

ALGERIA TODAY

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IN COPENHAGEN, PRESIDENT BOUTEFLIKA CALLS FOR "LOOKING BEYOND 2012"



Speaking on the first day of the Heads of State meeting on climate change in Copenhagen, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika immediately set the tone of his vision regarding the main issue facing the delegates from 192 countries attending the Copenhagen 2009 world conference, when he said: "Man disrupts climate; he has the duty to control that". With those introductory words, the Algerian President laid out the responsibilities that mankind as a whole must meet to repair the damage done to the natural balance of the planet. Mr. Bouteflika warned that "time is being counted off" for Planet Earth and the global community must find solutions to the sense of desolation which oppresses the inhabitants on this planet. He also sincerely reflected the deep concerns of the populations of developing countries because they are the most vulnerable and must pay a heavy toll for the excessive increase in greenhouse gases emitted in the atmosphere over the centuries. In his address, the Algerian Head of State called on his peers, and particularly those of the industrialized nations, to write the first page of a new post-Rio 92 and post-Kyoto 97 era, saying that "Copenhagen must be a new stage for us, so that we respond collectively to the unprecedented challenges posed for mankind by climate change." Through his words, Mr. Bouteflika added to the unconditional and multifaceted commitment expressed by Algeria in support of measures likely to be put forth by the final declaration of the conference. Taking the lead in presenting and defending the views of the African continent, Algeria, through Minister Chérif Rahmani, has argued forcefully for solutions favorable to Africa and the developing world and called for substantial financial support to address the concerns of those countries in the face of necessary measures to control emissions but also their expectations for a sustainable development including the climate dimension.

PRESIDENT BOUTEFLIKA CALLS FOR "CONSIDERATION OF THE AFRICAN POSITION" AT THE COPENHAGEN SUMMIT ON CLIMATE CHANGE



In a message addressed to the "Third African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable Development ALC-2009", and read on his behalf at the opening in Algiers of the conference proceedings by presidential adviser Mohamed Ali Boughazi, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika said that "the Copenhagen Conference should take into consideration the common African position which translates an awareness of the role that our continent should play to preserve its rights to sustainable development and prosperity of its peoples." The Head of the State recalled that the last summit meeting of the African Union, held in July 2009 in Syrta, Libya, has established the AU Committee of the Ten on climate change and entrusted it with harmonizing the continent's position. President Bouteflika also recalled that Algiers had hosted in 2007 an international workshop on the role of space technology in adapting Africa to climate change. The Algiers meeting stressed the essential role of data gathered by earth observation and meteorology satellites. Furthermore, in his message the President indicated that, on the margin of the ALC-2009 conference, Algeria, South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria will conclude an agreement on African Resources Management Constellation devoted to the collection and management of data on continental resources. He also announced that Algerian Space Agency (ASA) and the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs will sign a cooperation agreement with a goal of creating in Algiers a Regional Support Office for Disaster Management and Emergency Responses (UN-SPIDER). The agreement will enable emergency teams in areas of natural disasters to make "rapid use" of space images fed from satellites.

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COMMUNIQUE OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (in French)

Available on the Embassy's website:
www.algeria-us.org

ALGERIA: AN ACTIVE PARTNER FULLY COMMITTED TO CONTRIBUTING TO THE EMERGENCE OF A BETTER WORLD

The recovery policies implemented under the guidance and leadership of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika have borne fruit and have been eloquently demonstrated in the qualitative leap registered in all sectors, including the economic, social, and diplomatic areas. Algeria has indeed returned to the world scene, taking an active part in the debate over the major issues of concern to the world community, namely peace, security, institutional reforms, climate change, the fight against terrorism, and others.

The views held by Algeria and the positions she has defended within global fora have earned her respect and esteem within an international opinion able to evaluate and value the wisdom of the message put forth by Algeria, who has always remained committed to defending just causes and the spirit of fairness in international relations, but also the accuracy, absence of bias, and pertinence of an analysis reflecting her experience and sound management of issues.

It is a fact that Algeria is now a reliable and efficient partner whose views and opinions are valued and respected by the highest officials of numerous States, including major powers, who regularly visit Algeria to seek her views on major issues. The recent visit in Algiers by the Commander of Africom, who stressed the positive role played by Algeria in the preservation of regional and international peace and stability, reflect the weight and credibility of Algeria. The invitation extended by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to her Algerian counterpart, Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. Mourad Medelci, who just ended a two-day working visit in Washington, accurately translates the willingness of both partners to work together on issues of major interest at the regional and international levels.

Algeria is always available to bring her contribution when the objective is the resolution of issues emerging at a time when a major part of mankind seeks alleviation from enduring scourges such as conflicts, poverty, hunger, diseases, ignorance, and others. At a time when peace and stability are being threatened by extremists who propagate messages filled with hate, fanaticism and intolerance, Algeria never misses an opportunity to recall that salvation is in dialogue and that peaceful coexistence among peoples demands the promotion of a spirit of tolerance, understanding, and respect of others.

