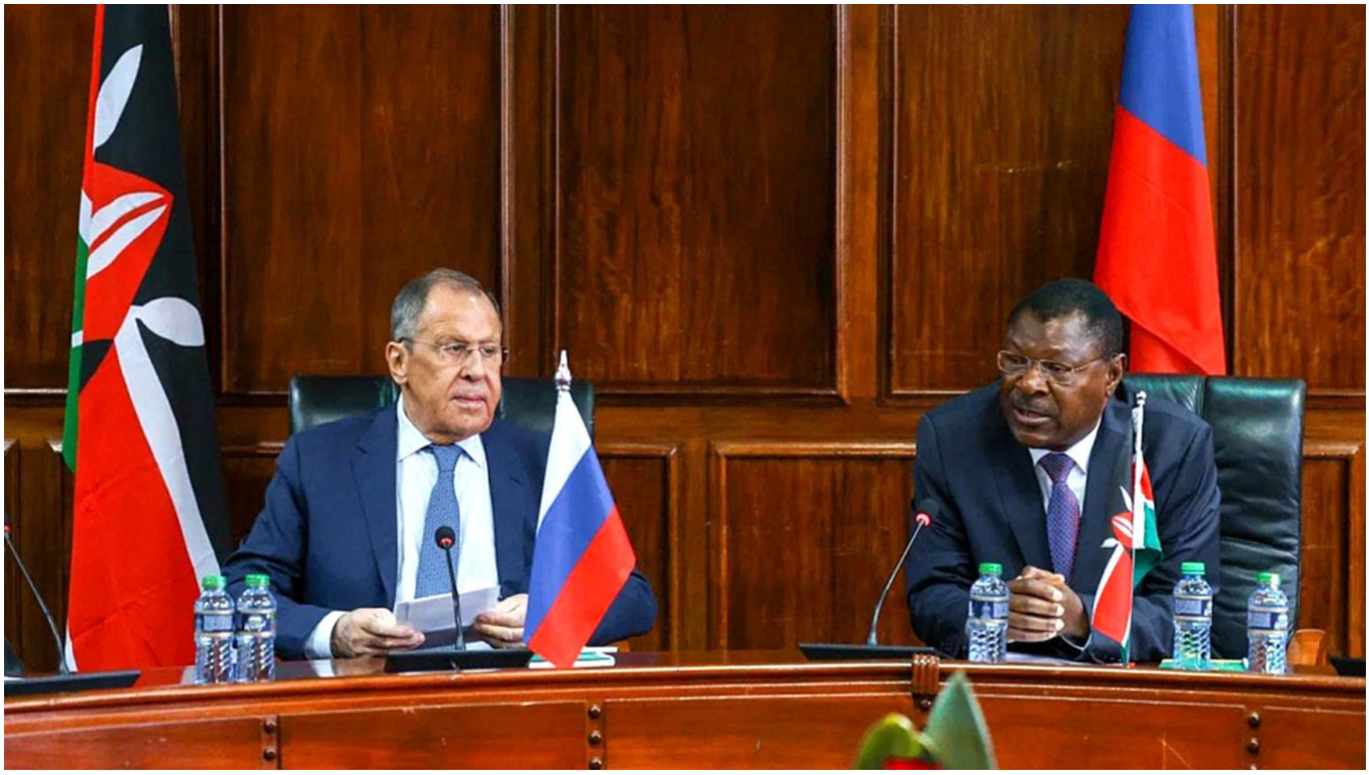
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Lavrov in Kenya on Heels of Ukrainian Counterpart's Trip to Africa

By AFP

May 29, 2023



Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (L) and Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya Moses Masika Wetangula. **Russian Foreign Ministry Press Service**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met Kenyan leaders on Monday on a surprise visit to Nairobi, as Moscow and Kyiv both seek to bolster support from African nations over the war in Ukraine.

Lavrov's trip to the East African powerhouse comes on the heels of a trip to the continent last week by his Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba.

"During our visit we will discuss our cooperation in the trade, investment and economic spheres, humanitarian and cultural questions, education, cooperation in the UN and many other issues," Lavrov told Kenyan lawmakers, according to the Russian Foreign Ministry.

The trip had not been announced in advance, and no information has been forthcoming from

Kenyan officials.

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Lavrov has visited Africa several times over the past year, as global powers tussle for influence on the continent of 1.3 billion people.

Kuleba last week called for certain African nations to end their neutral stances over the 15-month-old war in Ukraine and announced a push by Kyiv to intensify its ties with the continent.

"We speak with our African friends, trying to explain to them that neutrality is not the answer," Kuleba said at a press conference on Wednesday in Addis Ababa, home of the African Union.

He also announced in a statement the following day that Ukraine planned to open more embassies in Africa and stage a summit with the continent's leaders.

Embed:

> Today I hosted H.E. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Republic, who paid me a courtesy call in my office at Parliament Buildings in Nairobi.
>
> Kenya and Russia have had longstanding warm and cordial ties since establishment of diplomatic relations way back... pic.twitter.com/Bj2OPNatAA
>
> — Rt.Hon.Dr.Moses Wetang'ula (@HonWetangula) May 29, 2023

In February, 22 of the African Union's 54 member states abstained or did not vote on a UN General Assembly resolution that called for Russia withdraw from Ukraine.

Two of them — Eritrea and Mali — voted against the resolution.

Russia has ties with African countries that can be traced to the Cold War, when the Soviet Union cast itself as an anti-colonialist defender.

A Russia-Africa summit, the second in the series, is to be held in St. Petersburg in July.

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