# RAFU will work on creating mirror laboratories to assess damage to African countries from colonialism

12.06.2025

The Ministry of Science and Higher Education held a meeting dedicated to the launch of the Russian-African Network University (RANU) to create mirror laboratories to assess the damage caused to African countries during colonialism. The discussion was attended by the following employees of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation: Sokolov S.A. - Deputy Director of the Department of International Cooperation, Meshcheryakova E.V. - Deputy Head of the Department of Bilateral Cooperation with Far Abroad Countries of the Department of International Cooperation, representatives of leading Russian universities, including St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (SPbPU), St. Petersburg State University of Economics (UNECON), Russian State Geological Prospecting University (MGRI) and the Institute of the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The main topic of the meeting was the discussion of developing methods for calculating the damage caused to African countries during the colonial period, including economic, environmental, cultural and other losses. As noted by Dmitry Arsenyev, Vice-Rector for International Affairs at SPbPU: "This project has not only scientific but also important political significance. We must unite the efforts of universities with expertise in this area and offer African countries a tool for an objective assessment of the consequences of colonialism."

St. Petersburg State University of Economics, by agreement with the Ministry of Education and Science, will lead a working group to create mirror laboratories to assess the damage to African countries from colonialism. Elena Gorbashko, Vice-Rector for International Affairs at UNECON, emphasized: "We have to develop a comprehensive methodology that takes into account not only direct economic losses, but also indirect factors - lost profits, environmental damage, consequences for human capital."

Rector of MGRI Yuri Panov shared preliminary calculations: "We have already estimated the economic damage from the use of natural resources for Zimbabwe and Mozambique - 52 and 74 billion dollars, respectively. At the same time, direct export of resources accounted for only 3-4% of the total amount, the main part is lost profits and environmental consequences."

The Institute of the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences proposed to include digital archives of cultural heritage in the study. Deputy Director Natalya Sokolova noted: "Digital twins of monuments will help to record the destruction and prove the scale 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 the 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 cooperation between Russia and African countries,” said Stepan Sokolov, Deputy Director of the Department of International Cooperation of the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, summing up the meeting.