ALGERIA IS “PERMANENTLY” COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



In a message addressed to the participants in a seminar commemorating the 61st anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and read on his behalf by the Chief of Staff of the Presidency Mr. El Okbi Habba, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika reiterated that Algeria, which is “resolutely pursuing the establishment of democratic institutions”, is “reaffirming its permanent commitment to the principles and values expressed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

Mr. Bouteflika recalled that Algeria had declared its commitment to the Declaration even while under the yoke of colonialism, reiterated its commitment to human rights during the war for national independence, and enshrined it in its first Constitution on September 10, 1963. Stressing that promotion and protection of human rights “can only be conceived in the framework of peace, institutional stability, and safety of individuals and property”. The President indicated that “The Algerian State considers that its objective of consolidation of the entitlements derived from the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation approved by the Algerian people in September 2005 is a major goal of its effort for national recovery.”

President Bouteflika also recalled in his message that Algeria has ratified practically all international instruments relating to human rights because “since independence, it has always been willing to devote most of its resources to economic and social development and to improving the quality of life and well-being of its population.” He added that the recent ratification by Algeria of the International Convention for the Protection of Migrants Workers and their Dependents, the International Convention on the Rights of Handicapped Persons, as well as its support for the Convention on the Elimination of Any Forms of Discrimination Towards Women “reflect” the willingness of the country “to maintain a high degree of commitment towards human rights.”

The President deplored as well the fact that some people “still continue to be deprived of their essential rights and are kept by an unfair international order on the margin of the ideals of peace, progress and prosperity.” He reaffirmed that “human rights cannot be dissociated from the rights of peoples” and stressed that “the international community still faces challenges relating to the enforcement of human rights” in particular “the right to peace, to sovereign exercise of their right to self-determination, the right to development and the right to live safe from fear and poverty and in an environment promoting the ecological balance of our planet.”

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MR. MOURAD MEDELICI ON A WORKING VISIT IN WASHINGTON



Several areas of the Algerian-American bilateral cooperation were at the heart of the discussions held by Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. Mourad Medelci on the first of two days of his working visit in Washington.

The head of Algerian diplomacy held talks with Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman, Under Secretary of State for Economic, Energy, and Agricultural Affairs Robert Hormats, and Mr. Daniel Benjamin, Coordinator for

Counterterrorism at the U.S. State Department, with whom Mr. Medelci reviewed “all areas of bilateral cooperation as well as political issues of common interest.”

Later, Mr. Medelci met at the White House with Mr. Anthony Blinken, Advisor for National Security Affairs to U.S. Vice President Joe Biden.

He also had a “long discussion” at the U.S. State Department with his American counterpart, Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton. During the meeting, both parties exchanged views on a wide array of issues relating to bilateral cooperation, the situation in the Middle East, the fight against terrorism, the Copenhagen Conference, and the issue of the Western Sahara.”

“A wide convergence of views emerged on all these issues”, indicated the same source, adding that on the issue of the Western Sahara, the U.S. Secretary of State “has reiterated U.S. support for the United Nations process.”

Mr. Medelci, who is leading a delegation including, namely, Ambassador Abdallah Baali and Mr. Sabri Boukadoum, Director General of the “Americas” region at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will meet at the White House, on the second day of his working visit, with General James Jones, National Security Affairs Advisor to President Barack Obama.

Furthermore, Mr. Medelci will hold talks on Capitol Hill with members of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, before meeting with representatives of the Algerian community living in the United States.

“The warm and cordial discussions and meetings taking place in Washington during the official visit by Mr. Medelci reflect the significance with which the United States of America views Algeria.”

“Whether at the U.S. State Department or at the White House, one could note that the advice and opinions of Algeria, under the leadership of the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, are sought and taken into consideration on numerous issues, thereby confirming that our country is not only a respected partner whose advice is taken into account, but also an unavoidable player.”

FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER MR. MOURAD MEDELICI MEETS WITH MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



In the framework of his official visit to the United States of America, Foreign Affairs minister Mr. Mourad Medelci met on Capitol Hill on December 8 with Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-Minn.), who is a member of several committees including the House Appropriations Committee, and with Congressman Alcee Hastings (D-Fl.) who chairs the Helsinki “OSCE” Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs discussed several issues of common interest with both Representatives, including the possibility of establishing parliamentary cooperation between the two countries.

MINISTER MEDELICI'S MEETING IN WASHINGTON WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ALGERIAN COMMUNITY IN THE U.S

During his visit to Washington, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Medelci stressed the importance given by the State to the protection of Algerian citizens living abroad and its willingness "to spare no means" to guarantee their safety and well-being wherever they may be.

Addressing representatives of the Algerian community living in the United States, on the second day of his working visit in Washington, Mr. Medelci specifically highlighted the "invaluable contribution" that the Algerian community, particularly Algerians living in the United States, can make to help their country as it pursues its ongoing enterprise of development and recovery.

In this respect, the Foreign Affairs Minister indicated that the Algerian Government is attentive to the concerns and expectations of this community and is willing "to translate into actual measures the ideas and suggestions expressed by this community so as to enable it to be fully involved in that national enterprise."

