

## New realities for partnership

Import substitution is one of the key development priorities of the Republic of Belarus in the near future. Back in December 2021, the Belarusian government defined strategic areas of work and developed specific tasks in this direction. These are the use of opportunities of such integration formations as the Eurasian Economic Union, increase of localization in conjunction with support measures, implementation of sectoral import substitution programs, development of cooperation both within the republic and with friendly countries, use of local raw materials, active involvement of scientific developments in the real sector of the economy. In late December 2022 at the meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus it was noted that in 2023 import substitution will become an even more effective driver of Belarusian industrial production, where special attention will be paid to increasing localization. Interesting experience in this context has already been accumulated in a number of Belarusian regions. In particular, in recent years, enterprises in the Brest, Gomel and Mogilev regions have set up systematic work to master the production of import-substituting products. This is discussed in this proposed study.



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*Chronicle of international cooperation in the context of economic mobilisationeconomic mobilization*

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# **New realities for partnership**

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## An effective reserve for cooperative enterprise interaction

Import substitution is one of the key development priorities of the Republic of Belarus in the near future. Back in December 2021, the Belarusian government defined strategic areas of work and developed specific tasks in this direction. They are to use the possibilities of such integration entities as the Eurasian Economic Union, "increase localisation linked to support measures, implement sectoral import substitution programmes, develop cooperation both within the republic and with friendly countries, use local raw materials, and actively involve scientific developments in the real sector of the economy"<sup>1</sup>. In late December 2022, the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus noted that in 2023 import substitution will become an even more effective driver of Belarusian industrial production, where special attention will be paid to increasing localisation. Interesting experience in this context has already been gained in a number of Belarusian regions.

In particular, in recent years **Brest Oblast** enterprises have set up systematic work to assimilate the production of import-substituting products. Suffice it to say that in 2022 the southwestern region produced such products worth almost 900 million dollars, with new types of goods mastered. For example, production of batteries and accessories has been increased. Mushroom compost production facilities were put into operation in Kobrin district. The Brest Radio Technical Plant has set up production of temperature indicators to meet the needs of Brestgazoapparat. Companies that

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<sup>1</sup> Golovchenko: Import substitution is one of the engines of the economy to counter sanctions pressure [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-importozameschenie-odin-iz-dvigatelej-ekonomiki-prizvannyj-protivostojat-sanktsionnomu-542135-2022/>



produce equipment for the processing industry have also got involved in this work. For example, KOMPO has mastered the production of a sausage-making line and AgroPischeProm has mastered the production of meat processing equipment.

In 2023 the Brest region aims to produce import-substituting products worth more than 900 million dollars, of which more than 530 million dollars worth will be exported. At the moment 146 items are being worked on, including 14 new ones. "In particular, enterprises of the region have taken up manufacturing of radiosurgical tools, construction parts made of plastics, planters and sprouting machines, zip lock packaging. A farm in Ivanovsky district grows bulbs of Dutch tulip varieties. One of the enterprises in the region has mastered the production of low-protein bakery and confectionery products"<sup>2</sup>. In addition, Pinsk-based Kuzlitmash is working on a new range of precision-formed mechanical presses. Zubr Energia has started production of rechargeable batteries using AGM technology. "Silicon Materials will produce monocrystalline silicon ingots. Production of hydrodistributors and expansion of the range of hydraulic cylinders will be organised at SALEO-Kobrin, and production of chrome-plated hydraulic cylinder rods will be established at Kobrin Tool Factory "SITOMO".

**As for Gomel Oblast** enterprises, which are actively working to replace imported products, the region produced import-substituting products worth over \$860 million in 2022. At the same time more than 70 percent of such products were exported. Among the most effective import-substituting projects is Medplast, which

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<sup>2</sup> Brest Oblast enterprises plan to produce import-substituting products worth more than \$900 million [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predpriyatija-brestskoj-oblasti-planirujut-proizvesti-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-bolee-chem-na-561252-2023>

launched innovative production of vacuum tubes for venous blood collection back in December 2021. It now produces 55 types of tubes of different sizes, volumes and fills. These products are fully compliant with world standards. "Last year [2022] more than 14.4 million tubes were produced, and the plan for 2023 is to produce 20 million tubes. In the future this production will allow to fully meet the needs of medical institutions in the country with the possibility to refuse imported analogues"<sup>3</sup>. Total demand in Belarus is 20-25 million test tubes a year.

Another example of import substitution work in the Gomel region is the Svetlogorsk Khimvolokno enterprise, where last year "import-substituting production of nitrile and latex gloves for medical and food spheres was launched. The planned production capacity of 200 million gloves a year covers all the country's needs, including those for surgical purposes"<sup>4</sup>. In addition, more than 180 new jobs have been created. Another interesting fact is the Saleo-Gomel enterprise, which has ensured a significant increase in supplies of new import-substituting hydraulic units and hydraulic equipment for the head conveyors of the machine-building holdings MTZ and Gomselmash.

**In the Mogilev region** in 2022 import-substituting products worth more than \$820 million were produced, and "more than 60% of the manufactured products worth over \$500 million were exported. Small and medium businesses account for more than half

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<sup>3</sup> From test tubes to hydroblocks: import substitution has been stepped up in the Gomel region [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/ot-probirok-do-gidroblokov-v-gomelskoj-oblasti-aktivirovali-importozameschenie-558557-2023/>

<sup>4</sup> Krupko: enterprises in the Gomel region are actively working to replace imported products [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/krupko-predpriyatija-gomelskoj-oblasti-aktivno-rabotajut-nad-zamescheniem-importnoj-produksii-557802-2023/>

of the volume of import-substituting products of the region"<sup>5</sup> . For reference, it should be noted that last year the import-substituting production in Mogilev Oblast was manufactured by 113 economic entities in 191 commodity positions. They include the Yelizovo branch of Grodno Glass Plant where the glass shop has been modernized. A project to install a glass waste sorting and processing line is currently underway there. The Red Foodstuffs Slavgorod Industrial and Manufacturing Enterprise organized an innovative production of confectionery products where more than 80 new jobs have already been created. In 2022, BelEmsa LLC commissioned facilities to produce new types of hygiene products for children - nappy panties, which are not produced in the country. Babushkina krynka OJSC, the managing company of the holding company Babushkina krynka Milk Company, is implementing a project to create new lactose-free dairy products using an innovative method of membrane technology. The project is included in the State Programme for Innovative Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025. The company is implementing a project to set up production of components for meat, flax and petrochemical plants. More than 300 spare parts for flax-mill and meat-packing plants have already been produced within the framework of the project. One more thing: enterprises of Mogilev Oblast are planning to produce import-substituting products worth \$870 million in 2023.

All these facts indicate that it is import substitution, cooperative interaction between enterprises and increased localisation of production that are effective reserves for increasing

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<sup>5</sup> Enterprises of the Mogilev region this year intend to produce import-substituting products worth \$870 million [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/predpriyatija-mogilevskoj-oblasti-v-etom-godu-namereny-proizvesti-importozameschajuschej-produktsii-na-560572-2023/>

industrial production and strengthening cooperative links between the business sector and large state holdings.

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## Strategic partnerships enter a new era

In March 2023, the leaders of the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China adopted a **joint statement** on the basic principles of the development of exemplary relations of all-weather and all-round strategic partnership of the two countries in the new era, which includes mutual support of the state course and on issues affecting each other's core interests. In addition to this joint statement, "during the state visit, Belarus and China concluded 27 intergovernmental, interagency and interregional agreements and over 10 commercial agreements in various areas"<sup>6</sup>, and the cumulative economic effect of the visit is estimated at over three and a half billion dollars.

