

Hossam ELDEEN ALY,
*Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Ukraine*

OUR AIM IS SUCCESSFUL INTERSTATE INTERACTION

– *Your Excellency, would you please tell your “story of a diplomat”. How has it happened that you chose the diplomatic career?*

– As a matter of fact, I lead, over the past 27 years, a classical diplomatic career and am a regular diplomat in many aspects. What initially interested me in diplomatic service was that I visited after my graduation from University, in the late 1980s, a close relative who served at a senior position in our Embassy in London. I was then captivated by the atmosphere and the nature of diplomatic work. It made me decide to apply for joining the diplomatic service at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt. I passed the necessary competition tests and joined the diplomatic service formally in 1991. Since then I began slowly building up my career and dealt mostly with arms control and disarmament issues in the multilateral United Nations context. In the earlier course of my career, I got posted to Vienna and to our Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. Kyiv, representing my first ambassadorial posting, is an important station for bilateral diplomacy. I believe that either at the multilateral or bilateral spheres, diplomacy represents a distinguished honour as a profession. As a diplomat, you have the chance to speak fairly and objectively on behalf of your country, represent its policies and positions, protect and promote its interests and proudly promote the best image for your nation abroad to the best of your ability. It is exactly what I have sought when I joined this job.

– *In which countries did you work before coming to Ukraine? Which biggest challenges have you faced throughout your diplomatic activity?*

Before coming to Ukraine, I served at two main stations: the first was at our Embassy in Vienna, Austria, for 4 years, after which I joined Secretariat of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization for over 5 years, bringing my years of service in Vienna to over 9 years. After that, I returned to Egypt as Director for Disarmament Affairs at the Foreign Ministry in 2005 and got posted to the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations in New York in 2007, where I was in charge of the First Committee on Disarmament and International Security for four years. In 2011/2012, I worked for the United Nations Secretariat as Senior Advisor on Disarmament and International Security of the President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly, then returned to Egypt in 2012. I was the Deputy Assistant Minister for Disarmament Affairs when I got posted to Ukraine in August, 2016.



Засідання україно-єгипетського бізнес-форуму. Доктор Хоссам Ельдін Мохамед Алі, Посол Єгипту в Україні, Геннадій Чижиков, президент Торгово-промислової палати України, Ольга Трофімцева, заступник міністра аграрної політики та продовольства України, Гамаль Альгізі, голова єгипетсько-української бізнес ради, Ахмед Машур, голова асоціації молодих підприємців, та Шеріф ель Шафі, представник Міністерства інвестицій

Meeting of the Ukrainian-Egyptian Business Forum. Dr. Hossam Eldeen Mohamed Aly, Ambassador of Egypt to Ukraine, Hennadii Chyzhykov, President of the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Olha Trofimtseva, Deputy Minister of the Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine, Gamal El Aгуizy, Chairman of the Egypt-Ukraine Business Council, Ahmed Mashur, Head of the Young Entrepreneurs Association and Sherif Al Shafi, representative of the Ministry of Investments

I consider my first posting in Vienna to have been a very helpful challenge, since the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) was very technical and required a lot of effort to research and study specialized national and secretariat documents, learn history of issues and understand procedure. This helped brought to attention many important details and processes and assisted in identifying the priorities. Managing these priority tasks with a high level of credibility required that you constantly be updating your knowledge and your role against a dynamic reality on the ground. It is important that people trust you and understand that you have a good cause for comments you deliver, initiatives you suggest or draft resolutions you present. Challenges of younger diplomats are notable but not overwhelming, because s/he is usually guided by an experienced ambassador, who shoulders the lion share of decision-making responsibilities. Therefore, I cannot say that my posting in Vienna represented the biggest challenge, as I only had to work hard on mastering my issues, while following the guidance on instructions given by the ambassador at that time. Actually, throughout my career, I served with excellent superiors, who were very helpful.

Working in New York was an even bigger challenge: my colleagues and I had to deal with the Chairmanship of Egypt of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) for 3 years, in the context of which we coordinated many significant processes, conferences and key international events, which we had to lead the Movement through. It was a tough task to coordinate the work of 120 member countries of the NAM on the full range of issues discussed within the United Nations. The United Nations in New York is a great diplomatic school and has the highest number of States represented – 193 countries, hence, it was very important to find the balance between effectively perusing the interests of your own country while also listening the legitimate concerns of others, and maintaining friendly working relationships with everyone. Working there was the most challenging but through the challenge, also a wonderful experience of professional development.

Today as the Ambassador of Egypt to Ukraine, the main challenge I face is related to the broad responsibility for every aspect of the work of the Embassy, its strategy and policies, the way it does its business, how it represents itself, and how it interacts with Ukrainian counterparts and other foreign missions here. It is thus certainly a very different task than I have had before in a post abroad, but I enjoy it greatly, especially as we see positive results in advancing and consolidating bilateral relations.

– *Mr. Ambassador, which priorities do you set for your team of the diplomatic mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Ukraine?*

Our primary objective is very clear, that is to maintain friendly, healthy and mutually beneficial relations with Ukraine as a country, with which we enjoy very important friendly ties and economic, cultural, touristic and industrial interests. My instructions to my colleagues seek to motivate them to proudly represent their country at its best, promote our cooperation and friendly ties with Ukraine and always seek measurable results and positive impact on the ground. Indeed, success is not about intentions or statements, but about tangible results, at which my team is always aimed.

