education cooperation, energy and mineral exploration, technology, transport, infrastructure development and cooperation in peace and security. Russia's **history** in support of Africans in ending colonial rule and liberation movements remains

of importance, however the collapse of the Soviet Union put the burgeoning partnership on hold. Since 2000, Russia's renewed efforts to reaffirm itself as a **global player and technological power** meant that there was some catching up to do with Africa because it did lose its intensity in cooperation. Russia has been criticised that it is struggling for influence in the continent, this highlights that the critics themselves still see world relations through a colonial lens. Rather, Africa's engagement with Russia is not a zero sum game and Africa shouldn't be considered merely as a place for extracting resources. Shared values of **sovereignty**, the **respect for law** and similar approaches to challenges and threats resonate with Africa. And so, Russia's bi-lateral efforts have been focused on how Russia and Africa can work together to achieve development goals in support of African solutions and sustainability. Some of which have included energy infrastructure partnerships with Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria and Zambia, which have also emphasised the development of technology. Other forms of cooperation have included contributing to two Ebola vaccines in the DRC, and 18 000 scholarships for African students which will be increased. The support for peace and security, particularly in the fight to end terrorism and support for silencing the guns in 2020 is also a point of pride for Russian foreign policy. Among others, South Africa will continue to be a strategic partner in Africa and club diplomacy arrangements such as BRICS.

The Russia-Africa Summit: Opportunities and Challenges in an Evolving Geopolitical Landscape

Dr. Philani Mthembu, Executive Director, Institute for Global Dialogue

With **shifting geopolitical dynamics**, it is important for African countries to find their own **agency** at a time that has witnessed increasing interest in the continent from external powers. While much attention has focused on the rationale behind Russia's enhanced engagement in Africa, it is equally important to understand the African interests in Russia; particularly why African stakeholders have sought to grow their political and economic relations with Moscow in a constantly changing geopolitical landscape. African countries and institutions should thus make maximum usage of the external interest and craft their own path in their engagements with Russia to ensure that the idea of mutual interests is demonstrated in the nature of the partnerships and their alignment to Africa's already stated priorities through Agenda 2063 and its twelve flagship projects.

As relations between Africa and Russia are revisited and enhanced, there are 4 key takeaways to understand as the first Russia-Africa Summit gets under way: 1) it is important to understand demographics and longer-term trends. The growth of an **African middle class** which have immense global opportunities to actively shape the role of the African continent and a proactive narrative. The summit is thus an affirmation of African agency and opportunity, but it is important to remember that all actors have a responsibility; 2) African summits are on the rise, and there is much international interest

in summitry diplomacy with Africa, however, Africa needs better **coordination** in how to pursue its interests; 3) **Agenda 2063** is a catalyst for projects. African stakeholders engaged in the Russia-Africa Summit will thus need to ensure that the Summit contributes to **Africa's own development priorities**. 4) Enhancing multi-track diplomacy will be important to deepening mutual relations. Track 2 (academia, business), and track 3 (civil society), diplomacy channels can be vastly expanded beyond the Summit.

Russia-Africa relations: Contributing to building a stronger African peace and security framework

Ms Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive, South African Institute of International Affairs

Among other trends in Russian-African engagements, Russia's impact in **peace and security**, the fight against **terrorism**, and the growing number of defence cooperation agreements has received immense attention. It is important to protect bilateral interests and Russia has engaged Africa at an intergovernmental level, engaging the AU Commission and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It has also kept an interest in conflicts such as **Libya**, Central African Republic (CAR) and Sudan to name a few. The situation in Libya has been complicated by too many actors, competing factions leveraging elements, and the export of Middle East geopolitical tussles into North Africa. However, it is crucial to give support to UN processes as the issues have become protracted over the last decade, which has also accentuated violent extremism. From these lessons, Russia is in a positive position to **broker peace in CAR**, taking from its experiences in the Middle East: 1) using the AU 2019 peace agreement as a framework and **building better frameworks**; 2) **coordinating with the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in tandem**; 3) pushing to **disarm groups**. While this in itself is a point of geopolitical competition, Russia and France have leverage in this situation; 4) continued **technical transfers** cooperation with the AU to improve peace and security capacity building; 5) African countries have not had broader positive experiences with private military or security companies. It is important to have discussion about this and explore how companies linked to Russia can improve these relations; and 6) the export of the Middle East conflict collides with local grievances and transnational elite interests fuel discontent. It is important to make use of Track 2 and 3 diplomacy in this regard to diffuse tensions.