The signed documents include **the Program of Belarusian-Chinese Scientific and Technical Cooperation for 2023-2024**, which aims at creating joint innovative production facilities between the two countries. After all, "a well-developed engineering base, a modern system for training highly qualified personnel, and many years of advanced experience of the leading Belarusian design bureaus - all this forms the basis for future high-tech industries"<sup>7</sup>. In this regard, we emphasize that Chinese investors invested over \$100 million in projects in Belarus in 2022. In addition, more than forty projects have been implemented with the participation of companies from China, and about twenty more promising initiatives are being worked out this year. In this context, the Great Stone Industrial Park

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<sup>6</sup> Foreign Ministry: Belarus President's state visit to Beijing became a significant event in relations with China [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/mid-gosvizit-prezidenta-belarusi-v-pekini-stal-znachimym-sobytiem-v-otnoshenijah-s-kr-557851-2023/>

<sup>7</sup> Belarus and China aim to create joint innovative industries [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-kitaj-natseleny-na-sozdanie-sovmestnyh-innovatsionnyh-proizvodstv-556688-2023/>

should be mentioned, where "Belarusian resident companies have launched production of glass for all types of ground transport, innovative photographic print products, automated process control systems for industry and energy in 2022. The InKata Science and Technology Park, which hosts companies engaged in scientific research and experimental development, has been put into operation" .<sup>8</sup>

It should be recalled that in the last days of 2022, the number of residents in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park Great Stone reached the 100 mark. For reference, it should be noted that "as of the end of 2021, 85 residents were registered here"<sup>9</sup> . In particular, the 99th resident was Unchenbel LLC, whose founder is a large Chinese company, SUMEC International Technology Trading. "The new resident will create an e-commerce platform allowing import and export of mechanical and electrical equipment"<sup>10</sup> . And the Belarusian company Human Kraft will produce medical products - individual bone prostheses based on 3D printing technologies, which will be used in surgery, traumatology, dentistry and in the treatment of oncological diseases. Also, at the end of December 2022, agreements of intent were signed to enter the industrial park as residents of Foryu Information Technology LLC and Tontun Information Technology LLC (People's Republic of China).

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<sup>8</sup> Abramenko: The Great Stone is a colossal business opportunity on the Belt and Road platform [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/abramenko-velikij-kamen-eto-kolosalnye-vozmozhnosti-dlja-vedenija-biznesa-na-platforme-pojas-i-put-556679-2023/>

<sup>9</sup> Zalessky, B. Partnership of flexible forms. Peculiarities of Eurasian cooperative dialogue in the context of global threats / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2022. - C. 5.

<sup>10</sup> The number of Great Stone residents has reached 100 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/kolichestvo-rezidentov-velikogo-kamnja-dostiglo-100-542481-2022/>

In addition, at the end of 2022, the industrial park's resident company, IPD Group LLC, signed a lease agreement for a 5.5 thousand-square-metre universal production building. This deal has become one of the largest in 2022 on the Belarusian industrial real estate market. "This space will be used to implement a project for the development and serial production of high-tech data processing and storage devices. In particular, the company will produce computer hardware, server equipment, monitors, and interactive smart panels. In the future, the resident plans to expand the range of import-substituting products"<sup>11</sup>. A total of 19 residents were registered in Great Stone at the end of 2022. Also. Last year, the park's residents exported their products worth more than \$100 million to 20 countries.

In 2023, the Great Stone is expected to attract at least 20 residents. Several investors from Belarus have already registered in January alone. In particular, "very interesting projects in the field of veterinary products. And the second project is in the field of science, <...> in the field of nuclear energy"<sup>12</sup>. At the end of January, a new resident, BaikalGroup LLC, was registered at the Great Stone. "A company with Chinese capital will create a transport and logistics centre in the park <...>. The park's resident plans to provide warehousing and logistics services, including storage, packaging, tracking, marking..."<sup>13</sup>. Goods will be shipped to the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union.

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<sup>11</sup> Great Stone ended the year with its biggest deal [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-velikom-kamne-zavershili-god-krupnejshej-sdelkoj-542635-2022/>

<sup>12</sup> "Great Stone plans to attract at least 20 residents this year [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/velikij-kamen-v-etom-godu-planiruet-privlech-nemee-20-rezidentov-547180-2023/>

<sup>13</sup> A new Great Stone resident will create a transport and logistics centre [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-sozdast-transportno-logisticheskij-tsentr-547574-2023/>

In February 2023, three more new residents registered in the industrial park: two with capital from Belarus and one from China. Heprotrade LLC will produce environmentally friendly thermal paper, the products of which will be widely used in sales and services. "The production capacity will be up to 300 tons per month. The implementation of the project will make it possible to provide such products for the domestic market and reduce imports, as well as supply them for export"<sup>14</sup>. The second resident, OOO Rivex, will produce innovative dressings and sterilisation materials for both the domestic market and the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union. Bel-Nord Logistics s.r.o., whose founder is a Chinese company in the field of international logistics and one of the largest in the Inner Mongolian region, plans to "develop the logistics infrastructure by building warehouses and introducing a wide range of services in the field. In addition, road transport of goods along the China-Europe route will be organised"<sup>15</sup>. This initiative will also help address the most important strategic objective - to expand the presence of Belarusian products in the Chinese market.

In just a month and a half of 2023, seven new residents have already managed to register at Velikiy Kamen. And in total, already during the life of the industrial park, "the total number is 107 residents with a planned investment of \$1.3bn"<sup>16</sup>. In order to create additional conditions for attracting new investors in 2023, work is expected to continue on further improving the park's special legal

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<sup>14</sup> Two more residents with Belarusian capital registered in Great Stone [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/esche-dva-rezidenta-s-belorusskim-kapitalom-zaregistrirovany-v-velikom-kamne-549664-2023/>

<sup>15</sup> Great Stone's new resident will develop international logistics [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-razvivat-mezhdunarodnuju-logistiku-551642-2023/>

<sup>16</sup> Great Stone has registered 7 new residents this year [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-etom-godu-velikij-kamen-zaregistiroval-7-novyh-rezidentov-551821-2023/>



regime with a focus on the implementation of new high-tech projects, including in the field of traditional and innovative Chinese medicine. Promising projects are also planned in logistics, e-commerce, fine chemistry, biotechnology, instrumentation, research and development. In February 2023, at a meeting of the working group on the China-Belarus Industrial Park, it was noted that the Great Stone sites "can quickly increase the level of localization in the production of medical and technological equipment, transport and other areas, promptly replacing the falling out imports with these products. To make the most of the existing potential, it is necessary to continue to actively develop the park, build infrastructure and declare the project on a global scale"<sup>17</sup>. In short, the current challenges dictate a window of opportunity for the industrial park's residents - in particular, and also create additional competitive advantages for the promising development of the Belarusian economy - in general.

Another important document adopted in March 2023 is the **Comprehensive Strategy for Joint Industrial Development** that is being implemented by the Ministry of Industry of Belarus and the Ministry of Industry and Information of China and provides incentives for Belarusian and Chinese enterprises to intensify and strengthen technological cooperation. A roadmap with specific projects and initiatives has been prepared to implement this strategy. "It is planned to set up joint ventures in China, use Chinese technologies and competencies to upgrade Belarusian production facilities and attract Chinese investments to implement projects in

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<sup>17</sup> Chervjakov: current economic challenges are a window of opportunity for Great Stone residents [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chervjakov-tekuschie-vyzovy-ekonomiki-okno-vozmozhnostej-dlja-rezidentov-velikogo-kamnja-550498-2023/>

Belarus"<sup>18</sup> in such major areas as mechanical engineering, electronics, woodworking, optomechanical, pulp-and-paper and chemical industries.

In particular, **Minsk Tractor Works** is ready to step up cooperation with China. A project to organise the assembly of 350-horsepower BELARUS tractors is currently underway in the Celestial Empire. The first prototype was tested in 2020-2021. Last year two more BELARUS 3523 tractors were delivered to China for certification, after which a decision will be made to localize the assembly of Belarusian tractors. And tests of the BELARUS 3523 model with a diesel engine made by the Chinese Weichai Corporation continue in Minsk. It is expected that 100 such engines will arrive at the plant in the near future. "Another direction is related to the supply of components from China. Last year imports from China amounted to \$1.8 million, by the end of the two months of this year [2023] it was \$400 thousand."<sup>19</sup> . So the parties are interested in joint investment projects.

