

# ALGERIA TODAY

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## SPANISH KING ENDS VISIT TO ALGERIA



The King Juan Carlos I of Spain arrived in Algiers on March 13, 2007, for a visit, which he said would present "a new opportunity to strengthen the ties of friendship and cooperation ... and

also enable us to personally witness the great progress that has been made by Algeria."

The Spanish Monarch also said that his last state visit to Algeria in 1983 left "a very enduring impression."

During their talks, President Bouteflika and the Spanish King stressed the need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the two countries in view of the complicated situation on the world arena. They expressed satisfaction with the smooth development in the bilateral relations since the signing of an agreement to enhance good-neighborly ties, friendship and cooperation in 2002.

The two countries signed an extradition treaty in December last year on a joint fight against terrorism and organized crimes.

Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. Mohammed Bedjaoui and his Spanish counterpart Angel Moratinos sealed two agreements, the first on air transport and the second one on parliamentary cooperation, in addition to two other agreements in the maritime field.

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Both the King Juan Carlos of Spain and Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika attended the signing ceremony of the documents which cover civil aviation, salvage operations, immigration, and measures against maritime pollution,

finance and parliamentary exchanges.

The other agreements include "Algerian-Spanish intervention plan in case of catastrophes occurring in the Mediterranean sea" as well as a memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation in terms of emergency and rescue matters in the open sea and pollution prevention and combating". Finally a memorandum of understanding between Algeria Finance Ministry and the Spanish Industry, Tourism and Trade Ministry, it was signed for the Algerian party by Minister Mourad Medelci and for the Spanish side by Mr. Pedro Mejia, Secretary of State in charge of Trade and Tourism.

This visit has been referred to by President Bouteflika three months earlier on the occasion of the visit by Spanish Prime Minister Luis Rodriguez Zapatero to Algeria in the framework of the third high-level annual meeting initiated by virtue of friendship, good neighboring and cooperation Treaty. He focused also on the "two countries permanent commitment to the Mediterranean project" which is viewed as a compendium of the daring cooperation based on good neighborliness and solidarity".

With some Algerians living in Spain and reportedly involved in terrorism and organized crimes, the extradition treaty aims to tackle the issue which would otherwise hinder the furthering of ties.

The two countries are also tightly bound by energy, as Algeria supplies 60 percent of Spain's natural gas.

## AMBASSADOR AMINE KHERBI ADDRESSES HIS BEST WISHES FOR MAWLID ENNABAWI ESHAREEF TO THE ALGERIAN COMMUNITY LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The birth of the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) is a joyous and festive occasion for Muslims in Algeria and elsewhere in the world. It is also a special time to celebrate our great religion of peace and tolerance. In my name proper and on behalf of all the staff of the Embassy of Algeria, I would like to seize this happy opportunity to extend my best wishes for joy, good health, and success to all the members of the Algerian community living in the United States of America.

May the Almighty bless all of you and may He continue to shed His light on our beloved country and people.



## FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER MOHAMMED BEDJAOUI MEETS SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE



H.E. Mr. Mohammed Bedjaoui, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs met with his American counterpart, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, on March 23, 2007 at the State Department and discussed several bilateral and international issues of common interest. Emerging from the talks, the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs said his meeting came within the framework of the deepening of dialogue and strengthening of concertation between Algeria and the United States. He said consultations between the two countries reflected their shared interest to increase their convergence of views in order to reinforce their bilateral relations and give them new prospects. Minister Bedjaoui added that his consultations with Dr. Rice also reflected the willingness of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and President George W. Bush to give a new impulse to the Algerian-American relations in order to establish a strong and lasting partnership.

On the eve of his meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State, the Algerian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs was guest speaker at an informal gathering of foreign policy experts at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). In his address, H.E. Mohammed Bedjaoui reviewed the current state of bilateral relations between Algeria and the United States and the determination of their leaders to transform them into a durable and solid partnership for the benefits of the peoples of both nations. Algeria, said H.E. Mr. Bedjaoui, is a strong, stable, peaceful and reliable partner of the United States with whom it shares a large convergence of views on many regional and international issues. Minister Bedjaoui seized the opportunity as well to reiterate Algeria's unwavering support for the right to self-determination of the people of the Western Sahara and for a Palestinian homeland, in conformity with international legality and relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

## UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE KAREN HUGHES VISITS ALGERIA



The Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Karen Hughes, decided on February 24<sup>th</sup> during her visit from February 21<sup>st</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> to Algeria that the United States have "to learn a lot" from the Algerian experience in the fight against terrorism. "The lessons to draw from the Algerian experience in the fight against terrorism are very important for us", Ambassador Hughes declared after her meeting with Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammed Bedjaoui. Responding to an Algérie Presse Service (APS) reporter's question about the rationale behind the recent creation of an Africa Command within the Pentagon, she explained that this section "will enable us to be more efficient and reach out to African peoples."

