**Iran's first VP condemns Western ‘Iranophobia’ and ‘Afrophobia’ as barriers to Africa ties**

1. [Politics](https://www.tehrantimes.com/service/politics)

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TEHRAN – Iran’s Vice President Mohammad-Reza Aref sharply condemned Western countries for perpetuating "Iranophobia" and "Afrophobia," adding that these narratives are designed to undermine Tehran’s efforts to forge stronger ties with African nations.

Speaking at the Third Iran-Africa Economic Cooperation Conference on Monday, Aref explained that such narratives not only distort Iran’s global image but also impede the development of mutually beneficial partnerships.

“Western countries, driven by their own interests, propagate Iranophobia through baseless claims and fabrications to paint an unreal picture of our nation,” he declared during a high-level meeting with African delegates in Tehran.

He further criticized the U.S. and European powers for exploiting Africa’s resources while treating the continent as “a backyard that must remain under their control,” a practice he described as both unethical and dehumanizing.

Aref emphasized that Africa’s rise as a pivotal player in global development is directly aligned with Iran’s commitment to fostering balanced and equitable relations.

He called for the removal of bureaucratic and legal barriers that hinder collaboration, urging African and Iranian officials to utilize bilateral commissions and specialized meetings to streamline joint initiatives.

Reflecting on centuries of shared history, he positioned the longstanding ties between Iran and Africa as a solid foundation for expanding cooperation in trade, technology, and politics.

Despite facing “unjust and illegal sanctions,” Iran has achieved self-sufficiency in agriculture, industry, and advanced technologies, enabling it to meet the needs of African partners “without ulterior motives.”

Aref also denounced Western nations for “poaching Africa’s brightest minds” to fuel their own technological advancements, while neglecting the continent’s overall development.

He lauded previous Iran-Africa summits for producing “valuable agreements” but noted that many projects have yet to be implemented, urging concrete steps, including a proposed heads-of-state summit next year, to elevate these ties.

Reaffirming Iran’s post-revolutionary commitment to Africa, he stressed that “political cooperation must pave the way for broader collaboration,” framing the summit as a decisive move away from Western-dominated paradigms in favor of multipolar partnerships.

The Iran-Africa Economic Cooperation conference brought together over 700 delegates from 38 African nations in Tehran and Isfahan.

The event, featuring ministerial panels on petrochemicals, mining, agriculture, and healthcare, underscores Tehran’s drive to diversify its economic alliances amid Western sanctions.

Delegates began their visit at Iran Expo—the nation’s premier trade exhibition—and then toured more than 10 industrial complexes in Isfahan, which showcased Iran’s capabilities in heavy industry, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy.

These visits highlighted sectors where African nations seek affordable, scalable solutions, aligning with Agenda 2063 goals in infrastructure development and industrialization.

Iran has further leveraged its advanced technological expertise in oil and gas exploration—a sector critical to Africa’s growth—to attract international partnerships.

For instance, countries such as Zimbabwe have expressed interest in collaborating with Iran to bolster their energy sectors, drawn by Tehran’s cost-effective solutions and technical prowess.

Moreover, plans to launch a dedicated shipping line to African ports aim to streamline trade logistics and foster deeper integration between Iranian industries and African markets.

Beyond economic initiatives, Iran’s outreach embraces a comprehensive partnership model. Historical ties, such as its support for South Africa’s liberation movements, coupled with recent security dialogues, reflect this holistic approach.

With bilateral trade still constituting only 3% of Iran’s exports and 1% of its imports, the conference marks a pivotal step toward unlocking untapped potential, positioning Africa as a cornerstone of Tehran’s global economic resilience.