In this regard, added Mr. Medelci, the creation of an Advisory Council serving the community living abroad, which will provide "an invaluable space for dialogue and coordination" and will help meet the expectations and aspirations of the community.

Following his address, Mr. Medelci, joined by the Ambassador of Algeria in Washington, Mr. Abdallah Baali, engaged the representatives of the community in a healthy debate over such aspects as consular services, bilateral relations between Algeria and the United States, as well as contributions by the members of the community to their country's development.

Earlier that day, Mr. Medelci held a long meeting with Dr. Smail Chikhoun, Executive President of the US-Algeria Business Council (USABC), to review investment opportunities in Algeria and stressed "the need for greater U.S. footprint in investments in non-hydrocarbon sectors."

In that context, Dr. Chikhoun announced that the Embassy of Algeria in Washington and the USABC were gearing up for an "important" trade and investment mission in Algeria scheduled for May 2010.

The second day of Mr. Medelci's working visit in the United States also included official talks with President Obama's National Security Advisor General Jim Jones and members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.



MR. MOURAD MEDELICI IN TUNISIA: CLOSER COOPERATION ON THE AGENDA

The Algerian Foreign Affairs Minister made an official visit to Tunisia, at the invitation of his Tunisian counterpart, Mr. Abdelwahab Abdallah. The two officials reviewed the bilateral relation between the two countries and exchanged views on a large array of issues of common interest relating to the Maghreb, the Arab world, Africa, and the Mediterranean region. They also signed a bilateral agreement delineating the maritime borders between the two countries. During his visit, Mr. Medelci met as well with other Tunisian high officials, including Prime Minister Mr. Mohamed Ghannouchi and the Speaker of the House Mr. Foued Mebazaa.



THE EUROPEAN TROIKA: ALGERIA PLAYS A “KEY ROLE” IN THE SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION

In a statement to the press on December 8, after her meeting with Minister Delegate in charge of Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel, Mrs. Carin Wall, Ambassador to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden and Chairwoman of the European Union Troika, declared that Algeria plays a “key role” in the area of security and development of the Sahara and Sahel region.

Ambassador Wall added that the visit in Algiers by the European delegation translates the continent’s wish “to define a strategy and a common approach to security and development in the Sahara-Sahel region.” Speaking of regional cooperation, she hailed the efforts deployed to convene a regional summit meeting, as proposed by Mali’s President, calling it “a very good initiative” and expressing the hope of seeing the conference take place soon and getting “this cooperation that we need” started. It should be noted that Mrs. Wall has also visited other countries in the region, including Mali and Mauritania.

For his part, Mr. Messahel indicated that the “constructive” talks he had with the Chairwoman of the European Troika are part of the ongoing dialogue between Algeria and the EU over the situation in the Sahel and reflect the positions of the countries of the region, who agreed that “issues of peace and security are primordial” and that “fighting terrorism is important to preserve stability” in the area.

IN NOUAKCHOTT, MR. MESSAHEL CALLS FOR “NEW IMPULSE” IN ALGERIAN-MAURITANIAN RELATIONS



During an official visit in the Mauritanian capital, where he also met with Mauritanian President Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz, Minister Delegate in charge of Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel called for a “new impulse” in Algerian-Mauritanian relations. Addressing the 9th session of the Algerian-Mauritanian Follow-Up Commission, which he co-chaired with Mr. Akbarou Ould Mohamed, Mauritanian Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister in charge of Maghreb Affairs, he said that the two countries are “eager to establish strong and fruitful cooperation” and insisted that the session offered the opportunity to “reactivate cooperation in all areas, in preparation for the next meeting of the Joint Commission”, which the Algerian and Mauritanian Prime Ministers will chair. Calling the volume of trade exchanges between the two countries “insufficient and well below their existing potentialities”, Mr. Messahel seized the opportunity of the session underline that both countries can and should increase it beyond its current \$13 million level. He also hailed the planned road linking Tindouf in Algeria to Choum in Mauritania as a “vital necessity” which will enable the two countries to increase their trade volume.

PRESIDENT BOUTEFLIKA CALLS FOR “CONSIDERATION OF THE AFRICAN POSITION” AT THE COPENHAGEN SUMMIT ON CLIMATE CHANGE (from page 1)

Commenting on the ALC-2009 conference, President Bouteflika said that it is “a new opportunity for us to discuss the means to coordinate cooperation among African countries with a view to integrating space technology into the sustainable development of our continent.” That vision is in keeping with Algeria’s policy of peaceful use of outer space in development and its first earth observation satellite Alsat-1has contributed, since joining a constellation of other international satellites in 2003, to the prevention and management of national, regional and international natural risks, observed the President.

The Head of the State also recalled that Algeria became a permanent member of the United Nations Committee for Peaceful Use of Outer Space in 2002, thanks to efforts deployed, both nationally and internationally, to promote a space activity entirely devoted to supporting sustainable development, well-being of populations, and prevention of natural disasters and management of their consequences. Furthermore, recalled the President, Algeria had chaired the UN Committee’s Scientific and Technical Sub-



AMBASSADOR'S ACTIVITIES



On December 11, 2009, Ambassador Abdallah Baali met at the State Department with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration, Mr. Eric Schwartz. Messrs. Baali and Schwartz discussed during this meeting bilateral relations and regional and international issues of common interest.



