

At SPbPU, they discussed the creation of mirror laboratories to assess the damage caused to African countries by colonialism

Polytechnic University and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education held a meeting dedicated to the activities of the Russian-African Network University (RAFU) and the creation of mirror laboratories to assess the damage caused to African countries during the colonial period. Representatives of the Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education and leading Russian universities, including St. Petersburg State University of Economics (SPbSUE), Russian State University for Geological Prospecting (MGRI), and the Institute of Material Culture History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, took part in the discussion.



The main topic of the meeting was the development of a methodology for calculating damage, including economic, environmental, and cultural losses. As noted by Dmitry Arseniev, Vice Rector for International Affairs at SPbPU: This project has not only scientific but also important political significance. We must combine the efforts of universities with expertise in this field and offer African countries a tool for objectively assessing the consequences of colonialism.

St. Petersburg State University of Economics, in agreement with the Ministry of Education and Science, will head the working group on the creation of the

laboratory. Elena Gorbashko, Vice Rector for International Affairs at SPbGEU, emphasized: We need to develop a comprehensive methodology that takes into account not only direct economic losses, but also indirect factors — lost profits, environmental damage, and consequences for human capital.

Yuri Panov, Rector of MGRI, shared preliminary calculations: We have already assessed the damage to Zimbabwe and Mozambique at \$52 billion and \$74 billion, respectively. At the same time, the direct export of resources accounted for only 3-4% of the total amount, with the bulk being lost profits and environmental consequences.

The Institute of Material Culture History of the Russian Academy of Sciences proposed including digital archives of cultural heritage in the study. Deputy Director Natalya Solovieva noted: Digital twins of monuments will help to record the destruction and prove the extent of the damage. We already have successful experience of such work in Syria, and we are ready to replicate it in Africa.

The next steps are to form a working group, prepare a concept, and select countries for pilot projects. The final proposals will be presented to Minister of Science and Higher Education Valery Falkov in July.

This project is not only a scientific task, but also an important step in strengthening Russia's cooperation with African countries, said Stepan Sokolov, deputy director of the Department of International Cooperation at the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, summarizing the meeting.

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