In the course of the state visit of the Belarusian delegation to China, several documents related to the development of industries in the **agro-industrial sector** were signed. In particular, "Belarus will build the largest pig-breeding complex for 300,000 head in Minsk Region. <...> We will modify our meat cattle breeding on the basis of Mogilev Oblast. First of all, we will build a separate

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<sup>18</sup> Abramenko, A. On peculiarities of doing business in KNO, joint projects and prospects for cooperation / A. Abramenko // [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/ob-osobennostjah-vedenija-biznesa-v-knr-sovmestnyh-proektah-i-perspektivah-sotrudnichestva-8633/>

<sup>19</sup> The MTZ CEO talks about intensifying cooperation with China [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ob-aktivizatsii-sotrudnichestva-s-kitaem-rasskazal-gendirektor-mtz-553348-2023/>

slaughterhouse. About a thousand lightweight sheds will be built to house cattle of the Aberdeen-Angus or Limousin breeds"<sup>20</sup>.

Belarus also plans to nearly double food supplies to China in 2023. Last year, such exports exceeded \$500 million. At the same time, Belarusian supplies "have increased in poultry meat (3 times), rapeseed oil (3.1 times), milk and cream (1.4 times) <...>. At the moment 148 Belarusian producers in 171 categories of goods have been accredited for deliveries to China"<sup>21</sup>. The goal is to reach the \$900 million mark in food exports by 2024. Overall, Belarus has every chance of increasing its trade and economic cooperation with its Chinese partners up to USD 2.2 billion this year.

Two other interesting documents signed in Beijing in early March 2023 concern the topic of **regional cooperation**. The first one is the **plan for the Year of Belarus and China Regions 2023**, which "contains over 80 bilateral agreements and initiatives"<sup>22</sup> to attract at least USD 150 million of direct Chinese investments by 2026 in each Belarusian oblast and Minsk. The second is the **Agreement between the Ministry of Economy of Belarus and the Ministry of Commerce of China on deepening of trade and economic cooperation between the regions of the two countries**, in which the parties emphasize three Chinese regions. First, **Tianjin** is a central city with a predominantly industrial and logistics orientation. Secondly, **Qingdao**, located in **Shandong** province, where manufacturing and medical enterprises are particularly

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<sup>20</sup> Belarus expects to nearly double food supplies to China [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-rasschityvaet-pochti-v-dva-raza-narastit-objemy-postavok-prodovolstvija-v-kitaj-553023-2023/>

<sup>21</sup> Belarusian exports to China almost doubled in 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/za-2022-god-eksport-belorusskih-tovarov-v-kitaj-prakticheski-udvoilsja-556681-2023/>

<sup>22</sup> Abramenko: Belarus and China seek to deepen bilateral cooperation in all areas [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/abramenko-belarus-i-kitaj-stremjatsja-k-uglubleniju-dvustoronnego-vzaimodejstviya-vo-vseh-oblastjah-556675-2023/>

developed and where the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization** free trade zone is actively used. Thirdly, **Chongqing** is another central city. "It is the heart of logistics, transit. Here it is mostly e-commerce, with an emphasis on transport and logistics, including green corridors. This is where the train is not checked at the border but controlled at the destination, which gives a big plus in cost and time."<sup>23</sup> .

Also in early March 2023, Belarus and China signed a **plan to develop cooperation in health care for the period 2023-2025**, which notes that "the parties will develop cooperation in health care, science and education based on the principles of national legislation of the countries as well as on the principles of mutual benefit and mutual assistance"<sup>24</sup> . The two countries will give priority to cooperation in such areas as: organization of joint medical research, exchange of experience in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases; organization of seminars and workshops for experts; cooperation in epidemiology and microbiology and exchange of data on the spread of epidemic diseases; cooperation in surgery, transplantation and haematology; participation in international medical exhibitions held in the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus.<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that back in the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of an All-round and Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, published in September 2022, Belarus and China agreed to develop cooperation in the field of high-tech medicine, vaccines

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<sup>23</sup> . Nikolay Snopkov: The cumulative economic effect of the Belarus-China agreements is estimated at more than \$3.5 billion [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10547>.

<sup>24</sup> Plan on development of cooperation in health care for 2023-2025 signed between Belarus and China [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://minzdrav.gov.by/ru/sobytiya/podpisan-plan-po-razvitiyu-sotrudnichestva-v-oblasti-zdravookhraneniya-na-2023-2025-gody-mezhdu-bela/>

<sup>25</sup> China and Belarus adopt a Joint Declaration [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://viazda.by/ru/news/20220916/1663330543-kitay-i-belarus-prinyali-sovmestnuyu-deklaraciyu>

and pharmaceuticals and "prioritised the establishment of a joint pharmaceutical cluster, commercialisation of new pharmaceutical products and technologies and the creation of a high-quality centre for traditional Chinese medicine in Belarus" xml-ph-0

For the record, the two countries have longstanding ties in the field of medicine. The first agreement on cooperation in healthcare and medical science between the Belarusian and Chinese ministries of health was signed back in 1994. In 2021, a decree of the Belarusian government "On state registration of strategically important medicines" was adopted, allowing for their accelerated registration for pandemic control. At the same time the Ministry of Health for the first time registered a preparation of Chinese traditional medicine (TCM) - soft capsules "CINVI". Today "in Belarus there are 810 registered medical products, 502 medical items and 480 remedies produced in China. Since April 2020 to date the PRC has donated the equivalent of \$30 million worth of personal protective equipment, medical and diagnostic equipment and a vaccine against COVID-19 to Belarus. .<sup>26</sup>

Our country has already established TKM centres and the necessary business environment for setting up pharmaceutical production facilities. In particular, for the residents of the Great Stone Park, the Ministry of Health of Belarus has developed a booklet "Main aspects of admission to circulation of medical devices and medicinal products" in Russian and Chinese to inform them about the opportunities and preferences. Besides, the works on the architectural project "Construction of a polyclinic on the territory of the Great Stone Park taking into account establishment therein of a

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<sup>26</sup> The Belarusian Ministry of Health and Weigao signed a cooperation agreement [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/minzdrav-belarusi-i-kompanija-weigao-podpisali-soglasenie-o-sotrudnichestve-552445-2023/>

regional centre for promotion of traditional and innovative Chinese medicine" have already been completed. The work on inclusion of the specialty "doctor of traditional Chinese medicine" into the nomenclature of positions is being completed, which will give additional impulse for promotion of this topic in Belarus.

In late February 2023, the Ministry of Health of Belarus and the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine of China announced that they were preparing a memorandum on TCM, which should reflect the establishment of a TCM centre in Belarus, a pharmaceutical cluster and development of traditional Chinese medicine in the China-Belarus Industrial Park Great Stone. It should be noted that "in Belarus reflexology methods, diagnostic methods, therapeutic gymnastics, classical acupuncture, Chinese massage, as well as treatment methods based on modern technologies - electroacupuncture, laser acupuncture, ultrasonic acupuncture are used <...>. The centres of traditional Chinese medicine have been established in regional centres of Belarus. There is cooperation with a number of universities - Tianjin University, Changchun University, Zhejiang University of Traditional Chinese Medicine..."<sup>27</sup>. Besides, the educational process in this specialty is carried out at the Belarusian Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education at the Department of Reflexotherapy. On average, more than 200 doctors are trained each year. Employees of the department have repeatedly trained in Beijing, Taiyuan and Tianjin. These methods have proven to be effective, including in the treatment of postvoid syndrome. Every year in Belarus, reflexologists carry out around 900,000 reflexology procedures.

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<sup>27</sup> Belarus and China prepare a memorandum on traditional Chinese medicine [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-knr-gotovjat-memorandum-po-voprosam-traditsionnoj-kitajskoj-meditsiny-552902-2023/>

In 2023, the parties continue to actively cooperate in this context. In February, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus signed a number of cooperation agreements with Chinese partners. First, in the city of Weihai in Shandong province, with Weigao International Medical Trading Company, which supplies medical products and spare parts made in China. Second, in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, with the North China Pharmaceutical Company Limited (NCPC). "This company has been chosen as a strategic partner who will represent the interests of Belpharmprom Holding in procurement of pharmaceutical substances in the People's Republic of China, as well as perform market research functions, submit proposals to the management company of the holding for supply of substances and raw materials in accordance with requests"

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As regards development of cooperation between Belarus and China in the new era in **the field of education**, in February 2023, Beijing hosted the China Education Expo, which included a thematic exposition titled Education in Belarus, where leading Belarusian universities made presentations of their educational programmes: the Belarusian State University of Economics, the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics, the Minsk State Linguistic University, the Belarusian State University of Radioelectronics, the Minsk State Linguistic University, the Belarusian State University of Radioelectronics, and the Minsk State Linguistic University. It should be noted that the Belarusian exposition was the only foreign exposition at this educational forum,

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<sup>28</sup> A cooperation agreement was signed by the Ministry of Health of Belarus and a Chinese pharmaceutical company [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-podpisali-minzdrav-belarusi-i-kitajskaja-farmkompanija-552543-2023>

which was visited by more than two thousand young men and women from China who are interested in studying in Belarus.

