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## **REPRESENTING UKRAINE IN ETHIOPIA**

*– Academic and expert circles often address the lack of African studies specialists. Is there an actual ‘staffing shortage’ in Ukraine’s diplomatic missions on the African continent? What practical solutions do you see to tackle the issue systematically?*

– The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 necessitated a fresh look at the methods, tools, and approaches of Ukraine’s diplomatic missions around the world, including on the African continent. Now diplomacy is inherently the secondary front of our state against Russia, complementing the daily effective service of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The main component of the activities of Ukrainian embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa is to ensure the tendency for receiving states to vote in favour of pro-Ukrainian initiatives within the UN platform in New York. An analysis of the political realities currently prevailing on the African continent shows that the main priority for the near future should be the promotion of the Ukrainian Peace Formula, which President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy proposed to the international community.

I am highly committed to effectively implementing the goals of the first African strategy in the history of our country, which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs developed in 2021 at the behest of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Moreover, I absolutely concur with the statement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba that Ukraine’s diplomatic work in African states ‘is a complicated story, as Russia has been persistently investing in Africa. Nevertheless, little strokes fell great oaks, and we will definitely contribute to the fall of the oak of Russian influence in Africa.’

The positive results and achievements of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s diplomatic team in this area are apparent. In particular, African states demonstrated overwhelming support for Ukraine during the UN General Assembly vote on 27 March 2014 on the draft resolution ‘Territorial integrity of Ukraine,’ adopted with 100 votes in favour overall. More than half of African countries reaffirmed their support for Ukraine and voted in favour of the draft resolutions ‘Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine’ of 23 February 2023 and ‘Territorial integrity

of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations' of 12 October 2022. As a result, more than 140 UN member states voted in favour of those resolutions.

Therefore, when objectively analysing the judgements of academic and expert circles regarding the alleged lack of specialists in African studies in Ukraine, it should be understood that any expertise in Africa will be beneficial only if the expert has the opportunity to communicate daily with decision-makers on the continent and apply knowledge to the formulation of recommendations to the state leaders.

Ukraine boasts a whole constellation of seasoned professional diplomats with expertise in African studies. The lion's share of them are engaged in the crucial work in the central office of the MFA of Ukraine, in relevant diplomatic missions abroad, the National Security and Defence Council, and non-governmental organisations. It is paramount here to acknowledge the most prominent figures of Ukrainian diplomacy who devoted part of their professional lives to Africa: Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ivan Kuleba, Andrii Veselovskyi, Mykhailo Dashkevych, Hennadii Latii, and member of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, veteran of diplomatic service Viacheslav Luzin, the author of the book entitled *Diplomat by Profession, Consul by Position*, which is very insightful for young African studies specialists to work in Africa.

Extending the above list, I have to mention the Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to the Republic of Senegal Oleksandr Ovcharov (2013–18), who has invaluable experience, and Yurii Pyvovarov, who worthily continues to represent Ukraine's interests in Senegal; Andrii Pravednyk, Ambassador of Ukraine to Kenya, and Mykola Nahorny, Ambassador of Ukraine to Egypt, who also has a unique experience of diplomatic work in Libya and Tunisia. Finally, this array should include Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to the South African Republic Liubov Abravitova, as she has shown truly effective work in this African state, which requires a lot of effort due to its close military and political ties with Russia.

In light of the daily practical advisory support that Ukrainian non-governmental organisations provide, it is necessary to highlight the Ukrainian Foreign Policy Association under the leadership of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Volodymyr Khandohii. The cooperation between the Association and the MFA of Ukraine aims to strengthen the role of civil society in implementing Ukraine's foreign policy.

I deem the amendments to the Procedure for the Rotation of Diplomatic Service Officials in the Diplomatic Service Bodies pivotal and innovative. They were adopted at the end of May 2023 on the initiative of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and aimed at expanding the competence of diplomatic staff. This initiative will further provide many of our colleagues with the opportunity

to prove their unwavering effectiveness, regardless of receiving state or region. For instance, twenty years of my career have allowed me to test my expertise in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Ethiopia, one of the most politically challenging country amid the russian-Ukrainian war.