Speaking to reporters, Ambassador Hughes praised the "excellent and important cooperation" between the United States and Algeria in the areas of economy, security and education. She described talks with Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammed Bedjaoui as "positive and fruitful," adding that the visit helped her get acquainted with Algeria's position towards challenging questions for the United States such as Iraq and the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

U.S. Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes said also that her country made use of Algeria's experience in the field of terrorism combat and that Algeria's pioneering experience in the field of terrorism combat could benefit the countries that were still suffering the threats of that epidemic.

During her visit, Under Secretary Hughes also met with Prime Minister Abdelaziz Belkhadem, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed Bedjaoui, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Rachid Haraoubia, and Minister of National Education Boubekeur Benbouzid. She held meetings with female members of Parliament and journalists, and attended the opening of the "American Corner" at the National Public Library.

Ambassador Hughes also had the chance to do some sightseeing, when she visited the ancient city of Tipaza (80 kms west of Algiers).

## ALGERIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SET FOR 17 MAY 2007



President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has signed a decree setting the date of the parliamentary elections for May 17, 2007. The presidential decree, which was published in Issue 11 of the Official Gazette ("Journal Officiel") also announced the launch from February 19<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of "an exceptional revision of the country's electoral rolls". The National People's Assembly, the Lower House of the Algerian Parliament, has 389 seats. It is composed of the following parties: National Liberation Front (FLN), National Democratic Gathering (RND), Worker's Party (PT), Reform Movement (ISLAH), Society for Peace (HMS), National Understanding Movement (MEN), Algerian National Front (FNA), and the Independent Party.

## MINISTER KHELIL AT HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL



On Tuesday February 20th, Harvard Business School (HBS) welcomed the visit of Minister Chakib Khelil, the Energy and Mining Minister of Algeria and H.E Amine Kherbi, Algeria's Ambassador to the US. Minister Chakib Khelil made a 30 minute presentation on "Gas Markets Developments: Algeria's role", followed by a session of questions and answers moderated by Professor Rawi Abdelal, Professor of Management of International Trade and Investments at HBS.

The Minister's presentation emphasized the importance of Algeria as a major supplier of natural gas both to Europe and the US. Algeria is the fifth producer of natural gas in the world, with the world's 8<sup>th</sup> largest reserves. Responding to a question about a potential gas cartel between Algeria, Russia and other gas exporting countries, Minister Chakib Khelil said that this is neither desirable nor possible for three main reasons: First, natural gas is sold through long-term contracts; second, the exporting countries in many cases have competing interests, and finally, gas reserves are abundant and well-dispersed around the world.

Responding to another question regarding the Sub-Saharan pipeline project between Algeria and Nigeria, Dr. Chakib Khelil explained that this project will benefit all countries involved: Niger will benefit from the royalties and internal consumption, Nigeria will solve a big environmental problem caused by unused flared gas, and Algeria will export its gas to Europe through its pipelines reaching Spain and Italy. After the presentation and the Q&A session Minister Chakib Khelil and H.E. Mr. Amine Kherbi participated in a round table attended by professors and students from HBS.

This event was organized by Mr. Toufik Khadir, and Algerian MBA student at HBS and co-sponsored by the Middle East North Africa Club and the Energy Club at HBS.

## AT A HOWARD UNIVERSITY FORUM, AMBASSADOR KHERBI STRESSES THE ROLE OF DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN SOLVING THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE IN AFRICA



H.E. Amine Kherbi joined eminent panelists, including Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Ambassador Kwame Bawuah-Edusei of Ghana, House International Relations Committee Staff Member Dr. Pearl Alice Marsh, and Howard University Assistant Professor of Political Science Dr. Ben Fred-Mensah, in a lively discussion of "The Bifurcation of the Continent of Africa: Bridging the Divide between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa". The Forum, held on February 28, 2007, at Howard University's Ralph J. Bunche International Affairs Center, was co-sponsored by the Africa Society of the National Summit on Africa. In his presentation, the Ambassador of Algeria to the United States said that "the issue of integration of Africa is too important and complex to be effectively covered in just one gathering" and that "it requires further consideration and deeper discussion". Ambassador Kherbi explained that the "bifurcation" of the Continent is a result of "the historical past of Africa" and that "the resulting divisions are the most glaring consequences of a long process of colonization" which had "great impact on the identity and the political culture on all regions" of our continent. Colonialism, said the Algerian ambassador, "Balkanized" Africa and is behind a lack of infrastructure that "hampers inter-African relations". Such geographic and trade barriers, however, cannot stand in the way of greater trade exchanges, easier travel and more democracy for Africans, said the Algerian diplomat. Africans, said Ambassador Kherbi, have been aware that the reconstruction process, which started with independence, "will take time and sustained conjugated effort" and that the economic and political integration of Africa is not only a matter of determination; it is also a matter of time.

