

Financing Africa's Transaqua Water Transfer Feasibility Study Becomes Law in Italy

[EIR] With an amendment introduced by Sen. Toni Iwobi (Lega), the Italian government has included financing the feasibility study for the Transaqua water transfer project in Africa in the 2021 budget law. This will hopefully unblock procedures for the joint Italy-Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) which had stalled under the current pro-malthusian Environment minister, and therefore, implement the decision taken in the 2018 joint memorandum to finance the feasibility study for EU1.5 million.

Senator Iwobi reported that his amendment was endorsed by Lega Senate head Massimiliano Romeo. The fact that the government has included it in the 2021 budget law, passed in the Senate on Dec. 16, indicates that the amendment got green light from the Foreign Ministry.

The amendment says: "In order to implement Art. 6 of the Memorandum signed by the [Italian] Ministry for Environment, Sea and Territory Protection and by the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the feasibility study for the 'Transaqua Project' is co-financed with EU1.5 million for the year 2021 through the Fund for Extraordinary Interventions aimed at relaunching dialogue and cooperation with African countries and other countries of primary importance for migratory movements."

Although the Act reiterates a previously decided upon entitlement, and the date of 2021 does not reflect the urgency of the matter, nevertheless the Act is of primary importance because the commitment for Transaqua is now formally state law in Italy. This is a qualitative improvement over the simple memorandum of understanding.

Senator Iwobi has proudly publicized the development on his website and Facebook page, including a video in which he shows where Lake Chad is and why the Transaqua project to refill the lake is so important.

Transaqua is not merely a water-transfer scheme, but an integrated water, transport, hydroelectric and agro-industrial infrastructure project that, as African scholars have correctly judged, will provide the engine for the recovery of the entire economy of the Central African region. Transaqua was conceived in the late 1970s by a team from the Italian engineering company Bonifica under the leadership of Eng. Marcello Vichi, who has joined efforts with the Schiller Institute and EIR to internationally campaign for Transaqua since then. Thanks to our efforts, combined with the impact of China's Belt and Road policy in Africa, the LCBC member countries adopted Transaqua as the only feasible solution to revitalize Lake Chad at the February 2018 International Conference on Lake Chad in Abuja, Nigeria. The African Union has included Transaqua among the infrastructure projects of continental relevance and Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari is actively campaigning for a donors' conference to raise \$50 billion to build the infrastructure.

Soon after his election in March 2018, EIR contacted Senator Iwobi, who is of Nigerian origin, and briefed him on Transaqua. Iwobi immediately endorsed the initiative, saying, "Those who are against this project are against Africa." He met the Bonifica team and participated to the ceremony for the Italy-LCBC MOU signing in Rome. He also discussed it with Nigeria President Buhari. Iwobi sent a speech to the Movisol co-sponsored conference on "Italy on the Silk Road" on March 13, 2019 in Milan, which discussed Transaqua as an example of an Italy-China-Africa tripartite plan for Africa's development.