– *On 2 November 2022, the 2-year civil war in Ethiopia ended. Is there any internal social tension in the country? What is the role of russia's war against Ukraine in Ethiopia's information space considering the internal problems and processes?*

– International community and human rights organisations could not ignore the death toll of more than 900,000 people on both sides due to the armed clashes in Ethiopia. On 2 November 2022, the parties to the Ethiopian civil conflict (the federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front) signed a ceasefire agreement under the auspices of the African Union (AU), as well as the UN and the US as observers located in the South African Republic.

Meanwhile, according to the UN, the shocks that hit Ethiopia in 2022 (primarily unprecedented in recent years droughts and concomitant famine, as well as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic) amplified the problems by creating a migration crisis with internally displaced persons reaching the amount of over 20 million Ethiopians overall. The OCHA Regional Office for Southern and Eastern Africa reports that more than 25 million Ethiopians, a third of whom are women and children, still need urgent humanitarian assistance, including bread and provisions.

The World Bank, which annually classifies countries as per their level of development, reports that as of 2023, Ethiopia is one of the poorest and most insolvent countries in the Horn of Africa and exists mainly due to external loans and international humanitarian aid.

The economic and political instability of the past years, together with the interethnic armed conflicts and terrorist activities by separatist leaders of some areas of Ethiopia, still negatively affect the internal political life of Ethiopians.

In addition, the current government in Ethiopia is subjected to intensified criticism from international human rights organisations and even the Ethiopian diaspora due to the country's unprecedented and deepening human rights crisis. Specifically, following a decision in early 2023 aimed at preventing the public dissemination of information about the domestic situation, the social networks Facebook, Telegram, TikTok, and YouTube have been shut down in Ethiopia.

In general, unwilling to heed the repeated requests of the EU member states and the United States in recent years to respect human rights in Tigray, Ethiopia is trying to compensate by rapprochement with China and russia, which objectively distances the issue of the russian-Ukrainian war from the focus of Ethiopian society's perception in favour of the subject of domestic political life and relations with other African states, which the local media actively covered.

– *What false russian narratives about Ukraine and the war are disseminated in Ethiopia and how can they be countered?*

– The notorious russian organisation rossotrudnichestvo [Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation] and subordinate to it russian centre for science and culture in Addis Ababa have maintained their positions in Ethiopia for the last few years. In fact, those two institutions, which representatives of russia's special services have long patronised, actively influence the cooperation between russian and Ethiopian media. One of the so-called achievements of their cooperation was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) and the russian Sputnik radio and news agency in early October 2022.

Other working arrangements in this area include reprinting russian news in Ethiopia, which is still the main mouthpiece of russian propaganda. Given the enormous budget of rossotrudnichestvo, which reached 1 billion rubles in 2019 (based on open-sources intelligence), countering the aggressor's narratives regarding the russian-Ukrainian war in Ethiopia remains an essential task for our Embassy.

Meanwhile, the Embassy's active interaction with the Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden allows us to counter russian narratives effectively. There is a clear result in this area: at the end of July 2022, the EU Delegation to the African Union published a Joint Op-Ed refuting the narratives of russian foreign minister sergey lavrov addressed to African audiences in the countries that the representative of the aggressor state was visiting at that time (the Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Uganda). Contrary to lavrov's propaganda narratives, which were published in the pages of the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram*, the Congolese newspaper *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville*, the Ugandan newspaper *New Vision*, and the unpopular Ethiopian newspaper *Ethiopian Herald*, the stance of the European Union Ambassadors to the African Union expressed the real actions of the russian aggressor in Ukraine .

– *What was the effect of Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba's visit to Ethiopia during his 2<sup>nd</sup> tour of Africa (24 May 2023) on the perception of Ukraine there?*

– Preparations for the mentioned visit proceeded against the backdrop of fierce political confrontation with russia. However, despite multiple attempts of the russian ambassador in Addis Abeba and lavrov's efforts to interfere in the process, Dmytro Kuleba held the two-hour meeting with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali for the first time in 30 years of bilateral relations. Also, Ukrainian Minister met with the Chair of the African Union, President

of the Comoros, Azali Assoumani, and Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat for the first time in the history of Ukraine–AU relations.

