

# ALGERIA TODAY

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## Commentary

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHARTER FOR PEACE AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION**

On September 29, 2005, Algeria held a referendum on the Draft Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation and the people overwhelmingly supported the initiative. The document submitted to the voters called for granting amnesty to anyone held during the national tragedy on charges other than "the commission of collective massacres, setting explosives in public places, or the commission of rapes."

A lot has been achieved since the President decided to make civil concord "the priority of priorities" of his political  
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### **US-AFRICAN PARTNERSHIP AGAINST TERRORISM:**

*Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Topical Seminar,  
Algiers, February 19-24, 2006*



The African Union's *African Center for the Studies and Research on Terrorism* and the United States' *Africa Center for Strategic Studies* co-sponsored an important topical seminar on counterterrorism which held its proceedings in the Algerian capital from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, 2006. Civilian and military counterterrorism experts met to discuss terrorist threats to the African continent and examine how best to respond to them. About 80 participants, primarily including four to five representatives from the African states that are part of the *Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative* (TSCTI), namely Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria and Tunisia, joined a number of participants from African sub-regional organizations, European states, relevant organs of the United Nations, and concerned US government agencies. US participants in the *Trans-Sahara*

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### **ALGERIA, WITNESS TO THE ALGIERS AGREEMENT BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA**

Algeria, along with the African Union, the European Union, and the United States, issued a statement at the United Nations on February 22, 2006 regarding the December 12, 2000 *Algiers Agreement* between Ethiopia and Eritrea. As a witness to the Agreement, Algeria welcomes and endorses the U.S. initiative to resolve the current impasse in the peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

According to a Media Note by the U.S. State Department, the call for the full implementation of the *Algiers Agreement* is seen as a way to resolve differences, stress cooperation without restrictions, and call on the international community to support peace in the region.

### **PRESIDENT PUTIN VISITS ALGERIA**



Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Algiers Friday, March 10, 2006, at the invitation of President Bouteflika. This is the first visit of President Putin to Algeria.

President Putin's visit strengthens the "strategic partnership" agreement signed in Moscow in April 2001 when President Bouteflika made a state visit to Russia.

## ALGERIA, SOUTH KOREA SIGN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

On March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006, South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun and President Abdelaziz Bouteflika signed a strategic partnership agreement between Algeria and South Korea after their summit in Algiers. The two leaders agreed to widen South Korea's participation in Algeria's infrastructure construction and the privatization of its public corporations, while solidifying ties in high-speed Internet networks, education, and e-governance.



President Roh Moo-Hyun was accompanied by an important delegation which included CEOs of leading public corporations, construction firms and other industrial firms interested in African markets. This visit is the first by a South Korean head of state.

President Roh Moo Hyun said in an interview with *Algerie Presse Service* (APS) that his visit aims at developing friendship ties between Algiers and Seoul: "My visit to Algeria will be an opportunity to put bilateral relations at a strategic partnership level and develop friendship ties existing between both countries."

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## ALGERIA – EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CONCLUDE OUTLINE-AGREEMENT

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006, the National People's Assembly (APN) and the European Parliament (EP) committed to a "mutually beneficial" partnership in common fields of interest.



The President of the APN, Amar Saadani, and the President of the EP, Josep Borell, signed an outline-agreement of parliamentary cooperation under which both parties committed to "institute and continue a close collaboration." Both committed "to undertake and continue common initiatives which allow mutual and deeper knowledge."

Mr. Saadani said that the visit gives the Algeria-EU Association Agreement "the required parliamentary dimension on establishing political dialogue."

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## PORTUGAL'S PRESIDENT CALLS RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA "REMARKABLE"

The President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, paid a one-day visit to Algeria March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006, at the invitation of President Bouteflika. During a lunch in honor of his guest, President Bouteflika said that the relationship between Algeria and Portugal is "now characterized by lasting confidence and optimism." He also said that trade between the two countries has experienced "an unprecedented boom."

President Sampaio described Portuguese-Algerian relations as "remarkable" and said that their development over the last few years has been "significant" and "important." He added that by strengthening ties, Algeria and Portugal could "bring an important contribution to a more solid and more profitable relationship between Europe and the Maghreb."

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER, H.E. MR. BEDJAOUI, VISITS GERMANY

Algerian Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Mohammed Bedjaoui, made a two-day official visit to Germany starting on March 7<sup>th</sup> and met with German senior officials. The visit was an opportunity to assess the state of cooperation between Algeria and Germany, examine its development and strengthen Algerian-German partnership in different sectors." Stress was put on profitable investment, partnership opportunities and on reinforcing bilateral technical and cultural cooperation.



