

The poison of its own greed

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By Roberto Morejón

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa joined the long list of personalities and international organizations demanding respect for Africa's riches, plundered by colonial powers, transnationals and armed groups.

Speaking at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, the South African leader stressed that the continent's wealth belongs to those born there and must reach them.

The statesman alluded to the cost to the region of the industrialization and development processes of the world's rich nations.

The dignitary alluded to a neuralgic point of Africa's problems, with almost half of its 1.4 billion inhabitants living in poverty, in spite of its vast original wealth.

Some 30 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are rich in natural treasures, as the continent is home to one third of the world's mineral reserves and in the case of uranium, platinum, diamonds and gold, they exceed 50 percent.

Africa also has important oil producers, such as Nigeria, Angola and Equatorial Guinea, and a new front of hydrocarbon deposits recently discovered in the east.

With this potential, one might think of levels of well-being, but the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Program places 34 sub-Saharan African countries among the world's bottom 40.

Multinationals and former colonies avoid addressing these contrasts and the historical exploitation to which Africa has been subjected, where epidemics, illiteracy, internal wars, corrupt governments and famines have also contributed to making it more difficult to reduce deprivation.

It is no coincidence that last January Pope Francis demanded that the world powers stop plundering the native wealth of Africa for "the poison of their own greed".

Today, when the corporate press talks about the coup d'état in Niger, few delve into the local context and refrain from asking the following question: How is it possible that in Niger, the world's third largest producer of uranium, or 7.5% of the world's population, life expectancy is 55 years?

The international community should pay more attention to denunciations such as those made by the Supreme Pontiff and the President of South Africa.

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