

RUSSIAN-MOORISH RELATIONS: HISTORY AND MODERN*

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In 2014, Russian-Moorish diplomatic relations celebrate 50 years anniversary. They were established on the July 12, 1964 during the stay in Moscow of Moorish goodwill mission between the Soviet Union and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. In 1965 was held a mutual exchange of embassies. At the same time was concluded an agreement on the development of cooperation between these two countries.

The first decade of relations between our countries was developing quite rapidly: an intergovernmental agreement on trade was concluded in 1966; agreement in cultural and scientific cooperation in 1967; agreement on cooperation in the field of radio broadcasting in 1968; agreement on marine fisheries in 1973; air transport agreement in 1974; agreement on cooperation in the field of exploration in 1974. Mauritanian government invited soviet specialists to work in different sectors of economy, sent citizens of Mauritania to study in the USSR. The exchange of governmental delegations, including at the highest level, has been conducted. Permanent contacts were maintained between the Communist Party and the ruling in the 1961-1978 Mauritania's People Party¹.

During a drought in the 1968-1973 the Soviet Union provided assistance to the people of Mauritania in the form of food, medications and basic necessities².

In 1979, near the city of Nouadhibou. has been constructed a Scientific Research Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries with the assistance of the USSR. In 1980, Joint Soviet-Moorish fishing community was established³.

On December 29th, 1991 the government of Mauritania recognized the Russian Federation as a sovereign state. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the cooperation between Russian and Mauritania survived the period of stagnation due to the economic reasons. Despite this the relations between the countries were not interrupted: the capital of Mauritania Nouakchott was visited by parliamentary delegation of the RF in February 1993 and in August 1993 the President of Senate (upper house of parliament) of Mauritania Dieng Boubou Farba came to Moscow⁴.

A new stage of economic relations between two countries had already begun in the XXI century.

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1 The Islamic Republic of Mauritania. M., 1987, p. 60.

2 Kuuz A.A. Mauritania. - In the book: The recent history of the Arab countries in Africa. M., 1990, p. 430.

3 The Islamic Republic of Mauritania, p. 112.

4 www.mid.ru.

One of the successfully developed spheres of cooperation between Russia and Mauritania is the marine fisheries. With the financial assistance of Russian commercial banks, fish processing plant in Nouadhibou was built and commissioned in 2002. New agreement on cooperation in marine fisheries was signed in Moscow on May 12th, 2003. 20 Russian ships work in the exclusive economic zone of Mauritania. Sessions of the Russian-Moorish mixed Fisheries Commission were held in 2003, 2005, 2008, 2010 and 2013. "Russian fishermen have proven themselves: their methods of fishing are recognized by Mauritania as the most rational and environmentally friendly."⁵

The relations between business structures of our countries are also being developed. The Russian-Moorish commercial center has been functioning in Nouakchott since 2002. It provides consultancy services to Russian businessmen interested in cooperation with Mauritania. At its base, in 2004, a mixed Russian-Moorish company "Hydrofor", which provides water well drilling, has been established on its basis.

Russian doctors also work in Mauritania, as well as research staff of the Research Institute of Oceanography in Nouadhibou.

After the coup in Nouakchott on the 6th of August. 2008, Russia immediately advocated the prompt return of the situation in Mauritania to the constitutional framework, the stable, democratic and peaceful development of the country in the interests of all sectors of the Moorish society.

In April 2011, Mauritania was visited by delegation of OAO "Gazprom", in September - by representative of "Gazprombank". In June, the delegation of "Rosneft" was in the country, which was headed by the president of the company M.S. Gutsiriev. In 2011, "Rosneft" obtained a controlling stake in the international company "IPG" and started the search and extraction of oil in the IRM.

In February 2013, Nouakchott was visited by Russian delegation headed by the deputy director of the Russian Arab Business Council (RABC), Director General of "Arabia-EXPO" V.S. Lutsenko. As a result of the negotiations, Mauritania sent a large delegation of businessmen headed by Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce of Mauritania M. Ould Mahmoud to the 11th session of the RABC and 3rd international exhibition "Arabia-EXPO" (June, 2013) held in St. Petersburg. In the frames of these events was signed an agreement on cooperation between the Chamber of Commerce of Mauritania and RADS, Russian-Moorish business working group on cooperation was established.

In December 2013, the delegation of Russian businessmen visited Mauritania as a part of the trip to several countries of North Africa. During its stay in the country, the second meeting of Russian-Moorish working group on cooperation and a business forum with the participation of major Mauritanian businessmen were held. The delegation met with the ministers of trade, fisheries, rural development, held talks in the ministry of oil and other specialized agencies. A memorandum on cooperation between Nouadhibou and Lipetsk was signed (it was signed by the Moorish president of free economic zone Nouadhibou I. Sidiya and the President of Chamber of Commerce of Lipetsk Goltsov A.V.

In March 2014, in accordance with the plans of cooperation between the Chamber of Commerce of Mauritania and RABC and in the frames of Energetics week of Russia in North Africa Nouahchott was visited by a delegation of Russian companies: CJSC "NPO Aconite-2" (construction of fish meal plants, mining and construction plants, machinery), LLC "Sevzaptransproekt" (transport construction, road designing), LLC "TOMS Engineering" (a range of services for the development of mineral deposits), JSC "Podzemburgaz" (drilling for water and minerals). The delegation met with five ministers (oil, trade,

5 Akulov A. Russia - Mauritania: Prospect for Economic Cooperation // Asia and Africa today. 2004, № 8, p. 36.

fisheries, rural development, transport), held expert consultations in the specialized agencies and negotiations with Moorish businessmen in the Chamber of Commerce, visited the port of Nouadhibou free zone.

The cooperation in the field of higher education is also carried out. Currently, with the assistance of Rossotrudnichestvo the issue of enrolling Moorish students to the Russian universities at the expense of Russia is considered⁶.

The volume of bilateral trade is relatively small and is approx. 40 million dollars a year. Russia's main exports to Mauritania are oil, metal, machinery, equipment, vehicles, tools. The main imports from Mauritania are fish oil, fish meal, frozen and canned fish.

According to africanist A. Akulov, the reasons preventing more active development of Russian-Moorish relations are reciprocal in nature: "...Great caution of business circles of the country (Mauritania - P.G.) in establishing business relation with Russia, because Mauritania is incorporated, on the one hand, to the European, and on the other hand, to the all-Arab informational field and even without that insignificant zeal of Russian businessmen to cooperate with West Africa in general and with Mauritania in particular, which is hampered by extremely slow approval of documents at the level of ministries and departments of these two countries"⁷.

References

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4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia // www.mid.ru.

6 www.mid.ru.

7 Akulov A., the same.