On December 2nd, 2009, Ambassador Abdallah Baali met with Senator Russell Feingold (D-WI), Chairman of the Subcommittee on African Affairs (Senate Committee on Foreign Relations). During this meeting, Messrs. Baali and Feingold discussed bilateral relations and regional and international issues of common interest.

PRESENTATION BY AMBASSADOR BAALI ON "ALGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY" AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

In the framework of speeches and conferences he has been giving at universities in the United States, Ambassador Abdallah Baali gave a presentation on November 30, 2009, at George Mason University, on the topic of "Algeria's Foreign Policy".



AMBASSADOR ABDALLAH BAALI TOOK PART IN THE ARAB-AMERICAN ANNUAL GALA IN HOUSTON, TEXAS

On November 21, 2009, Ambassador Abdallah Baali took part in the Arab-American Annual Gala in Houston, Texas, which was attended by 400 people. On that occasion, Mr. Baali addressed the Arab-American community and presented a short Algerian documentary (the full text of the speech and the documentary are available on the website: www.algeria-us.org).

FINANCE LAW SIGNED BY PRESIDENT BOUTEFLIKA

The President of the Republic signed, on Wednesday, December 30, 2009 the 2010 Finance Law.

According to the document, the total government budget allocates 5,860 billion Algerian Dinars (DZD) (\$82.7 billion) for expenditures and 3,081 billion Algerian Dinars (\$43.4 billion) in revenues due to lower oil exports over 2009. Foreseeing a 4% rate of increase for the GDP (5.5% for non-hydrocarbon sectors), an oil barrel average price of \$37, an inflation rate of 3.5%, and \$37 billion for imports, the budget will allocate 2,838 billion DZD to operational expenditures and 3,022 billion DZD to capital expenditures.

Calling for new measures intended to support investments, reduce fiscal pressure and reduce unemployment, the new legislation reflects the willingness of the State to keep up efforts geared towards strengthening social policies, fighting unemployment, and achieving stronger economic growth.

The ceremony for the signature of the bill was held at the Presidency of the Republic in presence of State senior officials and members of the Government.



9TH FORUM OF GAS-EXPORTING COUNTRIES: MR. CHAKIB KHELIL WILL CHAIR THE NEXT MINISTERIAL MEETING IN JANUARY 2010



Convened in Doha, Qatar, for the proceedings of the Ninth Forum of Gas-Exporting Countries (FGEC), delegates from 15 member-states (Algeria, Bolivia, Brunei, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela – Norway and Kazakhstan are observers) elected Mr. Chakib Khelil, Algerian Minister of Energy and Mining, chairman of the ministerial meeting planned for January 1, 2010. The Forum also elected the first Vice-president of Stroitransgaz, Mr. Leonid Boukhanovski, the next Secretary General of

FGEC, an organization with a \$6 million budget. Modeled after OPEC and created on December 23, 2008, in Moscow, FGEC has emerged as an influential organization whose members have called for closer cooperation and indexing of gas prices on those set for oil, as proposed by Qatar, the third gas-producing country in the world.

The Algerian Minister of Energy and Mining, for his part, called for a strategy leading to gas price stabilization, increased coordination among the members, and a “harmonious” development of the gas industry that, said Mr. Khelil, would make it possible “to avoid imbalances between market supply and demand and to face unexpected developments or initiatives from some countries” and would permit “to ensure the best valorization possible of gas exports on the basis of fair conditions guaranteeing the interests of all parties”.

Noting that the 10th session of the Forum will be held in Oran, Algeria, on April 19, 2010, during the World Gas Conference GNL16, Minister Khelil also said that market prospects are “good” and warned that gas-producing countries could become major consumers as well.

THE ALGERIAN OIL CORPORATION SONATRACH REMAINS “UNCHALLENGED” AS THE FIRST AMONG 500 BEST AFRICAN COMPANIES, SAYS THE FRENCH WEEKLY “JEUNE AFRIQUE”



In its yearly review of the best-performing African corporations, the French weekly magazine “Jeune Afrique” considers that the Algerian oil corporation Sonatrach remains “unchallenged” and “eternally first” among the 500 successful African major companies. Sonatrach owes its dominance of first ranking for the past 10 years to the 5.5% increase in corporate revenues since the previous year and to “a strategy that places it among the major players in its area of activity”, says “Jeune Afrique”. The weekly’s report adds that “in the gas sector, for instance, it (Sonatrach) covers 30% of the European energy needs and will provide 60% of the supplies of the continent by 2015-2017, thanks to two gas pipeline projects (Medgaz to Spain and Gasli to Italy)”. The magazine also points out Sonatrach’s “heavy presence” in Africa, noting that the Algerian company is “remarkably active” in Egypt, Libya, Mauritania and Nigeria. It further adds that Sonatrach’s involvement is not limited to the African continent, since the oil corporation “is already making its move” in South America, namely in Venezuela. Compared to the second-ranked in Jeune Afrique’s review, the Angolan oil company Sonagol, Sonatrach boasts net corporate earnings three times higher than those of its Angolan counterpart, indicated the magazine report.