– *It is known that Ukraine and Egypt have intensified bilateral cooperation this year, which was announced by Pavlo Klimkin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, during an official visit to Egypt on April 29–30, 2018. In this context, which areas of bilateral cooperation between the two countries you consider to be the most promising, but not yet fulfilled?*

– First, I have to say that I am glad to witness bilateral relations with Ukraine advance in all fields. In my opinion, the areas of potential cooperation are vast. They include cultural, agricultural and industrial cooperation and technology transfer in industry. We also still have room for bringing a better balance and larger scope for trade exchange between our two countries, as well as several other fields. I am convinced that there are many fields that are still to be

explored, in which Ukraine can be a trustful and reliable partner to work with. We are now trying to do that and have already started this process in the field of agriculture and others as there is an extensive room for implementation of large projects in the future, which would bring benefit to both sides.

– *In which area(s) in your opinion there is already an effective cooperation?*

– There are, in fact, two most successful and visible areas of cooperation. The first is trade where the volume of bilateral trade has reached 2.4 billion dollars annually. It is a massive figure, which makes Egypt the first partner in Africa and the Middle East in terms of trade with Ukraine. The largest imports we receive from Ukraine include grains, meat and livestock, all very important for Egypt. Likewise, a number of quality and very competitive Egyptian goods still need to find their way to the Ukrainian market. So far, Ukrainians are familiar with Egyptian fruits, like oranges, strawberries and others, though there is a lot more in the area of crops and products that we can export to Ukraine. There are many other competitive products that may be brought to the Ukrainian market to the benefit of both sides, which will expand interaction. It is also another focal direction of cooperation between our countries.

The second most successful area is definitely tourism. In this regard, Ukraine is among key partners of the Arab Republic of Egypt. It has always been increasingly important for us to maintain the tourist flow from Ukraine to Egypt. We have moved now to close to one million Ukrainian tourists visiting Egypt per year, which is a big leap, comparing to the previous figures of about 450 thousand. We expect the initiation of direct flights between the two capitals to contribute also positively to these growing numbers of tourists and the scope of touristic destinations that they can enjoy all across Egypt. We closely cooperate with the Ukrainian side, and put huge national efforts to make sure that touristic products in Egypt are diverse and competitively priced and that all tourist destinations visited by Ukrainians are safe and secure, in accordance with the highest international security standards.

– *This April, the state of emergency in Egypt has been prolonged, because of the necessity for security forces to counter terrorist groups. What are so far prospects of settling the conflict?*

– First and foremost, I want to note that it is hugely incorrect to describe the situation in marginal pockets in the northern most part of Sinai as a domestic conflict. Egypt is very peaceful country with very solid social and political coherence and stability. What Egypt is facing is to be correctly described as a war on terrorism. It is known that several terrorist groups have been active in the region and different parts of the world and that did not exclude Egypt. Most of those terrorist combatants are not Egyptians and are sponsored by unfriendly terrorism-sponsoring States. Egypt confronts the threat of terrorism with all necessary means and will sure eventually totally clean our territory from that



Шарм-ель-Шейх – туристичний центр на Червоному морі
Sharm El Sheikh – touristic center at the Red Sea

menace. We are profoundly appreciative for Ukraine for announcing its full support for Egypt in its fight against terrorism.

I would like also to mention that the notion “state of emergency” is often misunderstood and perceived in a negative connotation. In terms of tourism, it is, on the contrary, an important step the country has taken to provide for security of both its nationals and visiting tourists. The state of emergency is a temporary measure that aims at facilitating and speeding actions of law enforcement forces in identifying and preventing terrorist threats and in arresting terrorists at large. This leads to stepping up security in the country, thus providing for the security of tourists. We are glad that efforts of Egypt in the protection of tourists have been noted by H. E. Minister P. Klimkin during his recent visit to Cairo last April. The Egyptian government has put in place large-scale and continuous efforts to guarantee efficient security for all our citizens and equally to tourists coming to the country. The counter-terrorist operations currently conducted by law enforcement forces are actually taking place in only limited pockets of terrorism in the furthestmost northern part of Sinai. They are about 500 kilometres away from Sharm El Sheikh, which is as far as Kyiv is from the Eastern borders. Neither tourists nor civilian nationals are granted access to these areas. Egypt fully makes sure that the tourists hosted are safe and secure, which is among the reasons why Egypt remains to be a competitive tourist destination in the region and the world.



*Посол Єгипту провів урочистий прийом на честь Національного дня
Ambassador of Egypt held a solemn reception dedicated to the National Day*

– *What from your point of view is common to the two countries and their nationals and in what do they totally differ?*

– To be honest, it is quite difficult to distinguish. The major obvious differences, I think, lie in the ethnic and historical origins, background and evolvement of the two peoples as well as their historical experiences. Certainly, the peoples of both countries have had two different historical paths in two different regions of the world. However, it is very surprising that the more I communicate and deal with Ukrainians, either at the professional or personal levels, there appears to be many similarities with Egyptians. In general, Ukrainians are very decent people who confidently seek their right to better life and better prospects for their country. They are pleasant, kind and have good humour, yet are very hard-working and serious where they need to be. The similarities make our people-to-people exchanges and contacts easier, as there are really much similarities and visible compatibility in the way Ukrainians and Egyptians think and aspire for the better future. It is my wish that through our bilateral cooperation, we succeed in advancing areas of agreement and similarity while wishing best for our two nations in an increasingly interdependent world scene.