The Russia-Africa partnership beyond 2019

Russia's re-emergence in Africa has focused on economic and education cooperation, energy and mineral exploration, technology, transport, infrastructure development and cooperation in peace and security. Russia's active role and contributions at the UNSC and bilateral level have made it an integral actor in peace and security efforts across the

world. Its role in the area of security also often opens up other forms of cooperation with respective partners. Some [outcomes of the Russia-Africa Summit](#) have committed parties to:

- 1) A mechanism for dialogue partnership that engages Russian Federation Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Chairpersons of the African Union on an annual basis;
- 2) Closer political cooperation, particularly among UN permanent missions and liaising UNSC members, improving on Russia's BRICS Africa Outreach Programme, and inter-parliamentary cooperation;
- 3) Security cooperation will be strengthened and more nuanced, notably on space security and the use of public platforms for nefarious outcomes, and placing special emphasis on Silencing the Guns by 2020 and post-conflict reconstruction;
- 4) Trade and economic cooperation efforts will be aimed at diversification, entrepreneurship and promoting energy security through reciprocity. As well as mutual support in global economic and financial governance reforms;
- 5) Legal cooperation on the basis of international law and UN principles and rules;
- 6) Scientific, technical, humanitarian, and information cooperation focusing on research and development, national health care systems, natural disaster, early warning mechanisms, professional training and people-to-people exchanges; and
- 7) Environmental protection cooperation that reiterates the commonly held positions, commitment to capacity building, and calls for the replenishment of the Green Climate Fund not placing additional debt burdens on African countries.

All eyes remain on Russia and its re-emerging status in Africa but African actors need to remember their agency in this partnership; and going forward, the Russia-Africa summit mechanism for dialogue partnership is an opportunity to exercise that. South Africa will take up this role as liaison in 2020, which dovetails with its Chairship of the African Union and its last year as a non-permanent representative on the UNSC, and also Russia's chairship of the BRICS. As a strategic partner, it is anticipated that South Africa will exemplify the potential for Russia-Africa cooperation and coordination.

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Conference in the Run-Up to the Russia-Africa Summit

Programme

Moderator: Prof. Thulasizwe Simpson, Associate Professor, Department of Historical and Heritage Studies,
University of Pretoria

17:30-18:00	Arrivals
18:00-18:30	Keynote address by H.E.Mr.Ilya Rogachev, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to South Africa
18:30-18:40	“The Russia-Africa Summit: Opportunities and Challenges in an Evolving Geopolitical Landscape” by Dr Philani Mthembu, Executive Director, Institute of Global Dialogue
18:40-18:50	“Russia-Africa relations: Contributing to building a stronger African peace and security framework” by Ms Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive, South African Institute of International Affairs
18:50-19:20	Q & A Session
19:20-20:00	Refreshments



SOCHI 2019

23-24 OCTOBER

About the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD)



The IGD is an independent foreign policy think tank dedicated to the analysis of and dialogue on the evolving international political and economic environment, and the role of Africa and South Africa. It advances a balanced, relevant and policy-oriented analysis, debate and documentation of South Africa's role in international relations and diplomacy.

The IGD strives for a prosperous and peaceful Africa in a progressive global order through cutting-edge policy research and analysis, catalytic dialogue and stakeholder interface on global dynamics that have an impact on South Africa and Africa.

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