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## EMBASSY ADOPTION PROGRAM



H.E. Amine Kherbi, Ambassador of Algeria to the United States, hosted a dinner at his residence, on March 29, 2007, in honor of the members of the Washington Performing Arts Society, known in the diplomatic milieu for their multifaceted cultural activities and the “Embassy Adoption Program”, which is celebrating its 32<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary. The project continues its endeavor of an award-winning multicultural enrichment program designated for sixth-grade students in, and in partnership with, the District of Columbia Public Schools. Using the unique resources of Embassies in Washington DC, the program provides teachers and students with the opportunity to increase their knowledge and appreciation of the culture, government and geography of other nations. More than 35,000 students have partnered with 103 Embassies since the program inception in 1974.



## ALGERIAN MILITARY MISSION TO SUDAN AND SOMALIA BACK HOME

The Algerian military units sent to serve as an air logistical support to the African Union peacekeeping missions to Darfur (Sudan) and Somalia, returned to Algeria, last month.



## HOWARD UNIVERSITY FORUM

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As the integration of the Continent takes place, driven by public demand for prosperity, the existing barriers will eventually come down. Supporting the Ghanaian Ambassador’s comment that “good governance and democracy are now universally acknowledged as the most rapid way of achieving progress”, Ambassador Kherbi said that such requirements will bring down existing barriers, increase communication links between the regions and lessen the significance of government red tape. In that respect, the Algerian Ambassador stressed the importance of the role played by the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). Proposed by African heads of state as a formula for prosperity, NEPAD focuses on the growth generated by the private sector and its effect in combination with lowered corruption and increased transparency in governance. NEPAD, said Mr. Kherbi “is accelerating the democratic process” in Africa thanks to its peer-review mechanism and “is acting as a bridge toward integrating all of Africa into the global economy”. However, warned the Algerian diplomat, for Africa to regain its place in the world economy, it “needs to effectively face the challenges ahead, particularly globalization”, and combat “endemic diseases and improve its health systems”. But, our continent cannot do it alone; “the world community needs to involve itself and lend a hand” and join efforts with the leaders and other actors on the continent, “such as the State, civil society, and the public and private sectors.” In this respect, the Ambassador of Algeria stressed the critical significance of democracy for a better future for Africa as well as for the security of the United States. Democracy, added Mr. Kherbi, should be viewed as a whole, particularly concerning significant issues such as transnational terrorism, economic development, and protection of the environment.

## NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT



The extraordinary summit of the committee for the implementation of the initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD, was held in Algiers on March 21, 2007, in order to assess the outcome of six years of activities to develop Africa.

NEPAD is a vision and a strategic framework for Africa's renewal, arising from a mandate given to the initiating Heads of State of Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa by the former Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 2001 to implement an integrated socioeconomic development structure for Africa.

The summit discussed the possibility of integrating the NEPAD's executive secretariat - with its present headquarters in South Africa - into the African Union (AU) Commission in Addis Ababa. The aim of this integration is to establish greater consultation work of the AU structures and to break up the state of overlapping and, sometimes, contradictions which do not serve the interest of the process of African integration.

The NEPAD's extraordinary summit represented a turning point for Africa to think seriously to find means and ways which can contribute in providing the black continent with a new impetus to respond to the requirements of the present international conditions. The Algiers summit, which was attended by 20 African Heads of State and Prime Ministers, will settle the issue of integrating the NEPAD's executive secretariat into the AU Commission in order to provide greater consistency to the efforts of development in the black continent and to unify the bodies in charge of African action. Earlier, the committee managing the NEPAD had proposed the setting up of a development agency to be in charge of following up this initiative.

This extraordinary summit, which comes six years after the launch of the NEPAD initiative, will also assess what has been achieved within the NEPAD initiative at the political, economic and social levels. It did so through the identification of new mechanisms of economic and human development and reinvigoration of the role of regional organizations in order to mobilize energies and to move to a new phase which will strengthen the NEPAD.

The participants in this summit also discussed ways to consolidate partnership between Africa and the G8 (the group of the world's most industrialized nations), European states, China, India and Japan in the interest of Africa's development.

The recommendations of this meeting will be submitted to the next African Union (AU) Summit, scheduled to take place in Accra, Ghana, in July 2007.