“IN SALAH GAZ”: AN INNOVATIVE ALGERIAN “CARBON DIOXIDE CAPTURE AND STORAGE” EXPERIMENT WORTH WATCHING

While world leaders are hard at work in the global conference on climate change, looking for ways to reduce CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere, Algeria has been quietly conducting for the past 5 years a successful experiment consisting in capturing carbon dioxide emitted during gas exploration and storing it in the subsoil. The process, called CSC, is being conducted at the Krechba plant in In Salah, in the Algerian desert, an area of major gas exploration. It is one of two or three similar projects that have caught the attention of scientists and experts around the world concerned with and by the effects of atmospheric releases on climate change. With a budget of \$1.7 billion, CSC is a Sonatrach-BP-Statoil joint-venture co-financed by the Algerian petroleum and gas corporation Sonatrach, the U.S. Department of energy, British Petroleum, the Norwegian oil and gas company Statoil, the European Union, and others. The process places Algeria at the forefront of research on control of atmosphere-harming industrial effects and could be attractive to Northern Europe, the United States and China, because their subsoil has geological formation and rock structure similar to those of the In Salah region. According to experts, the CSC process can contribute to 15% to 55% reduction of CO₂ emissions to stabilize climate change in the course of the century.

NATIONAL PROGRAM OF ENERGY-SAVING AND PROMOTION OF RENEWABLE ENERGIES STARTED

Addressing the Council of the Nation on December 24, Minister of Energy and Mining Chakib Khelil announced that the country has embarked on an “ambitious” program to save energy and promote the use of renewable energies, particularly solar energy. Part of the next five-year governmental plan for 2010-2014, the program involves, among other measures, the distribution of low-consumption heating lamps and 900 solar-powered water-heaters to households.

RENEWABLE ENERGY: FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A SOLAR-THERMAL TOWER PLANT IN ALGERIA



A German technical delegation from the Jülich Solar Institute started a feasibility study on a project estimated to cost 30 million Euros devoted to building the second solar-thermal tower plant in the world. The German-Algerian project has selected the “Saad Dahlab” University in Blida, northern Algeria, to build the tower because of the size of the location (30-50 acres), its proximity to the capital, and the availability in the country of researchers specialized in renewable energy.

According to a study of the German Aerospace Agency, Algeria, by far the largest country in the Mediterranean, has the largest long term land potential for concentrating solar thermal power plants, considering that 70% of its area are South of 20^o latitude.

The project stands apart from similar endeavors because of its hybrid nature, combining solar energy and natural gas, which will make it possible to develop additional processes, such as solar refrigeration, water treatment, sea water desalination, production of industrial heat, and solar electricity.

Supported by the policy of climate and environment protection enacted by the Algerian Ministry of Energy and Mining, the plant fully meets the objective of provision of clean energy for local consumption and export to European countries. The thermal-solar project reflects Algeria’s perception of ideal opportunities of combining its richest fossil energy – natural gas – with its most abundant renewable energy source – the sun – by integrating concentrating solar power into natural gas combined cycles.

Furthermore, said sources close to the project, this initiative will also help in the areas of job creation, training, and technology transfer. While the cost of the feasibility study is estimated at 100 million AD with up to 80% financing by the German side, 30 million Euros will have to be disbursed to cover the total cost of the project.

ALGERIA SETS OUT AMBITIOUS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR INNOVATION IN INDUSTRY

Minister of Industry and Investment Promotion Hamid Temmar announced on December 7 a new governmental policy geared towards stimulating industrial innovation and scientific research through financial and technical state subsidies. A new government agency will soon become operational and will have branches throughout the country to support all categories of business to increase their focus on Research & Development (R&D) and become “sources for ideas” able to contribute to development in industrial innovation. Larger enterprises will also be encouraged to form resource pools and participate in the process. Furthermore, said Mr. Temmar, the new government policy includes, on the one hand, programs aiming at retrofitting public and private enterprises and bringing them up to current industrial standards and, on the other hand, setting in place an adequate legal framework for innovation and development.

The Minister of Industry and Investment Development, who made the announcement during an event celebrating the National Innovation Day, also presented awards for “Best Invention for 2009” to several Algerian inventors. The top recipient was Mr. Yacine Sahir for a “smart electrical outlet” able to feed simultaneously several appliances of different amperage. The 2nd and 3rd laureates, Messrs. Kamel Bensmaïl and Mohamed Benchikh, were awarded prizes for developing, respectively, “a process for rationalizing electric power” and “multifunction muscle development equipment.” It should be noted that over the first eight months of 2009, 530 patents were granted by the National Industrial Property Institute (INAPI), whose director in charge of industrial innovation predicted that the final number of patents for the current year could reach 850.