During his talks with his German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister Bedjaoui examined bilateral issues "characterized by a revival in all fields." He also held a round-table at the Friederich Ebert Foundation and presented the latest national developments, social and economic reforms and discussed

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investment opportunities in Algeria.

On the second day of his visit, Minister Bedjaoui met with Mrs. Susanne Kastner, Vice-President of the Bundestag, to exchange views on issues of "common interest." He also met with the Federal Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development, Mrs. Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, to examine strategies for improving technical bilateral cooperation.

Minister Bedjaoui also attended a ceremony held in honor of Hans Jurgen Wichnewski, a friend of Algeria during its revolution.

### **AMBASSADOR AMINE KHERBI MEETS WITH VISITING ALGERIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Algeria's Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Amine Kherbi, welcomed a group of 21 Algerian high schoolers to the Algerian Embassy in Washington, D.C. on Friday March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006. The group of teenage boys and girls are in the U.S. for a whole academic year on U.S. government Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Project scholarships. They are currently enrolled in local public high schools. Through the YES project, the students spend a year in the U.S. and stay with American families.



The reception at the Embassy gave the students the opportunity to share with the Ambassador their impressions on their stay and assess their achievements thus far. The Ambassador encouraged the group to draw lessons from their stay in the U.S. The group is expected to return to Algeria in June 2006.

### **MINISTER KHELIL ATTENDS ENERGY WEEK IN D.C.**

Algerian Minister of Energy and Mining, Chakib Khelil, was in Washington D.C. from March 1-6, 2006 for the World Bank's Energy Week 2006, in order to focus on increasing US-Algeria cooperation, under the theme of "Clean Energy for Development."



Minister Khelil represented OPEC and the African Association of Oil Producers.

Also, Minister Khelil held talks on Friday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> with U.S. Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman on bilateral cooperation in the hydrocarbons and energy sector and additional areas of common interest. He told APS, "The Algerian-US relations in hydrocarbons and energy are excellent and constantly increasing."

On Monday the 6<sup>th</sup>, Minister Khelil presided a plenary session to examine the supply of oil in the market.

Energy Week brought together the largest gathering of energy professionals, including government ministers, policy makers, industry leaders, academics, civil society representatives, and World Bank staff.

### **EMBASSY'S OFFICE OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS TRAVELS TO NYC**

In response to requests from our compatriots and in order to facilitate better, speedier and more efficient processing of consular issues, for the past several months, the Head of Consular Affairs of the Embassy of Algeria has been traveling on the third Saturday of every month to the Permanent Mission of Algeria to the United Nations to process consular issues. This initiative by the Embassy has already generated praise from numerous members of the Algerian community living in the New York City area and beyond.

## AMBASSADOR AMINE KHERBI ADDRESSES US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS AND POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ALGERIA

On February 22, 2006, H.E. Amine Kherbi spoke before the Global Business Forum at the Georgetown Club and addressed the increasingly close US-Algerian Relations and recent political and economic developments in Algeria. In this context, Ambassador Kherbi discussed the current political, economic and social reforms undertaken in Algeria and called on the US business community to take advantage of the large array of opportunities that have opened up in all sectors of the Algerian economy.

### **SAHARA**, *continued from page 1*

*Counterterrorism Topical Seminar* included the Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the State Department, Ambassador Henry A. Crumpton, Mr. William Jordan, head of the State Department's Office of Maghreb Affairs, officials from the Pentagon, as well as academics. Termed a "collaborative effort by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), the African Union (AU), the State Department, the US European Command (USEUCOMM), the Near East and South Asia Center (NESAC), and the George C. Marshall Center", this colloquium offered yet another example of the US-African active partnership in combating transnational threats. This seminar is as important to the African continent as it is to the world community at large and the United States in particular. Its objective is to contribute to US national security interests by building African capacity and enhancing internal, bilateral and multilateral cooperation to combat terrorism on the African continent, as well as developing practical strategies to enhance the impact of the *Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative* (TSCTI).

This seminar comes on the heels of a previous seminar, held in Algiers in October 2005, and demonstrates the determination of the member states of the African Union to take concrete measures to combat terrorism. In this respect, it is worth recalling that on July 14, 1999, the then-OAU adopted in Algiers the *Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism*. At a time when the international community was not yet prepared to consider the terrorist phenomenon in its global and transnational nature, the African continent adopted a *Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa* with "the aim of building institutional capacities and strengthening operational capabilities of member states to enable them to better face a threat that is diffuse and difficult to apprehend, by virtue of its demonstrated global nature", as Ambassador Amine Kherbi of Algeria underlined at a symposium organized on November 15-16, 2005, by the Defense National University.

