

# Historic Italian-Chinese Agreement on Lake Chad Project

Excerpted from a report in EIR Strategic Alert, No. 32 of 2017.

Aug. 7—Backed by their respective governments, the Italian engineering firm Bonifica Spa and PowerChina, one of China's biggest multinationals, have signed a letter of intent for cooperation in exploring the feasibility, and eventually implementing the construction of the largest infrastructure project ever envisioned for Africa—the integrated water-transfer, energy, and transportation infrastructure project called Transaqua.

The letter was signed during a meeting between the executive heads of the two companies in Hangzhou on June 6-8, in the presence of the Italian ambassador to China, but it was only publicly made known at the beginning of August.

Transaqua is an idea developed by Bonifica in the 1970s, to build a 2,400 km-long canal from the southern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which would intercept the right-bank tributaries of the Congo River through dams and reservoirs, and carry up to 100 billion cubic meters of water per year, by gravity, to Lake Chad, in order to refill the shrinking lake, and in addition to produce electricity and abundant water for irrigation. The canal would provide a major transportation network for central Africa.

In past decades, the situation around Lake Chad has become more and more explosive and urgent. While the drying-out of the lake has forced a mass emigration to Europe, the impoverishment of the region has become a fertile ground for recruiting terrorists to Boko Haram. Although Transaqua offered a solution to all those problems, Western nations and institutions had so far refused to accept the project, on financial and ideological pretexts.

It is thanks to the fight waged by the LaRouche organization, especially since the late 1970s, together with the authors of the Transaqua idea, that this project can now become reality in the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. Efforts of the *EIR* and the Schiller Institute created the opportunity for the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), under Nigerian leadership, and the Transaqua authors to come together. Activity by the *EIR* and the Schiller Institute also led to the



Lake Chad (upper left), Congo (Zaire) River Basin, and proposed projects.

adoption of the view that Transaqua was the only realistic solution for the region. In December 2016, the LCBC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with PowerChina, and eventually organized contact between the Italian and the Chinese companies.

Speaking about the 2016 MOU to the *Nigerian Tribune* July 25, Nigerian Water Minister Suleiman Adamu noted that PowerChina is responsible for the inter-basin transfer. "China is doing exactly the same thing—they are transferring water from southern China to northern China. Just like Nigeria, southern China has more water than the north. In the northern part, some areas are semi-arid, so they are transferring water. The total canal that they built is about 2,500 kilometers, and that is Phase 1."

The head of the LCBC, Engineer Abdullahi Sanusi, expressed his confidence that the new cooperation will succeed "to be part of good history, to bring hope to the voiceless."