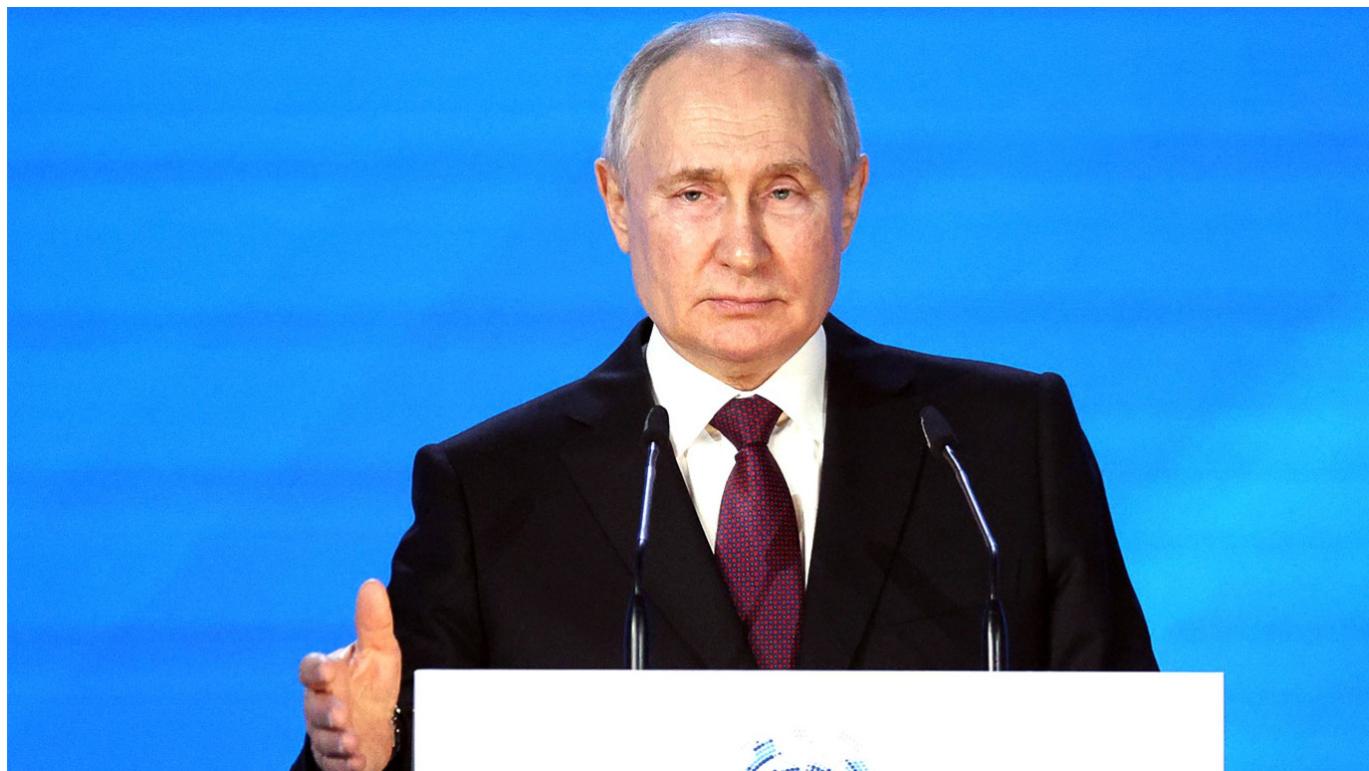


Putin Says Ties With Africa a 'Priority'

By [AFP](#)

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Sergei Bobylev / TASS / kremlin.ru

President Vladimir Putin said Monday that deepening ties between Russia and Africa was a key goal for the Kremlin, as Moscow seeks to expand its influence on the continent.

He added that Russia would continue supplying the continent with grain if Moscow exits a landmark agreement with Ukraine to allow exports from the country's Black Sea ports.

"Let me emphasize that our country has always given — and will continue to give — priority to cooperation with African states," Putin said in a televised address at a conference on Russian-African relations.

Putin's comments come as Moscow is seeking deeper political, economic and military ties in Africa and Asia as Russia becomes increasingly isolated on the international stage over the conflict in Ukraine.

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Russia, a key arms exporter to Africa, is making forays into the continent including through mining projects granted to the Wagner private paramilitary group.

Turkey announced this weekend the extension of the deal that has allowed Ukraine to export grain following Russia's offensive, but Moscow has said it only agreed to a 60-day extension, not 120 days.

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Putin said on Monday Russia would continue to deliver grain, regardless of the status of the deal.

"If we decide not to extend this deal after 60 days, then we are ready to supply free of charge the volumes that were sent to the countries most in need in Africa," he said during a televised address.

The deal brokered by Turkey and the United Nations in July 2022 — and signed by Kyiv and Moscow — had allowed for the safe passage of exports. It was extended for 120 days in November.

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