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agenda. The task was enormous and the challenge difficult: Return thousands of individuals to their homes, convince the deeply divided citizens, knowing full well that there is no alternative to peace, that a nation that is capable of forgiving has every chance to better negotiate concord among its children.

Today, Algeria has reached a very advanced stage of lasting peace. The law on the implementation of the policy of National Reconciliation was promulgated on February 21, 2006. Thousands of detainees who had met the requirements set forth in the law on Peace and National Reconciliation are going back to their loved ones. Such measures, reflecting a policy profoundly inspired by the values of the Algerian society, will undoubtedly further improve the climate of reconciliation and concord which has been prevailing in the country for the past few years. In so doing, Algeria has chosen the path of lasting peace, national solidarity, and no one else is better suited to defend the interests and moral and material rights of the Algerian people than the Algerians themselves.

## THE OLDEST LIVING ALGERIAN IS REPORTEDLY A 116 YEAR-OLD WOMAN

Mrs. Abbou Hadja Fatma is 116 and still standing. The oldest woman in Algeria, lives in the village of Beni-Chougrane, near Mascara in Western Algeria, surrounded by her children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Hadja Fatma, who lost her eyesight 5 year ago, has three living daughters and one son and has lost four children. Her eldest child is 80 years old.

## ARTIST DEVOTES EXHIBITION TO WOMEN

A cultural exhibit featuring work by local artist Amor Idriss Lamine Dokman opened March 8th at the Algerian National Radio's "Aissa-Messaoudi Cultural Palace." The exhibit, entitled "Your Eyes on Us," focuses specifically on the Algerian woman, her environment and her concerns.

## ARABIC VERSION OF H.C. ANDERSEN TALES FREE TO ALGERIAN CHILDREN

Ten thousand copies of an illustrated album gathering six tales by the famous Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen will be distributed for free to Algerian children, according to Denmark's Ambassador to Algeria, Bo Eric Weber. The albums, which have been translated into Arabic, will be offered to youth centers and about 750 public libraries nationwide.

## PIANIST FARID OUALI EMBARKS ON INTERNATIONAL TOUR

Algerian musician, Farid Ouali, winner of the first piano prizes from the prestigious "Tchaikovski" music conservatory in Moscow, is on an international tour, playing a repertoire of classical music.

## YOUNG ALGERIAN DANCER GRACES INTERNATIONAL SCENE

Sofia Boutella, the daughter of the famous Algerian composer Safy Boutella, is gaining worldwide popularity as a dancer. She got her big break in February 2005 when she became the principal female model for Nike's vast public campaign. In addition to Nike, she has modeled for Puma, Adidas and Reebok.

For the past few years she has been on many commercials, television shows and movies. She also accompanies artist Madonna on her international tours as one of her stage dancers.

Miss Boutella was born in 1982 and started dancing at a young age. Her career has already taken her all over the world.

## BATNA HOSTS FIRST SCULPTURE EXPO

*Artists from different regions participate*

Artists from all over Algeria showcased their sculptures at an exhibit arranged by the association PRISMA in the city of Batna in eastern Algeria. Directors of Museums and of art schools from various regions of the country were also present. The guest of honor was Algerian sculptor Mohamed Demagh.

The organizer of the exhibit stated that the art show was providing an opportunity of exchange between artists from all regions of the country who may not necessarily meet, as well as inspire students interested in sculpture.

## WOMEN ARE CALLED "AGENTS OF CHANGE" IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Earlier this month, on the occasion of International Women's Day, Algerian women were recognized for their great contribution to civil society and their active participation in a growing number of professional, civic, political, and academic areas. President Bouteflika called women agents of change and development in Algeria. He encouraged them to play a "greater role" in national development and "to invest more in sectors notable for sustainable development."

## **SOUTH KOREA, *continued from page 2***

Algeria is currently Korea's fifth largest trading partner in Africa, with Korean automobiles and electric appliances enjoying particular popularity with Algerian consumers. Cooperation in the energy and construction sectors is also active: an oil joint-storage project between the two countries' national oil corporations is underway.

In another respect, Algerian Minister of Energy, Chakib Khelil, in an exclusive interview with South Korea's *Yonhap News Agency* (YNA), said that Algeria is in need of South Korea's new technologies and experiences in management and industrial efficiency. He said that the two countries can do a lot for "mutual interest," and that South Korean investors would be offered huge profit potentials, as the Algerian government has an almost US \$100 billion infrastructure investment program over the next five years, in addition to tens of billions of dollars to be spent by private Algerian firms.

## **EU, *continued from page 2***

For his part, President Borell called for an intensification of EU-Algeria cooperation and parliamentary exchanges. He said that the future of Europe will depend on its relations with its Mediterranean neighbors in particular, and stressed Algeria's role in the Mediterranean basin.