WITH A SECOND SATELLITE LAUNCH PLANNED FOR 2010, ALGERIA'S SPACE PROGRAM IS ON GOOD TRACK

According to Minister of Post, Information technologies and Information Mr. Hamid Bessalah, Algeria is currently negotiating with several countries, including the United States, to develop space cooperation and boost its fledgling but ambitious space program. Algeria has one earth observation satellite already operational (Alsat-1) and is getting ready to launch a second one early next year (Alsat-2), thereby "strengthening Algeria's presence in space". Mr. Azzedine Oussedik, Director of the Algerian Space Agency (ASAL), expressed confidence that the launch will take place smoothly and said that building and testing of Alsat-2 is being completed at the Arzew Space Research Center by a team of 30 space researchers who were trained in 2006 in Toulouse, France. Algeria also plans to launch a telecommunication satellite (Alcomsat-1) which will be entirely "made in Algeria" and managed by teams of Algerian scientists. Additionally, the Algerian Space Agency is said to be in talks with NASA to increase overall cooperation in the area and training for its personnel. NASA is said to be highly interested in exploring the possibility of securing additional landing and recovery zones for the space shuttle in the wide open spaces of the Algerian desert.



ALGERIA'S FLAG CARRIER AIR ALGÉRIE SIGNS WITH BOEING AND ATR TO EXPAND ITS FLEET WITH 11 NEW AIRCRAFT

Earlier this month, Air Algérie's CEO Abdelwahid Bouabdallah signed two contracts with, respectively, the Africa-Middle East Vice President of the Boeing Corp., Mr. Abdelhamid Zeghmi, and the President of the French-Italian aeronautical group ATR, Mr. Stephan Meyer, for acquisition of 11 new transport aircraft. The event was attended by Minister of Transportation Amar Tou, the Secretary General of the Algerian Trade Unions and representatives from the French, Italian and U.S. embassies.



DECEMBER 11, 1960: CITIZENS OF ALGIERS AND OTHER ALGERIAN CITIES REMEMBER



On December 11, 1960, men, women and children from several Muslim neighborhoods of Algiers, such as the Casbah, Belcourt, and others, revolted by the continued bloody repression led by the French colonial forces,

brandished Algerian flags and headed towards the center of town, demanding independence for Algeria and shouting their support for the Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria (GPRA). Repression was violent and merciless. Men, women and children by the dozens were felled by live bullets fired by French soldiers. Sources have estimated that 103 people were killed that day.

On December 11, 2009, at a round table organized in Algiers in the building of the "El Moudjahid" newspaper, relatives of some of the victims, historians, journalists and ordinary people recounted the events of an urban uprising that stands as a major landmark in the history of Algeria.

The exactions directed at the civilian Muslim population, both by French military forces and by French settlers, strengthened the determination of the leaders of the movement for independence and generated great outcry throughout the world, leading the United Nations to pass a resolution supporting the right of the Algerian people to self-determination and calling on France to negotiate with the Front for National Liberation (FLN) which was leading the struggle for independence.

At the round table, several witnesses paid tribute to a father, mother, brother or sister who was lost on that day. Mr. Abdelhamid Ouatiki was one of those who spoke. His sister, then a teenager and already active in supporting the liberation movement, was felled by six bullets from a machine gun fired by a French soldier. Close to fifty years after that bloody day, said her brother Abdelhamid, the pain is still deep and the scar will probably not heal over time.

"GREAT FIGURES OF ALGERIAN RESISTANCE (1830-1954): THROUGH THE SWORD AND THE PEN - THE RUMBLING OF HISTORY AND THE INSPIRATION OF THE EPOS"



Mr. Boualem Bessaïeh, the current President of the Algerian Constitutional Council. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Culture, former ambassador and a renowned writer as well. His scholarship and experience,

both during the war for independence and in government service, have converged and coalesced in a beautiful book just published in Algiers by "Casbah Editions" in which he looks at the various manifestations taken by popular resistance to denounce, demonstrate and fight against subjugation and colonialism.

The Book, titled "Les grandes figures de la résistance algérienne : par l'épée et la plume 1830-1945 – Le bruissement de l'histoire et le souffle de l'épopée" (The Great Figures of the Algerian Resistance: Through the Sword and the Pen 1830-1945: The Rumbling of History and the Inspiration of the Epos), is a tribute paid to the men and women who organized and rose up to become the leaders of a ragtag army determined to fight to the death a strong and well-fed imperial army and claw off their freedom from French colonial power. Detailed and meticulous in retracing the lives of legendary figures like Emir Abdelkader, El Mokrani, or Fatma N'Soumer who led armed resistance, thinkers like Ibn Badis, Bachir El Ibrahimi or Emir Khaled who shaped Algerian identity to Larbi Tebessi or M'Barek El Mili, and many others, the book is a great contribution to Algerian history and a valuable teaching tool for a young generation that sometimes takes independence and freedom for granted.