In addition, during the talks held in the Chinese capital at the Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture, the possibility of Belarusian higher education institutions joining the International Engineering and Architecture Consortium of Educational Institutions was discussed. And in total, "as a result of meetings of representatives of Belarusian universities in Chinese universities and consulting companies 17 agreements on cooperation in the field of educational services have been signed, 16 agreements are being prepared for signing"<sup>29</sup>. For reference, it should be noted that "Belarusian and Chinese partners have already signed over 540 direct cooperation agreements. Almost 500 citizens of the Republic of Belarus are currently studying in the PRC, the number of Chinese students in Belarusian universities has reached 8,000"<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, the creation of joint educational structures is actively promoted in Belarus and China. For instance, seven joint projects are already in operation: three laboratories, two centres and two institutes. Forty joint educational programmes of the first and second levels of higher education are being implemented, 10 of which have been developed in the last two years.

In this context, an important player in international cooperation with the People's Republic of China in the field of education is **the Belarusian State University (BSU)**, which already cooperates with more than 50 Chinese universities, and over three

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<sup>29</sup> Belarus-China: 17 new education agreements signed [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-kitaj-podpisano-17-novyh-soglashenij-v-oblasti-obrazovanija-553144-2023/>

<sup>30</sup> Zalesky, B. Route of interaction - Asia. Intensification of Belarus' multidimensional relations with the main economic partners on the continent / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023. - C. 19.



thousand citizens of the Celestial Empire now study in its classrooms. In March 2023, the BSU identified new vectors and forms of cooperation with leading Chinese universities to strengthen, intensify and expand the areas of partnership.

In particular, BSU is reaching a new level of cooperation with Peking University, which is the oldest university in China and was founded back in 1898, where the local library has over eight million books and where over 46,000 students, including over four thousand foreigners, are studying. Recall that the two universities signed a memorandum of understanding in 2019. In March 2023, the parties initiated cooperation in the field of mathematical sciences. "The development of joint research projects, academic exchanges for lectures on modern advances in probability theory, mathematical statistics and data analysis are seen as promising"<sup>31</sup>. In addition, cooperation in the field of joint training of Master's and PhD students will be expanded. To this end, the topic will be analysed in detail in the near future to identify the specialties and scientific fields of knowledge in which they plan to cooperate.

Another BSU partner in China is Beijing Foreign Studies University, one of the country's leading universities in the field of linguistics training. As a follow-up to the agreements with it since 2017, BSU signed a student exchange agreement in March 2023 to develop academic mobility of Chinese, Belarusian and Russian language students and undergraduates. The parties will also develop joint innovative pedagogical methods.

And China University of Political Science and Law became a new partner of the BSU following meetings held in March 2023.

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<sup>31</sup> BSU reaches a new level of cooperation with Peking University [Electronic resource]. - 2023.  
- URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/bgu-vyhodit-na-novyj-uroven-sotrudnichestva-s-pekinskim-universitetom-557082-2023/>

The universities signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which will allow cooperation in the field of jurisprudence in numerous vectors. "These include exchange of students, opening of joint educational programmes, implementation of joint research and educational projects, exchange of information, teaching materials and scientific reports, organisation of conferences, seminars, workshops and courses and preparation of joint publications" .<sup>32</sup>

**Brest State Technical University** (BrSTU) is also among the active Belarusian HEIs developing cooperation with Chinese partners. In January 2023, BrSTU signed an agreement on cooperation in education, science and culture with Guangdong Construction Vocational Technical Institute to join efforts of the two educational institutions to jointly train qualified specialists for the benefit of the economies of the two countries. The two sides plan to create a joint educational programme to train Chinese students. There is talk about forming training groups where students will study in China for the first two years and then in Belarus. The Chinese were especially interested in the "architecture" specialty. "These joint educational programs are very popular because they allow students to get two diplomas in one cycle of training."<sup>33</sup>

The Guangdong Construction Vocational Training Institute is the largest and only state-run higher vocational education institution that trains builders and architects and is located in the industrial centre of southern China. It has a total of 22,000 students. With the support of the National Development and Reform Commission of

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<sup>32</sup> Student exchanges, joint programmes: BSU and leading Chinese universities identify new vectors of cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/obmen-studentami-sovmestnye-programmy-bgu-i-veduschie-vyzy-kitaja-opredelili-novye-vektory-557224-2023/>

<sup>33</sup> Brest University and Guangdong Institute will jointly train architects and builders [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/brestskij-universitet-i-guandunskij-institut-budut-sovmestno-gotovit-arhitektorov-i-stroitelej-543128-2023/>

the People's Republic of China, an industrial and educational integration base has been built on the institute, where students study various innovative and traditional construction technologies, design methods, water supply systems, BIM technologies, and real estate management. As for BrStU, more than 200 Chinese citizens are studying in Brest today. The most popular among them are specialties in the field of economics, construction and mechanical engineering.

Finally, another set of documents signed in early March 2023 in Beijing concerned cooperation in **the media sector**. This included **an agreement on cooperation between the news agencies of Belarus and China - BELTA and Xinhua**. In this regard, it should be noted that the first cooperation agreement between BELTA and Xinhua was signed back in January 1993, then re-signed in June 2018. The new document - already the third - "implies the exchange of text news, photos and videos, mutual support and promotion on the Internet and social networks"<sup>34</sup>. The agencies agreed to exchange experiences and train journalists, editors and technical staff to improve their professional skills.

All these initiatives and projects adopted this spring in the relevant documents show that cooperation between Belarus and China as a whole tends to strengthen in all areas, but there is still a big untapped potential that will be realized in a new era - an exemplary relationship of all-weather and all-round strategic partnership between the two countries.

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<sup>34</sup> BELTA and Xinhua sign agreement on strengthening cooperation and enhancing news exchange [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belta-i-sinhua-podpisali-soglasenie-ob-ukreplenii-sotrudnichestva-i-aktivizatsii-obmena-novostjami-553192-2023/>

## Using exhibition specifics

At the 9th meeting of the joint intergovernmental commission for bilateral cooperation between Belarus and Uzbekistan in 2022, it was noted that the two sides should achieve a multiple increase in mutual trade in the near future through joint efforts. At the same time, "the importance of continuing systemic work for new promising joint initiatives" was emphasized<sup>35</sup>, including the development of Belarusian exports in the Uzbek market with the use of exhibition specifics. There will be several such projects in 2023.

In March 2023, Tashkent already hosted the 22nd international exhibition of food products, ingredients and production technologies - UzFood, where Belarus presented a large-scale exposition - The Taste of Nature - with more than 20 food producers participating. Concern Belgospischeprom presented products of the confectionary factories Kommunarka, Spartak and Krasny Pestrovik, which introduced the best products and new products - new types of confectionery, chocolate and chocolates, waffles, biscuits, chewy and jelly marmalade to guests of the Belarusian pavilion.

The exhibition also featured a wide range of meat processing enterprises and dairy products producers from the holding company Grodnomiasomolprom and Brestmyasomolprom Concern. These were Brest, Pinsk, Slonim, Volkovyssk, Grodno and Oshmyansk meat processing plants, which offered high-quality beef in various versions, sausages and meat semi-finished products. In particular, Grodno meat processing plant demonstrated new products, bringing

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<sup>35</sup> Zalessky, B.L. It is important to continue systematic work for new projects / B.L. Zalessky // Materials of the XVIII International scientific and practical conference "Proceedings of academic science - 2022", August 30 - September 7, 2022: Sheffield. Science and education LTD. - C. 3.

to Uzbekistan raw smoked sausages "Oriental" and "Caucasian", cooked smoked salami "Favorit" with olives, as well as with cheese.

