

Putin Claims Russian Firms Looking to Expand Manufacturing Across Africa

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Vladimir Putin at the 2026 Russia-Africa Summit in Moscow. **Igor Ivanko / Pool via REUTERS**

President Vladimir Putin [said](#) Thursday that Russian companies are interested in opening up manufacturing plants across Africa as a way to get around Western sanctions.

“Our companies are simply interested in moving certain production operations to African countries. It’s a mutual interest,” Putin said during the second day of the 2026 Russia-Africa summit in Moscow.

“This fully aligns with Russia’s interests, especially given current circumstances, when scores of sanctions are placed on the Russian economy and businesses,” he told the representatives of 48 African nations, including 22 heads of state.

Putin did not say which Russian manufacturing firms were looking to set up shop in Africa, but boasted that they have “sufficiently high” investment potential.

“All that matters is that your decisions remain sovereign, your investments stay safe and

secure, and everything functions regardless of the political climate,” the Russian leader said.

Putin touted the volume of Russian trade with African nations last year, which totaled \$27 billion, or 2.4% less than in 2024. He also expressed confidence that trade could double to \$50 billion in the “near future.”

The president has repeatedly [vowed](#) to double Russia’s trade with countries across Africa since at least 2019. Trade with the entire African continent [accounts](#) for just 3.9% of Russia’s total foreign commerce.

Russia’s influence in Africa is largely rooted in military cooperation and security deals. In Mali, for example, Russian mercenaries have [supported](#) the central government in clashes with Al-Qaeda-linked militants since 2021.

Analysts [note](#) that African countries leverage relations with Russia to balance Western and Chinese influence, while also raising concerns about Russia’s recruitment of its citizens to fight in Ukraine.

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