

African Energy Projects Face Western Pressure Whilst Russia, China Offer Cooperation

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Although the African continent has about 9% of the world's natural gas reserves and 12% of its oil, most of the continent's countries have been struggling with energy issues for years, including power and fuel shortages. Even oil-producing nations such as some Central African States have capacity issues and lack financing, which makes them dependent on imported refined products. Many such states have focused mostly on crude sales and several energy projects have failed to come through. The 4,128 km-long Trans-Saharan gas pipeline (which involves Algeria, Niger, and Nigeria) was planned and agreed upon in 1970 and still exists only on paper. But other projects are moving forward.

In early September the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Congo Republic, as well as Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Gabon, and Chad (all Central African nations) signed an agreement to create, by 2030, their own regional gas and oil pipeline network and hub infrastructures to reduce dependence on imports of refined energy sources. Such a project in this case requires foreigner know-how. According to NJ Ayuk, CEO of pan-African corporate conglomerate Centurion Law Group, and African Energy Chamber executive chairman,

"Russians are the best when it comes to pipelines", and African leaders were inviting Russian energy players to have bilateral talks on "how to use Russian or Chinese expertise to make this work".

In addition, in mid-September, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) signed a memorandum of understanding with Morocco to start building a 7,000-kilometer offshore gas pipeline which is to run across 13 African nations. The Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline (NMGP) can boost economic integration in the continent, reliably and sustainably supply gas, and can also improve overall living conditions. Once completed, it could supply approximately three billion standard cubic feet of gas per day across the West African Coast, while also delivering gas to northern Morocco, where it can be connected with the Maghreb European Pipeline (MEP), from which it could supply gas to Spain too. Another such

project is the Tanzania and Uganda's East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP).

Could these projects fly? If the US-led West has its way, the answer is no. In fact, local African energy projects have been facing strong Western opposition which has been voiced in terms of the climate agenda. For example, on September 15, the EU Parliament passed a resolution stating that the Uganda-Tanzania EACOP project, might pose "social and environmental risks." The European Parliament has thus advised its member states not to support Uganda's gas and oil projects – either financially or diplomatically. Uganda's Deputy Speaker of Parliament Thomas Tayebwa responded to that by describing the resolution as the "highest level of neocolonialism and imperialism" against Uganda's and Tanzania's sovereignty.

Another interesting example: last month, the US special presidential envoy for climate (often informally called the "Climate Czar") John Kerry warned investors against funding the Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline project which could benefit Africa and also Europe – he casted doubts on its long-term viability. In fact, Washington's foreign policy on Morocco, particularly regarding the [Western Sahara](#) issue, is not in Europe's best interests: the US recognition of Western Sahara has increased tensions in the region, which has been a kind of "protective barrier" for the European continent. Moreover, while speaking to Reuters on the sidelines of the 18th session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in Dakar, Senegal, on October 3, Kerry in fact discouraged investing in long-term gas projects in the African continent in general.

Ironically, Africa in 2020 accounted for merely 3.8% of the worlds' CO2 emissions from industry and fossil fuels. As of now, EU nations (the most vocal promoters of green energy and economy) are resurrecting coal-fired electricity plants amid the global energy crisis. According to Mamdouh G. Salameh, global energy expert and international oil economist, oil and gas should still drive the global economy throughout the 21st century, and the EU and the US won't abandon their own gas and oil projects. Thus, Western environmental agendas might mask veiled interests in maintaining the continent energy-starved with its energy resources kept underground so that they may be used in the future for the West's own needs.

Sudanese-British billionaire Mo Ibrahim recently attacked the hypocrisy of the Global North in preventing African countries from developing their own hydrocarbon gas reserves over climate change concerns, while at the same time seeking to explore African resources themselves.

In this regard, from an African perspective, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Russia can offer countries in this region a much better deal. Last month, the Russian Ministry of Energy signaled that the Russian Federation is willing to develop joint projects with African nations to boost energy supplies to their markets.

Another case in point is [Egypt's Russian-built nuclear plant](#), which has placed Cairo into the global nuclear club. The project marks the advancement of Russian-Egypt collaboration in spite of intense American pressures and is yet another sign of the new age of [non-alignment](#) and [multi-alignment](#).

Geoenergetic interests thus remain one of the main issues and driving forces of the 21st century. The irony is that the US-led West's "Green Agenda" hampers African energy

security but also even Europe's. While European powers might have their interests in Africa resources (which are often described as "neocolonial"), Europe itself has been played by [Washington's interests](#) to the [detriment](#) of its own energy security.

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