The dairy segment is represented by Kobrin Butter and Cheese Plant, Minsk Margarine Plant, Luninets Dairy Plant, Lida Dairy and Canning Plant, Molochny Mir, Molochny Gostinets and Minsk Dairy Plant No.1. "Belarusian producers display a wide range of whole-milk products - milk, cream, kefir, cheese, cottage cheese, creams and yoghurts"<sup>36</sup>. Oil and fats products and rapeseed oil were also on display. Bread products were presented by Berezești Baker OJSC, and the Bellakt company showed baby food products. Besides, the products of such enterprises as JSC Malorita Cannery and JSC Lidskiye Food Concentrates were displayed.

The exhibition included an Uzbek-Belarusian business forum attended by more than 50 leaders and representatives of government agencies and business circles of the two countries, where cooperation in agriculture and food was discussed, the food potential of Belarus was outlined, and the export potential of the Brest and Grodno regions was presented. In addition, the business communities of the two countries held B2B talks that took place separately and at the stands of Belarusian companies. As for the specific outcome of the exhibition, "Grodno meat processing plant concluded a \$500,000 contract for the supply of meat products, and Minsk Margarine Plant concluded a \$10 million contract for the supply of its products. Minsk Dairy Plant No.1 held talks during the exhibition on increasing sales to its key partners in Uzbekistan, in particular, on supplies of butter and skimmed milk powder, and

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<sup>36</sup> Belarus presented an exposition at the food industry exhibition in Tashkent [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-predstavila-ekspozitsiju-na-vystavke-pischevoj-promyshlennosti-v-tashkente-557927-2023/>

concluded a contract for the supply of dairy products"<sup>37</sup>. Bellakt has discussed opportunities to increase product sales, increase supplies of dried baby food and agreed to supply this Central Asian country with curd desserts and dried milk, including lactose-free, while Molochny Mir has signed an agreement to supply almost two and a half thousand tonnes of dried whey and over a thousand tonnes of dried milk.

Among the Belarusian companies that are actively interested in promoting their export products in the Uzbek market is also Bobruiskagromash Holding Company. In March 2023, during the international exhibition 'Agriculture - AgroWorld Uzbekistan-2023', specialists of the Belarusian company held talks with key Uzbek partners - Metal processing, Planeta Servis and MCHJ Buxoro Agro Texnika Garant, "with whom further volumes of machinery supplies were agreed, as well as technical performance of machines to adapt them to the requirements of the Uzbek market. In addition, during the talks, the representative of the holding acquainted the partners with new Bobruiskagromash machinery: cotton cultivator, seed drills and heavy trailers"<sup>38</sup>. The partners from Uzbekistan confirmed their interest in annual deliveries of agricultural machinery from Bobruisk. For reference: since 2022, machines for application of solid organic fertilisers and rotary mower shredders have already been operating in the Uzbek fields.

In April 2023, Tashkent will host the international industrial exhibition Innoprom. Central Asia", which covers six thematic

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<sup>37</sup> Belarusian enterprises intend to increase supplies to Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-predpriyatija-namereny-narastit-postavki-v-uzbekistan-559267-2023/>

<sup>38</sup> Uzbekistan is interested in supplying agricultural machinery to Bobruiskagromash [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/uzbekistan-zainteresovan-v-postavkah-selskoho-zajstvlennoj-tehniki-bobrujskagromasha-556555-2023/>

sections: mechanical engineering, metallurgy and materials, energy solutions, chemical industry technologies, information and telecommunication technologies, and infrastructure development. The exhibition will feature an extensive Belarusian exposition of Made in Belarus, which will present the best industrial developments and innovative equipment of the flagships of the country's machine-building industry. "Seven major enterprises have already expressed their interest in participation: the Belarusian Metallurgical Plant, BELAZ, Minsk Tractor Works, BATE, Scientific and Technological Park of BNTU "Polytechnik", "Gomselmash", "StankoGomel" .<sup>39</sup>

Another important reserve for Belarusian-Uzbek economic relations is the intensification of partnerships between the free economic zones (FEZs) of Belarus and Uzbekistan, whose residents can build cooperation in various areas. In March 2023, constructive negotiations were held between FEZ administrations of Gomel-Raton and Navoi during the Third Congress of Consolidated Economic Zones in Gomel, where the potential for mutually beneficial partnership was discussed. In particular, "The first direction is sales of goods in demand of FEZ Gomel-Raton residents in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is quite an interesting market. It has a population of 36 million people. <...> lots of foreign investments, infrastructure projects"<sup>40</sup> . And among the most sought-after products by Gomel manufacturers, the Uzbek side names such topical items as industrial, boiler, heating, ventilation and cooling

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<sup>39</sup> Belarus to present its exposition at Innoprom. Central Asia" in Tashkent [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-predstavit-ekspozitsiju-na-vystavke-innoprom-tsentralnaja-azija-v-tashkente-557617-2023/>

<sup>40</sup> Industrial cooperation and entering new markets. CEO of Navoi FEZ about the partnership between Belarus and Uzbekistan [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/promkooperatsija-i-vyhod-na-novye-rynki-gendirektor-sez-navoi-o-partnerstve-belarusi-i-uzbekistana-557030-2023/>

equipment, as well as energy-saving and energy-efficient technologies. In short, the Uzbek market is an important area for Belarusian exports to Central Asia. And this is just the beginning.

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## Roadmap paves the way for cooperation

In March 2023 in Tehran, the Presidents of Belarus and Iran signed a roadmap of comprehensive cooperation between the two countries for 2023-2026, which provides for cooperation between Minsk and Tehran in a wide range of areas - in politics, economy, consular, science and technology, education, culture, arts, media and tourism. This document has become one of the most important elements of the legal framework for cooperation between Belarus and Iran. For reference, we note that "the Belarusian-Iranian legal registry includes more than 30 international treaties and more than 70 other documents" .<sup>41</sup>

In March, eight more agreements were added to the list, including: the intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the field of plant quarantine and plant protection and the agreement on the transfer of convicts to serve their sentences; memoranda of understanding between the Belarusian Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran, as well as between the Belarusian State Committee for Standardization and the Iranian National Organization for Standardization. Speaking about the memorandum on **standardization**, we emphasize that the document provides for interaction of the parties in the field of conformity assessment procedures, standards and technical regulations for issuing halal certificates and their mutual recognition for the products manufactured and supplied by the countries. "At the same time, the mutual recognition of the results of halal certification applies only to certificates issued by the relevant bodies of the

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<sup>41</sup> Koltsov: the Belarusian-Iranian legal register includes more than 30 international treaties and 70 other documents [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/koltsov-belorussko-iranskij-pravovoj-reestr-vkljuchaet-bolee-30-mezhdunarodnyh-dogovorov-i-70-drugih-554851-2023/>

parties: the Iranian National Organization for Standardization (INSO) and BelHalal Ltd. The parties also plan to exchange experience and knowledge in the field of technology, competencies, infrastructure facilities, as well as research and development related to halal products"<sup>42</sup> . In addition, the parties reached promising agreements in industry, trade, transport and agriculture. This shows that for Belarus, Iran is the most important partner in the Middle East. And the two sides are interested in mutually beneficial long-term cooperation in a number of areas.

It should be recalled that over the past two years the relations between Belarus and Iran have demonstrated a major breakthrough. "In 2021, trade turnover between the countries exceeded \$33 million, an increase of more than a third compared to 2020. But over the past year, the level of trade added even more significantly: in 2022, Belarus and Iran traded over \$100 million, a threefold increase"<sup>43</sup> . **Economic cooperation** remains the key area of Belarus-Iran cooperation. In July 2022 at the 15th session of the mixed Belarusian-Iranian commission for economic cooperation it was stated that "Minsk and Tehran are interested in increasing the volume of trade between the two countries. In the best years the sides used to reach \$250-300 million."<sup>44</sup> . So the potential of the bilateral cooperation allows increasing the trade turnover within the next few years. In particular, "new deliveries of quarry machinery, cargo and passenger vehicles to Iran are being actively discussed.