A NEW BOOK EXPLORES THE LIFE AND SACRIFICE OF LARBI BEN M'HIDI, HERO OF THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE



Simply titled “Larbi Ben M’hidi” and published in Algiers by “Thala Editions”, this new book retraces the singular life and ultimate sacrifice of a man rightly venerated in Algeria for his leading role in the war for national independence and who died under atrocious torture. This paean to one of the greatest heroes of Algeria’s struggle for freedom was penned by Khalfa Mameri, a former Ambassador of Algeria and Columbia University graduate in law and political science. The author, already known for a dozen other books, including a biography devoted to Abane Ramdane, another hero of the war for independence, explores the selflessness of a young man full of promise but moved by his love of freedom and his rejection of subjugation and chose to make the ultimate sacrifice. His torturer, former General Paul Aussaresses, declared publicly in 2000 having assassinated Larbi Ben M’hidi and showed no regrets whatsoever for his actions.

KATEB YACINE REMEMBERED: THE ARAB WORLD INSTITUTE IN PARIS PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE FAMOUS ALGERIAN POET, AUTHOR, AND PLAYWRIGHT



L’Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (Arab World Institute) held an exhibit on December 10th to honor the legacy of the legendary and world-renowned Algerian poet, author, and playwright Kateb Yacine, in commemoration of his death twenty years ago. Attended by numerous French and Algerian literary and theater tenors, including Mr. Benamar Mediène, who wrote a biography of the author (“Kateb Yacine, le coeur entre les dents”), included Marianne Epin who was part of the cast of the Kateb Yacine’s play “Le Cadavre Encerclé”, comedian Mohamed Fellag, and Algerian theater figures such as Sid-Ahmed Agoumi and Fetouma Ousliha, and many others, the exhibit, features readings, long-lost videos of Kateb’s life, as well as an interview with the writer and eminent figure of Algerian literature Mohamed Dib, who recounted his first meeting with the author of “Nedjma”, while both were writers for the daily Alger-Républicain.

ALGERIA LAUNCHES AMBITIOUS PROGRAMS TO RESTORE AND PRESERVE ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES, SOME PART OF UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE



The Algerian Minister of Culture, Mrs. Khalida Toumi, inaugurated the launching phase of the second implementation phase of the “Permanent Plans to Restore and Safeguard Archeological Sites” in Algeria, calling them a “source of pride” for the country. Indeed, preservation of a rich national heritage spanning thousands of years and encompassing the legacy of Roman, Arab, Muslim, North African Mediterranean and Northern and Southern European civilizations has become a national enterprise in which a large array of government bodies is deeply involved. During a visit to Tipasa and Cherchell, the world-renowned Roman sites, on December 23, Minister Toumi emphasized that the Algerian Government is deeply committed, both politically and financially, to a multitude of efforts geared toward preserving the sites and protecting them from the encroachment and effects of modern life.

This effort, which is in phase with current government policies to promote Algeria as an unavoidable tourist destination, will involve the restoration and preservation of two archeological parks and an additional museum (the other being the Royal Mauretanian Mausoleum) in Tipasa in areas protected from development.

FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE REVEALS RENEWED INTEREST FOR TRADITIONAL POETRY AND MUSICAL GENRES – AHELLIL, ASHEWIQ AND AHAL HIGHLIGHTED

Typically Algerian, although influenced by other Mediterranean sources in some cases, traditional genres of poetry and music such as Ahellil, Ashewiq and Ahal are experiencing strong revival and generating renewed interest both in Algeria and elsewhere, as demonstrated by the level of domestic and foreign attendance at the first international conference devoted to the genres and held in Algeria.

Practiced mainly in the Southern areas of the country bordering the old caravan trade routes linking the areas of northern Africa to the sub-Saharan areas, known as the Gourara Region, these genres reflect the strong cultural bond that has always connected Africa south of the Sahel to the north. Reported as early in history as the 5th Century BC by Herodotus, the traditions and practices of this ancient oasis civilization, such as underground aqueducts carrying fresh water for human consumption and gardening needs, have been celebrated through poetry, prose, dances, ballets, and music genres such as Ahellil, Ashewiq and Ahal.

Inspired by the typical surroundings of the arid South, these traditional genres were sung and danced mainly by women but also by men and immortalized practices celebrating diverse aspects of life of the populations. The famous Algerian writer Mouloud Mammeri, who had devoted a great deal of time to researching national traditional arts and crafts, had said that such genres “were the highlight of every collective ceremony, whether religious or profane” and represented a means of “celebrating a holiday or family affair” and acted as “communion” tool.

FOUR ALGERIAN MOVIES FEATURED AT THE LONDON AFRICAN CINEMA FESTIVAL

Earlier this month, four Algerian movies were shown at the London African Cinema Festival, held at the University of Westminster, including “Inland” by director Tariq Teguia, “Viva L’Algérie” by Nadir Moknèche, “El Manara” by Belkacem Hadjadj and “Mel Watni”, directed by Fatima Belhadj. The movies were featured at a festival designed to make African cinema better known and well received by enthusiastic audiences.



ALGERIAN CINEMA: NO LONGER AN “EXTRA” IN WORLD MOVIE INDUSTRY



Over the past few years, Algerian cinema has been experiencing a revival with a multitude of films and documentaries, as attested by Algerian participation at the Marseille International Film Festival.