## IMF PRAISES ALGERIA'S MACROECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT



In its latest Article IV report, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) praised Algeria's current macroeconomic environment, while urging the authorities to continue the implementation of structural reforms. Recent economic developments in Algeria were mostly positive. Real GDP growth slowed from more than 5.0% in 2005 to a still robust 3.0% a year later. The IMF report added that "continued implementation of structural reforms, along with robust international oil prices, could make Algeria a top investment destination, even outside its hydrocarbons sector". The current-account surplus is estimated by the Fund to have increased to 24.5% of GDP in 2006, from about 21.0% a year earlier. Algeria's external sector and government revenues are expected to remain strong in the near future. Foreign-exchange reserves were estimated at more than US\$78 billion at the end of 2006, up from US\$56.3 billion a year earlier.

Despite a robust economic performance in recent years, the Algerian economy is in great need of structural reforms, financial system reforms should be accelerated, said the report, adding that the banking system's poor state makes it extremely difficult for monetary policy to be efficient. On a positive note, Algeria has recently started banking sector reforms. The privatization seems to be running smoothly. According to the Fund, steps are currently being taken by the authorities to improve governance of the remaining public banks.

As to the implications, the IMF thinks that Algeria's medium-term economic outlook looks bright. If key constraints to economic growth could be addressed, Algeria could become an important investment destination, even outside its oil and gas sector. The country's economic growth is expected by major specialized sources to accelerate this year on the back of increased crude oil production, the continued expansion in the gas sector, strong fiscal policy, and robust growth in the agriculture sector. The same sources consider that the strong fiscal policy will lead to a robust expansion in construction sector and will also curb the country's high unemployment rate, which currently affects 12.3% of the labor force. Meanwhile, gas production is expected to rise strongly, now that the In Amenas and In Salah gas projects are both online.

## EAST-WEST HIGHWAY PROJECT LAUNCHED

Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika on Wednesday, March 14, 2007, officially launched in Hammadi, in the province of Boumerdes, the East-West



motorway works, a "huge project" budgeted at AD800 billion (some US\$13 billion) and which length is estimated at more than 1,200km. The motorway will be completed within 40 months. According to APS, President Bouteflika laid the first stone of this project in an atmosphere of popular feast, created by the inhabitants of Hammadi, a southern Algiers small area and folk dance troupes, accompanied by shots of "baroud" by traditionally-dressed horsemen.

The highway will ensure the connection between the Tunisian border to the east and the Moroccan border to the west, and will link the cities of Annaba, Constantine, Setif, Algiers, Oran and Tlemcen. It will cross 24 of Algeria's 48 wilayate (or provinces). This project is part of a huge economic and social recovery program over the period 2005-2009, of which it is one of the major components in terms of required resources and potential economic value. The project is entirely financed by the Algerian Government.

Japanese consortium Cojaal and Chinese Citic/CRCC will carry out the construction of the three sections of the east-west motorway in Algeria. The first 400km-section will be built by Cojaal. The center and west section will be built by CRCC.

## TERRORISM LINKED TO RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

The African Center for Study and Research on Terrorism held on February 14, 2007, a debate in Algiers on the links between religious extremism and terrorism. Experts attending the 3-day seminar discussed how easy it has become to slip from religious extremism on terrorism.

Experts in security and religious affairs converged on Algiers to discuss links between religious extremism and terrorism. The 3-day meeting was organized by the Algeria-based African Center for Study and Research into Terrorism (ACSRT), which was set up by the African Union (AU) following the adoption of the African Convention on the Combating of Terrorism.

## MALIAN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION GROUP SIGN DEAL IN ALGIERS



A reconciliation agreement was signed in Algiers on February 20, 2007, between the Malian government and the Malian Democratic Alliance [Tuareg ex-rebels].

Algeria is a mediator helping to solve the crisis that erupted between the two sides in May 2006. Algerian Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammed Bedjaoui attended the signing ceremony.

The agreement is centered on three points: Measures to be taken with regards to the implementation of the agreement signed in Algiers in July 2006, measures to help the Malian insurgents leave their hideouts in the mountains and reinsert themselves and their families in the mainstream society with the opening of a fund to support their insertion, and setting up of special security units in the Kidal area made up mainly of residents in the area and, finally, holding of an African meeting on 23-24 March, 2007.

Algerian Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammed Bedjaoui said that "this agreement has required efforts from both sides, and now every thing is under control" and added that "its implementation will be easy, easier than before [when an accord signed between the two parties in Algiers in early July 2006 was not implemented with each camp accusing the other of not respecting the agreement]".

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