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<sup>42</sup> Belarus and Iran will mutually recognise the results of certification of halal products [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-iran-budut-vzaimno-priznavat-rezultaty-sertifikatsii-haljalnoj-produktsii-555113-2023/>

<sup>43</sup> Raisi: Iran-Belarus relations show breakthrough [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/raisi-otnoshenija-mezhdu-iranom-i-belarusju-prodemonstrovali-proryv-555018-2023/>

<sup>44</sup> Zalesky, B.L. Industry, Regions, Agriculture / B.L. Zalesky // Materials for XVII International Scientific Practical Conference, Innovations on Scientific Progress - 2022, 17 - 25 August 2022: Sofia. "Byal GRAD-BG". - C. 57.

Work is continuing on the details of a licensing agreement to organise the joint assembly of tractors in Iran"<sup>45</sup>. Another interesting fact: enterprises of the Bellesbumprom Concern increased exports to this Middle Eastern country by 2.3 times in 2022. "Positive dynamics was also observed in January of this year. The growth rate amounted to 134% compared to January 2022. Pulp, paper and cardboard and lumber are actively supplied to Iran".<sup>46</sup>

Belarus and Iran are also developing cooperation in **the transport sector**. In March 2023, the two countries agreed on a permit-free system for road transport of goods. Apparently, "already in 2023, road carriers will be able to transport cargo without permits <...>. From 26 March this year Iranian airline Mahan Air will start regular flights twice a week on the Tehran-Minsk-Tehran route"<sup>47</sup>. The transport theme is continued by the fact that Belarus, together with Iran, will take part in the development of the international North-South transport corridor. After all, "the Iranian side needs to build about 180 kilometres of railway today. And the Iranian side has actively embarked on this work to complete the North-South railway corridor in the direction of the port of Bandar Abbas."<sup>48</sup>. This project is quite important for Belarus, as it actualizes Belarusian transit via Iran to distant countries.

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<sup>45</sup> Rogozhnik: the potential of Belarus and Iran makes it possible to significantly increase mutual trade turnover [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rogozhnik-potentsialy-belarusi-i-irana-pozvoljajut-znachitelno-uvlechit-vzaimnyj-tovarooborot-554952-2023/>

<sup>46</sup> Enterprises of Bellesbumprom increased exports to Iran 2.3 times last year [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-bellesbumproma-v-proshlom-godu-uvlechili-eksport-v-iran-v-23-raza-555029-2023/>

<sup>47</sup> Belarus and Iran agree on a permit-free system for road transport of goods [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-iran-dogovorilis-o-bezrazreshitelnoj-sisteme-avtoperevozok-gruzov-555173-2023/>

<sup>48</sup> Belarus will participate in the development of the North-South transport corridor via Iran [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-primet-uchastie-v-razvitanii-transportnogo-koridora-sever-jug-cherez-iran-555159-2023/>

Another important topic in the context of Belarusian-Iranian engagement is the development of active **interregional dialogue**. In this regard, we would like to remind that "relations between the Homiel Region and Mazandaran Province, Mogilev Region and Eastern Azerbaijan, Minsk Region and the Iranian capital region are developing. Ties have been established between Minsk and Tehran, as well as between Mogilev and Tabriz"<sup>49</sup>.

Among the Belarusian regions that actively cooperated with Iranian partners in 2022, it is worth mentioning **Minsk Region**, whose trade turnover with Iran increased 10.5 times compared with 2021. More specifically, "in January-December 2022, trade turnover between the Minsk region and the Islamic Republic of Iran totaled \$51190.5 thousand (growth rate 114.1%). Including exports - \$44309.8 thousand (120%), imports - \$6880.7 thousand (113.5%). A foreign trade surplus amounted to \$37429.1 thousand"<sup>50</sup>. Last year, the basis of exports of the Minsk region was longitudinally sawn timber, plywood, wooden veneered panels, other engines and power plants, electric motors and generators and sawn timber. The Minsk region, in turn, imports dates, figs, pineapples, avocados, guavas, mangoes, mangosteen, lettuce, chicory fresh and chilled, other vegetables, fruits and nuts from Iran. In addition, several successful Iranian projects are "underway in the Capital Region. Projects such as AFTAB, the Bel Peka Paint project and the Eastern Shipp sheep

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<sup>49</sup> Koltsov, D. Trade, cooperation and removal of barriers. How Belarus and Iran will celebrate the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations during Lukashenka's visit to Teheran / D. Koltsov // [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/torgovlja-kooperatsija-i-snjatie-barjerov-chem-belarus-i-iran-otmetjat-30-letie-dipnotnoshenij-vo-vremja-8621/>.

<sup>50</sup> Narkievich, G. "We welcome Iranian investments in our economy". Turchin met with the country's ambassador / G. Narkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://mlyn.by/15022023/my-privetstvuem-iranske-investiczi-v-nashu-ekonomiku-turchin-vstretilsya-s-poslom-strany/>.

breeding project may be noted."<sup>51</sup> . In the future, the parties seem to have great prospects for development in a number of areas.

The Belarusian side is also attentive to other proposals for cooperation between the regions. In 2022 alone, direct interaction has been established with the governors of the Iranian provinces of Hormozgan, Mazandaran, Isfahan and Gilan, as well as with the mayors of Bandar Abbas, Isfahan, Rasht and Astara. This shows that new ties between the regions and cities of the two countries are, as they say, on the way.

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<sup>51</sup> The trade turnover between the Minsk region and Iran increased more than tenfold in 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tovarooborot-minskoj-oblasti-i-irana-v-2022-godu-vyros-bolee-chem-v-desyat-raz-550380-2023/>

## **The growth reserves must be brought into action**

In 2022, Belarus and Hungary marked the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. In recent years, Minsk and Budapest have been trying to intensify contacts and increase the level of partnership. Back in May 2020, at the 10th meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Hungarian Commission (IGC) for economic cooperation, the sides discussed urgent issues of trade cooperation, as well as the state of partnership in agriculture, pharmaceuticals, energy, transport, science, education and tourism. The participants of that meeting stated that "today there are considerable growth reserves in the cooperation between the two countries, and both Minsk and Budapest would like to put them into action in the near future"<sup>52</sup>. And in 2021 the Belarusian-Hungarian trade turnover exceeded \$230 million, having increased by a quarter since 2017. Meanwhile, Belarusian exports grew by 26 percent to almost \$90 million during that time. "The commodity structure of exports includes 170 commodity items. The most important of them are products of mechanical engineering, woodworking and metallurgy"<sup>53</sup>. But already in 2022, for a number of reasons, the figures for trade turnover declined, so this year the two sides appear to have set about building up trade and economic ties.

Thus, at the end of January 2023, a meeting of the joint Belarusian-Hungarian working group for cooperation in agriculture was held in Minsk, where the parties discussed the intensification of

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<sup>52</sup> Zalessky, B.L. Belarus-Hungary: partnership vector - agriculture / B.L. Zalessky // Materials for XVI International Scientific Practical Conference, Innovations in European Science - 2020, 15 - 22 June 2020. Ekonomiki. : Sofia. "Bial GRAD-BG. - C. 38.

<sup>53</sup> Ulahovič representatives of the Hungarian business community discussed the prospects of trade and economic ties [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ulahovich-i-predstaviteli-biznes-soobschestva-vengrii-obsudili-perspektivy-torgovo-ekonomicheskikh-497758-2022/>

cooperation in a number of areas. In particular, these included "priorities in the agricultural policy of both countries, experience in implementing innovations in agriculture and the development of organic farming, as well as the development of the agricultural sector and food security issues"<sup>54</sup>. Participants exchanged experiences in business and sectoral cooperation, including partnerships in poultry farming, seed breeding and breeding through cooperation with Hungarian companies Babolna TETRA, Agrofeed, Woodstock. In April 2023, Budapest hosted the first meeting of the Belarusian-Hungarian working group for cooperation in architecture, urban planning and construction, whose participants - representatives of relevant organizations and companies of both countries - in a detailed dialogue discussed a number of issues and promising areas of cooperation in the construction sector and "confirmed their interest in further joint work and agreed to work on mutually beneficial projects."<sup>55</sup>

Finally, in April 2023, the 11th IGC meeting was held in Budapest, where topical issues of practical cooperation in the economic and investment fields were discussed. "The main focus was on the prospects for cooperation in agriculture, industry, energy and water management"<sup>56</sup>. Scientific research, education and development of the contractual and legal framework for bilateral cooperation between Belarus and Hungary were also discussed. It