A remarkable political achievement of Ukraine following these meetings was the stark contrast with Lavrov's visit to Ethiopia in July 2022, when the Russians were unable to organise any events of this level for their minister.

The main accomplishments of Ukrainian Foreign Minister's first-ever visit to Ethiopia since the establishment of diplomatic relations encompass the agreement with the Ethiopian leader to institute an intergovernmental economic commission, which is to be instrumental in further increasing bilateral trade and reviving B2B contacts, implementing mutually beneficial projects in high technology, digitalisation of public services, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture.

– *Taking into account the dynamic enhancement of cooperation in the field of digitalisation and the establishment of an intergovernmental economic commission, what other areas of cooperation between Ukraine and Ethiopia do you deem promising?*

– In July 2022, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appointed Maksym Subkh as the Special Representative of Ukraine for the Middle East and Africa. It allowed to fully intensify our state's efforts in the political sphere and qualitatively strengthen trade and economic dialogue with the continent's countries, including Ethiopia.

On 10 October 2022, Maksym Subkh paid a working visit to Addis Ababa, where he met with the Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Demeke Mekonnen.

Ethiopia's Foreign Ministry acknowledged the capacity of Ukrainian agricultural sector, experience and expertise of Ukrainian specialists. The parties agreed to strengthen Ethiopian-Ukrainian cooperation in the agricultural sector.

Following the visit of Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba on 24 May 2023, the parties defined the main areas for the improvement of bilateral relations, namely pharmaceuticals, the exchange and application of Ukrainian agricultural technologies in Ethiopia, agricultural processing, and the education of local students in Ukrainian universities.

– *What problems do you face in advocating for Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Peace Formula in Africa generally and in Ethiopia particularly?*

– Developing relations with Ethiopia against the backdrop of Russia's unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, my point of view resembles the principles of President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which he expressed during his conversation with African media in August 2022. I would like to quote, 'I don't think there should be neutrality in war. This is the wrong attitude. There can be no neutrality between life and death. When you are neutral in the war, you immediately turn from even a large state into a small one. No one sees you, the

world does not see you, and therefore you do not influence the processes in the world. And when you have problems, you have to remember that the world can also be neutral. And it's not about business; It's about people's lives [...] There is no war, which is far away. This is the injustice of the security structure of the whole world, which needs to be changed. International institutions need to be changed to make them work. Today, when we talk about security guarantees for Ukraine, we act as a living yet tragic example that can later be extended to other continents and other states [...] It's about people dying. I know what we should do to help the countries of the African continent, just as African countries should unite and support Ukraine because the truth is on our side.'

I am personally and professionally convinced that the Peace Formula proposed by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is a tool to ensure Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty and adhere to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

The President of Ukraine expressed this strategically significant stance to African leaders during their visit to Kyiv on 16 June 2023.

– *Are there any plans to implement joint cultural, scientific, and educational projects between Ukraine and Ethiopia in the near future?*

– Although the full realisation of Ukrainian-Ethiopian projects had to be suspended due to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Embassy took an active part in the four-day online training course Security and Diplomacy in Wartime. Ukrainian Experience, designed for diplomats from African countries by the Hennadii Udovenko Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine and the MFA of Ukraine.

The lectures focused on Ukraine's experience in countering Russian aggression, the impact of Russia's war against Ukraine on the current international security, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Peace Formula, food and energy security, and issues related to regional and global challenges.

The training was conducted as part of the implementation of agreements reached during the first-ever Ukrainian Foreign Minister's tour of African countries in October 2022. More than 200 African diplomats took part in the course.

– *What role can and should higher education institutions play in building Ukrainian-Ethiopian relations?*

– In the 1970–1990s, over 70% of Ethiopian students pursuing higher education in the former USSR chose Ukrainian universities as their destination. As of today, some heads of departments of the Ethiopian MFA graduated from Ukrainian universities, and the Embassy keeps in touch with them on issues of bilateral interaction.

Recently, we have nominated several candidates from Ethiopia to the Council of African Graduates of Ukrainian Universities. We hope to intensify the involvement of Ethiopian students in receiving education in Ukraine.

