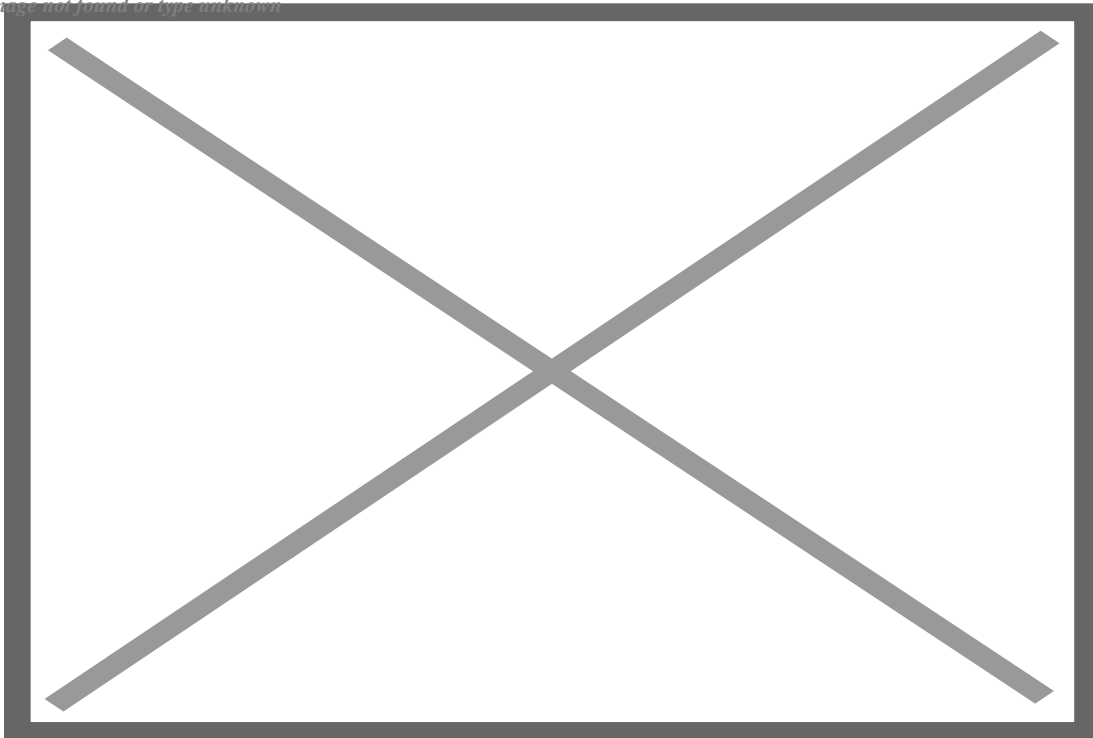


African leaders meet in St. Petersburg for Russia African Summit

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St. Petersburg, July 28 (RHC)-- Russian President Vladimir Putin has told leaders at a two-day Russia-Africa summit that Moscow respects their peace proposal on Ukraine and will carefully study it on Friday.

African leaders have pressed Putin to move ahead with their peace plan to end the Ukraine war and renew the grain deal. While the leaders were not directly critical of Russia, their statements on the second day of the summit were pointed reminders of the consequences of the conflict, especially on food prices.

"The African (peace) initiative deserves the closest attention, it mustn't be underestimated," Republic of the Congo President Denis Sassou Nguesso told Putin and fellow African leaders in St Petersburg. "We once again urgently call for the restoration of peace in Europe," he said via a translator.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has urged Russia to restart the Black Sea grain deal, which collapsed last week following Moscow's exit. During a Russia-Africa summit, Sisi said it was "essential to reach agreement" on reviving the deal. Following the deal's collapse, many countries that depend on exports, including Egypt, have pleaded for Moscow to rejoin the agreement to avert a global food crisis.

Putin has rejected suggestions that Russia's military operation in Ukraine was responsible for high global food prices, saying Western "mistakes" were responsible. During the two-day Russia-Africa summit in St Petersburg, Putin said the United States and the European Union had printed money to buy food due to the COVID-19 pandemic and "prices skyrocketed."

The Russian leader appeared to be referring to the policy of "quantitative easing" to help major Western economies function under the disruption of the pandemic. He added the West neglected investment in hydrocarbons and said: "One mistake led to another, it upended markets."

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