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<sup>54</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture and Food discussed issues of intensifying cooperation with Hungary [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-minselhozprode-obsudili-voprosy-aktivizatsii-sotrudnichestva-s-vengrijei-547587-2023/>

<sup>55</sup> Belarus and Hungary hold the first meeting of the Architectural and Construction Cooperation Group [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-vengrija-proveli-pervoe-zasedanie-gruppy-po-sotrudnichestvu-v-arhitekturnoj-i-stroitelnoj-559326-2023/>

<sup>56</sup> Economy, investments, advanced technologies. Head of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry visited Hungary [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/ekonomika-investitsii-peredovye-tehnologii-glava-belorusskogo-mid-posetil-vengriju-560951-2023/>

should be noted that the framework already includes about 20 international treaties covering, among others, trade, economic, scientific and cultural cooperation, agriculture, sports, tourism and education. During the 11th meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission the sides signed another document - a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of nuclear energy, which creates a good basis for future cooperation in this area. The more so because energy security issues are of paramount importance for Hungary. After all, "regardless of the geopolitical situation, nuclear safety is important to everyone. Without nuclear energy it is not possible to achieve the global climate goals"<sup>57</sup>.

Also in April, on the sidelines of the 11th IGC meeting in Budapest, the Belarusian-Hungarian Economic Forum was held, where over 70 companies from various sectors and business structures of the two countries were represented and it was noted that "the areas of Belarusian-Hungarian cooperation cover a wide range of industries: agrarian industry, construction, industrial cooperation, medicine"<sup>58</sup>. There are several specific joint projects that are being worked on. First, "the Belarusian factory here [in Hungary] has a representative office, but in the near future there will also be an assembly shop"<sup>59</sup>. Second, the two sides intend to develop cooperation in pharmaceuticals, where the Hungarian

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<sup>57</sup> Szijjártó: Hungary is interested in using Belarus' experience and knowledge in the nuclear power sector [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sijjarto-vengrija-zainteresovana-ispolzovat-opyt-i-znanija-belarusi-v-oblasti-atomnoj-energetiki-560927-2023>

<sup>58</sup> Belarus and Hungary discuss possible cooperation in agriculture and pharmacology [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-vengrija-obsuzhdajut-vozmozhnuju-kooperatsiju-v-selskom-hozjajstve-i-farmakologii-560940-2023>

<sup>59</sup> Hungary plans to open an assembly facility for Belarusian tractors [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-vengrii-planirujut-otkryt-sborochnoe-proizvodstvo-belorusskih-tractorov-560949-2023>



pharmaceutical and biotech company Gedeon Richter has a special role to play.

Third, the two countries are interested in expanding cooperation in science and technology and increasing the mutual turnover of high-tech products. It should be recalled that the basis of bilateral cooperation in science, technology and innovation is a memorandum of understanding signed in 2013 between the Belarusian State Committee for Science and Technology and the National Office for Research, Development and Innovation of Hungary. In 2016, a working group was established to coordinate cooperation. In 2015-2022, organisations from Belarus and Hungary were partners in 13 projects, including in areas such as information and communication technologies, new materials and instrumentation. In addition, there are a number of cooperation agreements between Belarusian and Hungarian scientific organizations. In particular, this is "an agreement between the academies of sciences, an agreement between the Belarusian State University and the Institute of Geography of the Research Centre for Astronomy and Earth Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences"<sup>60</sup>. The initiative to hold the 3rd meeting of the working group on scientific and technical cooperation and to organize a contest of Belarusian-Hungarian scientific and technical projects in 2023 was voiced at the 11th meeting of the IGC. All this shows that there are prospects of interaction in this area.

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<sup>60</sup> Belarus is interested in expanding cooperation with Hungary in science and technology [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-rasshirenii-sotrudnichestva-s-vengrijej-v-nauchno-tehnicheskoy-sfere-561135-2023/>

## From pinpointed steps to coordinated interaction

In late January 2023, a Belarusian delegation led by the President of Belarus paid a state visit to Zimbabwe, during which contracts were concluded to supply about four thousand pieces of Belarusian tractors, agricultural and other machinery to that African country, with the total economic effect estimated at USD 200 million. Let us remind you that "a few years ago Zimbabwe embarked on the course of modernization of its agriculture. And from 2020 the Belarusian side began to supply machinery as part of the program of mechanization of agriculture of this southern African country."<sup>61</sup> . A package of important bilateral documents was also signed during the visit, which includes basic economic agreements to ensure the development of industrial cooperation and economic cooperation with this South African state. A bilateral joint standing committee has been set up to further enhance cooperation, and a coordinating body, a task force of the two countries' ministries of agriculture, will also begin its work.

At the same time, Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, hosted the second Belarus-Zimbabwe Business Forum "Expanding Horizons: Dynamic Solutions for Economic Development," which was attended by 33 Belarusian companies and noted that the areas of healthcare, food, light industry, mechanical engineering, metallurgy, fuel and energy, mining, chemical and wood processing industries were seen as the most promising for bilateral engagement. For reference, note that "trade turnover between Belarus and Zimbabwe has increased 7-fold since 2018 and reached \$39m as of January-

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<sup>61</sup> Zalessky, B.L. Continued cooperation will be effective / B.L. Zalessky // Materiały XX Międzynarodowej naukowi-praktycznej konferencji "Strategiczne pytania światowej nauki - 2023", Volume 2. Przemysł: Nauka i studia. - C. 27.

November last [2022] year"<sup>62</sup> . During the forum, industrial enterprises of Belarus signed a package of documents with partners from Zimbabwe. In particular, memorandums and agreements on cooperation between the official dealer - AFTRADE DMCC - and JSC Lidselmash, JSC Gomselmash, JSC Bobruiskagromash and JSC Minsk Motor Plant Holding Management Company were adopted to develop cooperation in the agricultural sector in order to sell products of these enterprises in the market of that country. MTZ and AFTRADE DMCC also adopted a strategic partnership document to promote BELARUS machinery in Zimbabwe. For this purpose, in 2023-2024 Minsk Tractor Works will supply 3,575 vehicles to the Zimbabwean market, and in the future the quantity of vehicles and the terms of delivery will be determined based on the results of the negotiations. It should be noted that "between 2018 and 2022, Minsk Tractor Plant delivered more than 1,800 machines to Zimbabwe"<sup>63</sup> . And a multifunctional service centre with branches in Mutare and Bulawayo and a spare parts warehouse to service the supplied machinery has been established in Harare. And MTW together with the partner on a constant basis trains users in features of operation of BELARUS tractors. Another interesting fact - "the signing of a memorandum of intent between JSC BELAZ, SOHRA Overseas FZE and Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company Pvt Ltd to

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<sup>62</sup> A transcontinental bridge, investments and Belarusian ice cream in Africa. Details of the Harare Business Forum [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/transkontinentalnyj-most-investitsii-i-belorusskoe-morozhenoe-v-afrike-podrobnosti-biznes-foruma-v-547289-2023/>

<sup>63</sup> MTZ will supply more than 3,500 BELARUS tractors to Zimbabwe within two years [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-postavit-v-zimbabwe-bolee-35-tys-tractorov-belarus-v-techenie-dvuh-let-547284-2023/>

implement the agreements in terms of supplies of Belarusian machinery and equipment to the mining industry in Zimbabwe"<sup>64</sup> .