President Borell said that his meetings with President Bouteflika gave him new and deeper insight on the situation in Algeria, saying that he discovered a country with great financial and political standing. He said that Algeria's initiatives towards national reconciliation and economic development are a "major asset to help Algeria fully play its part" within the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly.

## **WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES INCREASING**

Women in Algeria have attained all kinds of titles and positions in the labor force and have greatly contributed to job creation. Nationwide, over 500 women carried out investment projects in agriculture in 2005, according to the Ministry of Rural Development. Also, in the second half of the year 2004, the National Unemployment Insurance Fund (CNAC) said that women were responsible for the creation of 480 jobs and 160 small enterprises. According to CNAC, out of 160 activities created by women, the highest concentrations were registered in the fields of services, textile industry, building and public works, catering, hotel management and the food industry.



The National Micro-Credit Management Agency said that their women promoters have created over 6,700 small enterprises, generating 10,074 jobs. Women also manage 1,661 small enterprises in agriculture, 2,830 in industry, 1,838 in craft industry and three in building and public works.

According to the National Agency for Support of Youth Employment (ANSEJ), the number of small enterprises run by women registered an 8% increase between 1997 (10%) and 2005 (18%). The number of women-owned businesses increased by 5.9% between 2004 and 2005. According to the latest statistics, 1,024, 392 women are involved in private business ownership, representing 9,439 businesses and providing jobs to 24,458 people. Typically, 25% Algerian women entrepreneurs are 39-48 years old and 20% are under 40 (29-38).

## **ALGERIAN WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS HONORED ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, the Parliament devoted the day to women and their experiences in the parliament. The female parliamentarians took this opportunity to stress the need for more women involvement in the political field and for greater contribution to the Algerian state. The speaker of the National People's National Assembly (APN), Mr. Amar Saadani, underlined that the Parliament is interested in the woman's role in legislative issues and established such a parliamentary day as a tribute "to testify to the long and militant course of Algerian women in this field."

## IMF & WMRC'S GLOBAL PROVIDE INSIGHT ON ALGERIAN GROWTH

The IMF recently praised Algeria's robust economic growth while highlighting the need for sound management of its hydrocarbon receipts in its latest Article IV consultation.

The *World Markets Research Centre* (WMRC) offers Global Insight Perspective on Algeria's growth. While it similarly recognizes the significance of the Algerian authorities' macro-economic policies, the Global Insight forecasts a GDP growth of 6.4% in 2006, whereas the Fund projected that it would be 4.7%. Global Insight's estimation is higher than the IMF because of the record-high hydrocarbon receipts and strong growth in the construction and services sectors.

### POSITIVE FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN ALGERIA

*Prospects for future FDI are improving*

Over the past two years, Algeria has achieved strong economic growth, impressive trade and current account surpluses, and improved its foreign debt profiles. The increase in spending has fostered a number of infrastructure projects that will continue to provide jobs and the much-needed experience of foreign companies.

While FDI continues to increase into Algeria's existing and unexplored oil resources, diverse international attention has been given to other industries. For example, the German conglomerate Siemens, and the French construction group Vinci, have signed on to build the first underground metro in Algiers. The Algerian government awarded a consortium that is led by Egypt's *Orascom*, the country's first private land line license. The European Union, Algeria's main trading partner, funded the first Algerian human rights center.

During 2001-2005, there was an investment increase of \$6.7 billion in sectors other than hydrocarbons, according to the National Agency of Development and Investment. Construction, agrolimentation, and the desalination of water, are all areas of interest for foreign investors.

Nationally, Algeria has greatly invested US\$ 1.2 brt to make oil and gas facilities more safe, at par with the international safety standards that investors expect.

### ALGERIA'S TRADE SURPLUS UP 119% FROM JANUARY 2005

According to the National Center of Information and Statistics, Algeria's trade surplus stood at \$3.3 billion in January 2006, up 119% from the level in January 2005. Exports of merchandise rose by 57.86% to \$5.03 billion, while imports increased 2.27% to \$1.71 billion. Non-hydrocarbon products stood at \$71 billion, while those of hydrocarbons, rose by 58.77%. The largest trading partners are France, Italy and Germany, with trade with the U.S. increasing.

*World Markets Research Centre* said it expected both Algerian exports and imports to increase in 2006. Imports will expand as a result of strong domestic demand, which will lead to larger imports of equipment, raw material, and foodstuffs.

### ALGERIA ATTENDS WORLD TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE



Algeria's Minister for Information and Communication Technology, Boudjema Haichour, took part in the World Telecommunications Development Conference from March 7th-15th, in Doha, Qatar. Mr. Haichour led a delegation composed of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Communications.

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