– *How is Ethiopia rebuilding after the internal turmoil, namely the civil war? Is it possible to adopt the models and tools used by the Ethiopian government for Ukraine's economic recovery after Ukrainian victory?*

– The issue of reconstructing and restoring the infrastructure in northern Ethiopia, which was destroyed due to the civil war, is quite sensitive for the state. First of all, because the developed democracies are involved in countering Russian aggression in Ukraine, the official Addis Ababa perceives Ukraine as a competitor in attracting international funds and assistance. Nevertheless, foreign donors, such as Australia, EU member states, Japan, the US, and others, are very enthusiastic about investing in this African country with grants and implementing humanitarian programmes, to list a few.

Since Ethiopia remains an agrarian country that is not securely stable, it is premature to talk about applying any local models or tools to Ukraine.

– *The Embassy of Ukraine in Ethiopia also represents Kyiv's interests in Djibouti, South Sudan, and the Seychelles. What activities are carried out in these countries? What challenges does the Embassy face in this context?*

– Delivering an address on Africa Day and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (African Union) on 25 May 2023, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba emphasised: 'Ukrainians are a nation that fights for justice, against oppression, and against human rights violations. Supporting Ukraine is not about being pro-Western or anti-Western. It is about respecting the UN Charter, international law and order, as well as the right of every nation to choose its own peaceful path of development [...] Our united voice should be strong in all international fora and within international organisations. And if they need to be reformed for that, including the UN Security Council, then we need to do so. We call for a more representative and democratic Security Council in which Africa, like all other world regions, will be represented. Ukraine also supports the idea of the African Union becoming a permanent member of the G20.'

The Embassy takes active steps to intensify Ukraine's trade and economic cooperation with Ethiopia, Djibouti, South Sudan, and Seychelles, enhance relations with these countries, including the creation of a United Voice of Africa to isolate Russia as an aggressor state.

– *Considering the announced opening of ten new embassies in Africa, what practical recommendations or concerns would you share with your counterparts on the specifics of representing Ukraine's interests on the African continent?*

– I greatly appreciate the statement of values from the Communication Strategy of the MFA of Ukraine, which Minister Dmytro Kuleba presented at the end of March 2021:

- Patriotism: the interests of Ukraine and every Ukrainian citizen are the starting point of every employee of the MFA. We are committed to our people,

appreciate the diversity of cultures, languages, history, and traditions, protect our citizens, and present, promote and defend our country at all levels.

- Professionalism: each employee of the MFA apparatus proactively, systematically, and efficiently performs their professional duties to achieve specific goals and ensures continuous development of their competencies following the requirements of their position and code of conduct. We believe that the skill of teamwork is an integral part of a diplomat's professionalism.

- Propriety: every employee of the MFA apparatus always adheres to ethical standards, keeps promises, avoids insults and does not intentionally harm others. We always strive to engage in constructive dialogue and not tolerate lies, manipulation, and disinformation. We understand that our words and actions can affect the fate of thousands of people and the entire country's interests.

Mr Kuleba also described the fourth pillar in the current circumstances – Victory: daily selfless work for maximum results, the ability to overcome any challenges for the sake of Ukraine.

From my experience and understanding of African features and related processes, I would recommend that each head of the newly established Ukrainian embassies in Africa keep the following key factors in mind:

1. Heading a diplomatic mission in Africa is, first and foremost, about responsibility: for the area entrusted to you and, most significantly, for the lives and safety of embassy staff and their families.

2. Africa is also about uniqueness, observation, and attentiveness. It is a continent of professional opportunities that galvanise a diplomat to success.

3. There are 40 Russian diplomatic missions on the African continent, some employing more than 200 people. Moreover, a significant part of this Russian staff is employees of Russia's secret services, who seek to compromise everything related to Ukraine, including its diplomats and citizens in a particular receiving country. In addition, if the political elite of such a country is pro-Russian, our newly appointed colleagues will have to get acquainted with the fable of the local authorities that the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 is not entirely in force, as is traditionally the case in the civilised world.

4. The financial and material support of a newly established diplomatic mission will only sometimes be what one would have dreamed of, even if it were a matter of ordinary issues from the point of view of provision. Therefore, the head of a new diplomatic mission should bear in mind that the level of funding for the embassy entrusted to them may only decrease in the future for objective reasons, mainly due to the Russian-Ukrainian war.