Industrial cooperation with Zimbabwean partners has great potential in other areas as well. For example, a contract has been signed to supply Belarusian-made equipment for the construction and modernization of grain storage facilities in Zimbabwe. The fact is that the authorities of that country have announced plans to allocate Belarusian state-owned companies farmland for agricultural complexes to grow wheat, soybeans, meat and dairy products, and poultry. The Belarusian side has already received 10 thousand hectares of land "in the Mbire district to grow corn, soybeans, and build a meat and dairy farm. At the same time a dairy and meat processing line will be launched, with the products to be sold through retail chains."<sup>65</sup> . Rice and wheat are planned to be added to the list of crops, and Belarusian specialists will plant orchards. Another fact is that "a memorandum of understanding has been signed on cooperation in supplying Belarus-made machinery and equipment for the forestry industry to the Republic of Zimbabwe"<sup>66</sup> . The two countries are also interested in cooperation in the light industry. Specifically, the Bellegprom Concern will explore possibilities for supplies of cotton from that African country, and "opportunities for cooperation in the textile and leather light industry

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<sup>64</sup> Belarus's industrial enterprises signed a package of documents on cooperation in Zimbabwe [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/prompredpriyatija-belarusi-podpisali-v-zimbabwe-paket-dokumentov-po-sotrudnichestvu-547368-2023/>

<sup>65</sup> Abukhovich, Y. Trade, agriculture, mining. On the prospects for cooperation with Zimbabwe and the UAE / Y. Abukhovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/torgovlja-selskoe-hozjajstvo-dobyicha-poleznyh-iskopaemyh-o-perspektivah-sotrudnichestva-s-zimbabwe-i-oae-8585/>

<sup>66</sup> Rogozhnik: industrial cooperation with Zimbabwe has great potential [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/rogozhnik-sotrudnichestvo-v-promyshlennoj-sfere-s-zimbabwe-imeet-ogromnyj-potentsial-547600-2023/>

were discussed at the Belarusian-Zimbabwean business forum in Harare"<sup>67</sup> .

As for interaction between the regions of the two countries, during the state visit of the Belarusian delegation, the two capitals - Minsk and Harare - signed an agreement on the establishment of twinning relations, which already outlines promising areas "in the energy sector, healthcare, education, water supply, water purification, municipal technology"<sup>68</sup> . And, apparently, the agreement will soon be followed up by the signing of action plans that will further strengthen the bilateral Belarusian-Zimbabwean regional relations, including in the trade and economic cooperation between the two capitals.

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<sup>67</sup> Belarus and Zimbabwe interested in cooperation in the light industry [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-zimbabwe-zainteresovany-v-sotrudnichestve-v-sfere-legproma-547603-2023/>

<sup>68</sup> Minsk and Harare have become twin cities. What next? [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minsk-i-harare-stali-gorodami-pobratimami-chto-dalshe-547593-2023/>

## **To the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership**

In March 2023, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe F. Shawa visited the Belarusian capital. During his official visit, he said that the Zimbabwean side was interested in identifying additional opportunities for economic cooperation with Belarus. As for official Minsk, it "wants to bring relations with Zimbabwe to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership."<sup>69</sup> . Following the talks at the Belarus Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the sides adopted a joint statement and reviewed the implementation of agreements in the trade and economic sector, specifically the progress in the fulfillment of contracts for supplies of agricultural and firefighting equipment to Zimbabwe, construction and modernization of granaries, and discussed cooperation in industry, agriculture, energy, mining, light industry. Specifically, Belarus will continue making its substantial contribution to the achievement by the Government of Zimbabwe of the goals of the long-term development strategy "Vision 2030" of this South African country.

In addition, the two countries continued working to expand the contractual and legal framework of Belarusian-Zimbabwean bilateral relations, which already includes over 20 intergovernmental and interagency agreements. In March 2023 a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Centre for Marketing and Price Study of the Republic of Belarus and Zimbabwe National Organization for Trade Promotion and Development "Zim Trade"

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<sup>69</sup> Belarus wants to bring relations with Zimbabwe to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-hochet-vyvesti-otnosheniya-s-zimbabwe-na-uroven-vseobjemljushchego-strategicheskogo-partnerstva-557622-2023>

was added to the list of documents, which "will become an additional incentive and support to activate cooperation of business communities, enterprises and economic entities of the two countries"<sup>70</sup>. The parties intend to hold the first meeting of the Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation in the near future.

It should be recalled that the development of economic cooperation is the most significant area of the relationship between the two countries. At the same time, "in 2022, Belarus and Zimbabwe traded over \$39 million, which is almost 57% more than in 2021. At the same time, Belarusian exports totaled almost \$30 million. Belarus supplied tractors and tractor trucks, machines and mechanisms for harvesting and threshing crops, parts and accessories for cars and tractors to Zimbabwe"<sup>71</sup>. And at the end of January 2023, following the state visit of the Belarusian delegation to Harare, the two governments approved a roadmap for the implementation of the agreements reached. "The document includes 65 measures in various areas: political and diplomatic, trade and economic, agricultural, military and technical, health and medical science, investments, energy, supply and maintenance of machinery. In addition, Belarus will continue participating in Zimbabwe's agricultural modernisation and mechanisation programme."<sup>72</sup>.

More specifically, in the development of cooperation between the two countries in various sectors, for example, since 2020, the

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<sup>70</sup> Transcript of the approach to the press of Belarusian Foreign Minister S. Aleinik. Aleinik on the results of negotiations with the head of the Zimbabwean Foreign Ministry (March 27, 2023, Minsk) [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: [https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/fd375850144e9b08.html](https://www.mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/fd375850144e9b08.html)

<sup>71</sup> The meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Belarus and Zimbabwe was held in Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/vstrecha-ministrov-inostrannyh-del-belarusi-i-zimbabve-prohodit-v-minske-557558-2023/>

<sup>72</sup> Frederick Shava: Zimbabwe has achieved a lot in terms of food security thanks to Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/frederik-shava-zimbabve-mnogogo-dostiglo-v-plane-prodovolstvennoj-bezopasnosti-blagodarja-belarusi-557640-2023/>

Belarusian side has started supplying machinery as part of the agricultural mechanisation programme of that South African country. "A company has already been set up here that not only sells, but also maintains machinery."<sup>73</sup> . The supply of spare parts, training of local farmers to drive and maintain these machines has been organised. As the president of Zimbabwe has announced the third phase of the farm mechanisation programme, Belarusian specialists "will directly participate in the construction of new and modernisation of existing grain storage complexes"<sup>74</sup> .

Another example. In June-July 2023, the first shipments of Zimbabwean cotton fibre will arrive in Belarus. Partners from South Africa are ready to cooperate on other issues as well. For example, "Zimbabwe has a school programme and about 2 million schoolchildren dress in business style. Zimbabwe imports fabrics only from China, so we [Belarusian specialists] have shown a number of samples of poly viscose fabric and fabrics with 20-30% wool content to the representative of Zimbabwe."<sup>75</sup> . Belarus has also embarked on a contract to supply fire engines to Harare. And this task will be completed on time.

Another interesting idea in the cooperation between the two countries, which may well come true in the near future, is that "Zimbabwe may become a major hub in South Africa for trade in Belarusian products"<sup>76</sup> . A Belarusian-Zimbabwean initiative

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<sup>73</sup> Zalessky, B. Export growth strategy. Opportunities and challenges of open economy in modern conditions / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023. - C. 29.

<sup>74</sup> Parkhomchik: all agreements with Zimbabwe will be implemented on time [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/parhomchik-vse-dogovorenosti-s-zimbabwe-budut-vypolneny-v-ustanovlennyyj-srok-557834-2023/>

<sup>75</sup> The first shipments of Zimbabwean cotton to Belarus are expected in June-July 2023 [Electronic resource]. - 2023. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pervye-postavki-v-belarus-zimbabvijskogo-hlopka-ozhidajutsja-v-ijune-ijule-2023-goda-557867-2023/>

<sup>76</sup> Frederic Chava: Zimbabwe Can Become a Major Hub for Supplies of Belarusian Equipment in South Africa [Electronic Resource]. - 2023. - URL:



involving another state in Southeast Africa - Mozambique - may be implemented for this purpose. It is a country that is washed by the Indian Ocean. "The most promising area for Belarusian exports to Mozambique could be the mechanization of that country's agricultural complex with subsequent service of Belarusian machinery,"<sup>77</sup> . The introduction of knowledge-intensive technologies, electrification and improvement of railways, creation of the necessary logistics infrastructure, and promotion of renewable energy sources could also be the backbone of the diversification of Belarusian exports to Mozambique. Given the high demand for medicines, the country retains niches for the promotion of pharmaceutical products. In short, the Southern African market is very promising for Belarusian exports and can further increase activity in various areas.

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<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/frederik-shava-zimbabve-mozhet-stat-krupnym-habom-po-postavke-belorusskoj-tehniki-v-juzhnoj-afrike-557809-2023/>

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