

Egyptian-Guinean Relations Past... Present... and Future Horizons

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The Arab-African relations, in general, and the Egyptian Guinean relations, in particular, are vital on both the political and strategic levels. In this respect, relations between both countries should be fostered for several reasons including the historical, political, economic, cultural and religious aspects, besides the common membership in various organizations and associations in addition to regional and international blocs such as the UN and its specialized agencies, the AU, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the non-Aligned Organization, the G"77", the 3rd World Countries and the Community of Sahel-Sahara States.

Such idiosyncrasies which both countries enjoy should be taken into consideration in order to entrench relations and to coordinate stances in various issues of mutual interest.

Since Guinea's independence from France in 1958, it enjoys distinguished relations with Egypt. Strong amicable relations had actually developed between the two leaders Gamal Abdel Nasser and Ahmed Sékou Touré; may God bless their souls. Since then, both countries were always keen to entrench the cooperation relations. In this vein, Guinea played a prominent role in restoring Egypt's membership in the OIC which was lost upon signing the Peace Treaty with Israel.

In return, Egypt was keen to support the Guinean cadres in the training courses organized by the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa in collaboration with various governmental bodies in various fields (Health, justice, police, agriculture, education, and diplomatic training).

In recognition of Egypt's role in backing Guinea against the French Occupation, the biggest Guinean University was named "Gamal Abdel Nasser". Furthermore, despite the diplomatic representation and the cultural agreements signed between both states, yet the political, diplomatic, economic and

cultural relations did not yet reach the aspired levels. Thus, in order to further develop the mutual relations, the following points should be tackled.

The Political and Diplomatic Levels:

The real determination of the leaders of both countries should be provided. A clear strategic plan should also be applied, including the mutual visits of the officials of both countries.

In this vein, it is worthy to point to the fact that since the death of President Ahmed Sékou Touré in the 1980s, no Egyptian visits had been paid to Guinea on the presidential levels, yet some official visits had been paid including that of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central and West Africa in 2009 to identify the opinions of the military regime of Guinea for the future of the political situation.

In 2008, the Guinean ministry of defense paid a visit to Egypt in order to tackle the horizons of military cooperation. And in 2006, the Guinean ministry of cooperation also paid a visit to Egypt.

Trade Agreements

According to informed sources, total amount of Egyptian exports to Guinea do not exceed LE 500,000

annually, mainly composed of food-stuff and construction materials that were exported through Lebanese and Iraqi traders. On the other hand, the Guinean exports to Egypt are almost non-existent.

Guinea is void of any Egyptian companies. In this vein, Conakry had recently paid visits to several Egyptian businessmen who unanimously agreed on the ability of the Guinean market to accommodate Egyptian products and investments. However, the political and economic instability which Guinea is currently suffering from do not encourage the Egyptian and Arab businessmen to invest there.

There are also a number of signed cooperation agreements between both governments in various fields, including: foreign relations, higher education, scientific research, trade, investment, tourism, health and air transport.

As regards the mutual committee, on March 25, 1982, Egypt and Guinea signed a mutual protocol to establish their mutual high ministerial committee in order to foster the cooperation relations between both states. In this respect, five sessions have been convened as follows:

- 1st session in Conakry, February 1983.
- 2nd session in Cairo, 7-9 February 1987.

- 3rd session in Conakry, March 1998.
- 4th session in Cairo, 19-22 December 1990.
- 5th session in Cairo, 18-20 December 2004.

Moreover, a strict legal framework and a clear-cut political commitment should be provided from both sides. It is important in this respect to encourage the financial companies and institutions; African Development Bank (AFDB), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), Islamic Development Bank and other related socio-economic African and Arab institutions, to further foster the Egyptian-Guinean cooperation.

Economic and Investment Fields:

- As regards the agriculture field, the natural geography of Guinea shows vast areas of arable lands. Guinea is also the source of the most important rivers and valleys in West Africa. Within this framework, both countries can cooperate in the fields of agriculture, fishing, livestock, and poultry farming.
- Both countries can cooperate in the field of cars, trucks and tractors assembly. The Guinean gov-

ernment can benefit from the Egyptian experience in this field under the slogan (the South-South cooperation as a real means for development).

- Both countries can cooperate in the field of tourism and hospitality, Egypt possesses accumulated experience in this field, thanks to its unique civilizational and archeological sites. In this vein, the Guinean government can sign contracts with Egyptian companies, especially the Arab Contractors as regards constructing hotels and tourist resorts in Guinea.

Fostering Cooperation in the Field of Religious and Cultural Affairs:

“Egypt and Guinea” are two of the pioneering Islamic states that had contributed to the establishment of the OIC. Egypt has wide experience in the fields of religious endowment, zakat and Islamic Affairs, being the cradle of human civilization and a cultural crossing from the Arab Mashreq to Sub-Saharan Africa. It is also the seat of al-Azhar and Cairo Universities; two of the most ancient universalities in the Islamic World.

Such specifications and idiosyncrasies are a main factor in consolidating cooperation between both countries, especially in the fields of religious endowment, zakat, pilgrimage and minor pilgrimage and training

Guinean cadres in the field of the tolerant Islmaic Da'wah (Call).

In the field of education and scientific research, cooperation agreements signed between the Egyptian and Guinean ministries of higher education and scientific research should be activated. Scholarships should also be granted for Guinean students to study in the Egyptian universities. It is also beneficial to exchange research and studies, to cooperate in the field of translation and publication and to teach the Arabic language in Guinean Universities and vice versa.

Information and Advanced Technology:

-An information and cultural strategy should be applied based on enhancing the intellectual and cultural communication. Public opinion in both states should be aware of the importance of fostering the Egyptian-Guinean relations that had deteriorated upon the death of President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

-Cooperation between both states should be created in the fields of communication and advanced technology (Internet and networks).

-Cooperation between the Egyptian Radio and Television Union and its Guinean counterpart should be fostered, so as to receive the utmost benefit from the Egyptian experience in the field of covering the radio and television programmes, especially the cultural and religious ones.

-Cooperation among the major Egyptian newspapers (al-Ahram, Akhbar al-Youm, al-Gomhoureya) and "Guinea News" should be created in order to benefit from the Egyptian experience in the field of editing, designing, layout and publication.

The Sports Field:

Sports competitions should be held between both countries; thus positively contributing to entrenching relations between the peoples of both countries.