5. If the head of the embassy or their colleagues have to bring their children to an African country, the issue of ensuring their right to a proper education can also be interpreted as a challenge that requires a comprehensive approach to its solution.



6. Mind your personal and professional reputation, as François de Callières, Minister of Foreign Affairs during the reign of King Louis XIV of France, taught: ‘The good negotiator, moreover, will never find success of his mission on promises which he cannot redeem or on bad faith.’

– *As the headquarters of the African Union is located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia has a particular symbolic significance for Africa. How is it possible and practical to advocate our country’s interests within the African Union through the Embassy of Ukraine in Ethiopia?*

– Ethiopia is the second country in the world, after Switzerland, regarding the number of diplomatic missions of foreign states and international organisations. Today, Addis Ababa hosts 117 foreign embassies, headquarters, and representative offices of a number of international and regional organisations.

Besides being responsible for the bilateral track of Ukraine’s relations with Ethiopia, the Embassy promotes active interaction between our country and the African Union. The main results of our diplomatic mission’s work in this area are worth highlighting:

a) On 11 April 2022, the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy had a telephone conversation with the then Chair of the African Union Assembly, President of Senegal Macky Sall to discuss the African Union’s statement of 24 February 2022 on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine in the context of Russian aggression and the aggressor’s heinous crimes, which, since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, have led to the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent Ukrainians, including women and children.

b) On 29 April 2022, a telephone conversation was held between the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat on the further development of Ukrainian-African relations.

c) On 20 June 2022, the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the participants of the African Union Bureau Meeting on ways to resolve the food crisis in Africa provoked by Russian aggression in Ukraine.

As mentioned above, on 10 October 2022, Ukraine’s Special Representative for the Middle East and Africa visited Ethiopia. At the headquarters of the African Union, he met with the Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission and delivered a speech at a high-level conference on food security.

Practical cooperation between Ukraine and the African Union is ongoing this year: on 2 May 2023, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy had a telephone conversation with the Chair of the African Union, President of the Union of the Comoros Azali Assoumani. On 24 May 2023, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba met with the Chairperson of the AU Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat and the Chair of the African Union Assembly Azali Assoumani in Addis Ababa.

It is essential to mention that the delegation of African leaders that visited Kyiv on 16 June 2023 was also led by the aforementioned Chair of the AU Assembly, President of the Union of the Comoros Azali Assoumani.

– *What are the prospects for Ukrainian-Ethiopian cooperation in the military sphere? In your opinion, will our state maintain and develop active strategic relations with African countries after Ukraine's victory? Do you deem the strengthening of cooperation with the region a practical step to ensure Ukraine's tactical interests?*

– In 2020, the President of Ukraine instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to strengthen Ukraine's cooperation with African countries. Notably, in December 2022, Volodymyr Zelenskyy set the following tasks for Ukrainian ambassadors (in the abstract): 'We are restarting relations with dozens of African countries. Next year [2023], we must strengthen this. We have identified ten states where new Ukrainian embassies in Africa will be opened.' He also said that the concept of the Ukraine-Africa Trade House had been developed, which provides for the opening of its representative offices in the capitals of the most promising countries of the continent. 'In addition to the existing representation of Ukraine in ten African countries – together with new embassies and trade houses – we have to achieve a presence in thirty African countries,' the Head of State noted.

The strategic results of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine's first-ever tour of the continent should include the second African tour in May 2023, during which Dmytro Kuleba visited Morocco, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Mozambique, and Nigeria.

Therefore, within this context, Mr Kuleba's conclusion is of particular importance to us, African diplomats: 'If Russia didn't feel threatened by our diplomatic efforts, Lavrov would not be flying after me, and Russian diplomats in Africa would not be running around convincing African governments to cancel my visits and not to meet with me. All of this activity by the Russians shows one thing: they feel that our work is seriously jeopardising their influence in Africa.'

Considering the described above and the knowledge, skills and experience I have gained over two years of work on the African continent, I am convinced that after Ukraine's Victory, each and every African state will offer our country even closer mechanisms of cooperation and interaction, seeking to explore and engage the best Ukrainian experience in fighting the occupiers and confronting Russian imperialism.