

Ambassador Igor N. Mozgo's Speech on Russian Unity Day



Esteemed Mr. Minister, Your Excellencies, Representatives of the Eritrean Government and Diplomatic corps,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends

I would like to welcome you all to the reception devoted to the newest Russian National Holiday – Day of the People’s Unity or National Unity Day. National Unity Day is celebrated in Russia in honor of National Liberation and the preservation of Russia as a unified state. The motto of this Holiday is the words from a famous Soviet song: I, you, he, and she – together we are the whole country. And another slogan – When united we are invincible.

Primarily, I would like to explain to you a little bit about what this Holiday means to Russia. In fact, it symbolizes the solidarity and unity of the Russian people, ensuring the country’s well-being and prosperity. This holiday is rooted in the past.

This Day commemorates a Russian popular uprising that freed Moscow from Polish-Lithuanian occupation forces on November 4, 1612. Leaders of the uprising, Citizen Kozma Minin, and Prince Dmitry Pozharsky, became national heroes. Sometime before that, they had gathered a people’s militia that included

representatives of different nationalities, estates, and religions near the city Nizhny Novgorod – this is the city in which I was born and raised – and directed it to liberate the capital of the Moscow State.

By that time, our country had been in the hands of the invaders and the impostor rulers for almost 15 years. Catholic Poles were in Moscow, in the Kremlin. Protestant Swedes occupied another ancient Russian city, Novgorod. In the South, the Tatars continued their raids on Russian towns and villages. All over the country, brigades of vagabonds were plundering and raiding whatever was leftover. This period is known as a “Time of Troubles.”

Russian people without any orders from boyars began to unite to defend themselves from the invaders. Ordinary people collected money, equipment, and weapons for fighting with the invaders. People’s militia headed by Citizen Kozma Minin and Prince Dmitry Pozharsky accomplished the feat by returning sovereignty and independence to our state. The monument dedicated to them, everybody can see on the Moscow Red Square near St. Basil’s Cathedral. And also on our monitor.

In 1649, Russian Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich made November 4 (October 22 of the then used Julian calendar) a public holiday. Russians celebrated this day until 1917. November 4 once again became a public holiday in 2005, when the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin signed a Decree on introducing Unity Day or the Day of the People’s Unity.

The cohesion and unity of our people helped us to preserve the State. We emerged victorious in the two Patriotic wars (against Napoleon and Hitler), rebuild the country after the Civil War after the October Revolution in 1917, first and second world wars, cope with the difficulties after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and regain its place among the world powers that determine the course of the world development.

National/People’s unity for us is not only a beautiful metaphor but also the basis for the existence of our multi-confessional and multi-ethnic people. Peace, cohesion, and harmony between the citizens of Russia of all nationalities,

political and religious views are able to perform a miracle and lead Russia to power and prosperity.

A solicitous attitude towards our Motherland, care for it, loyalty to sincere friendship, and rejection of any external pressure are the pillars of Russian statehood, our genetic and cultural code. The Day of the People's Unity marks the great probity of love for one's Fatherland, pride in it, and respect for it.

Russian President, Vladimir Putin, said: "Each nation teaches the world its own lesson and builds its unique legacy. For Russia, such an invaluable legacy is many centuries of peaceful cohabitation of different ethnicities. There is just no other country as large and multi-faced as ours. Preserving the diversity of the peoples of Russia, their ethnic and cultural identity is of key significance to us, as are traditions of mutual trust, concord, and closeness. These foundations permeate the unity of the Russian nation with special inner power".

He also mentioned that modern Russia is strong because of not only its new economic successes or its growing influence in international affairs. Russia was and remains powerful thanks to national unity and, of course, thanks to the tremendous intellectual and creative potential of our people, talented, qualified people who sincerely desire to act for the benefit of their nation. This is the best bridge to the successful future of Russia, to reviving and strengthening our country's historic role.

I would further like to draw a parallel between the Holiday in Russia and the National Holiday in Eritrea, celebrated on September 1, the Day of the beginning of the armed struggle for the liberation of the country. The Eritrean people, united by their leaders, began a long way to independence. And they have reached the result. Now, Eritrea is one of the youngest independent and sovereign states in Africa (after South Sudan). It has its own way of development, pursues an independent domestic and foreign policy. Here, as in Russia, people of many nationalities and faiths live peacefully. The main thing for them is the prosperity of the country.

Russia and Eritrea are friendly countries. We cooperate effectively in the international arena, support each other at various world platforms, and conduct a

productive bilateral dialogue. I think we will do our best to keep good relationships and develop contacts between our people.

Let me proclaim a toast: for the Unity of Peoples in Russia, for the Unity of Peoples in Eritrea, for the Unity of Peoples in every country of the world, and for the unity, friendship, and prosperity of the peoples of the whole world.

Thank you for your attention.

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