Stalled during the 1990s by terrorist violence, film and documentary production accelerated during the year 2000 generated “as many, if not more, selections than were produced in the 1970s, a time of great harvest for national cinema industry, said Michel Serceau, a member of AFLAM, the association for the dissemination through image of the culture of Arabic-speaking countries.

Today, a new generation of filmmakers has taken up the challenge of restoring the level of production prevailing in the 1970s. Numerous directors, some of them world-renowned such as Merzak Allouache or Rabah Ameur Zaïmèche, who had lived in exile during the terrorist violence have returned to Algeria and has started making movies again. However, their movies are no longer limited to historical exploration but are more focused on exploring social, political and artistic issues. This new cinematic energy was boosted these past few years by major international events involving Algerian participation, including “The Year of Algeria in France” in 2003, “Algiers, Capital of Arab Culture” in 2007 and the Pan-African Cultural Festival in 2009.

A NEW DOCUMENTARY TO CELEBRATE THE LEGACY OF OTHMANE BALY, TORCH-BEARER OF TARGUI TRADITIONAL MUSIC



Algerian director Mohamed Zaoui is already hard at work shooting “Othmane Baly: The Rainman”, a documentary devoted to a man famous for his efforts to preserve traditional Targui folk arts through poetry and music. The documentary title is intended as a paean to a man celebrated throughout the South of Algeria for his writing and his love of water, essential element of life and hard to find in the arid regions of the Sahara. To put it simply, Othmane Baly loved water and sang about rain and its intermittence and how it affects life for both sedentary and nomad populations in the Great Algerian South. He sang and venerated water for what it gave man and the vegetation that sprouted after the short but fierce storms typical of the area. Five years ago, on a starry summer night as he slept in a dry river bed in Djanet, the element that Othmane Baly adored and so lovingly sang turned into a flashflood and swept him away, drowning him. Director Mohamed Zaoui, who knew him well, said that Othmane Baly would not have wanted to pass away any other way. Eventually, the poetic muse and source of life in the desert turned angry and unpredictable and took away a man who had devoted his living days singing her praise, thinking that he was entirely hers.

The documentary is due to be released in June 2010.

NATIVE AMERICANS PARTICIPATE IN 4TH TIMIMOUNE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF DESERT PEOPLES

Made possible by bilateral cooperation between the Ministry of Land Management, Environment and Tourism and the U.S. Embassy in Algiers, Native American nations were represented in the 4th edition of the International Festival of Desert Peoples held in the Southern Algerian city of Timimoune. Dancers from the First Nations Dance Company (FNDC) based at Fort Defiance, Arizona, on the Navajo reservation, performed on December 17 and 18 before enthusiastic crowds.

Created in 1991, FNDC is one of the best known Native American dance ensembles in the world and presents Amerindian Powwow traditional dances and music and flute recitals performed by dancers, musicians and artists from various tribes and nations, including Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Maricopa, Zuni, Delaware, Navajo, Shoshone-Banock, Lakota, and many others.



NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS: CLOSE TO 10,000 TOURISTS EXPECTED IN THE ALGERIAN SOUTH



Algeria is gradually becoming the choice destination for European tourists, particularly living in Northern climes and wanting to ring in the New Year under warmer and definitely bluer skies. Indeed, close to 10,000 people from various European countries have booked their vacation to fly to the cities of Tamanrasset, Djanet, Tassili, Ghardaïa, and Tissala, located thousands of miles south of the capital, Algiers. Last year, over a million and a half foreign tourists visited Algeria, an encouraging indicator for tourism promotion.

U.S. BLUEGRASS BAND “STUDENT LOAN” TOURS ALGERIA



Thanks to cooperation between the Algerian Ministry of Culture, the Algerian Agency for the Dissemination of Culture, and the U.S. Embassy in Algiers, large audiences in the cities of Algiers and Annaba were treated to two concerts each of bluegrass music by U.S. band “Student Loan” at the “Moufdi Zakaria” concert hall, in Annaba, at the Regional Theater, and in Algiers, on December 12 and 20.

“Student Loan”, a four-piece band featuring violin, banjo, guitar, bass and mandolin, delighted the public with music from Bill Monroe, The Beatles, Phish and Sublime. The band members also gave four “master classes” on bluegrass to music students and will repeat such “teachings” in other Algerian cities that they plan to perform in. This tour was a great opportunity for the Algerian and American peoples to come together, transcend cultural or linguistic barriers and share the universal language of music.

MESSAGE OF GOOD WISHES FROM AMBASSADOR ABDALLAH BAALI

I am particularly delighted to seize the celebration of the beginning of the coming New Year 2010 to extend to all of you, on behalf of the entire staff of the Embassy of Algeria and on my own behalf, my best wishes of happiness and good health.



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US SOCCER HEAD COACH BOB BRADLEY: “THE ALGERIAN TEAM DESERVES A LOT OF RESPECT”

Replying to those who thought that he did not do enough to know about the future opponents of the US soccer team for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, Head Coach Bob Bradley replied during an interview that he has “a lot of respect for the Algerian soccer team” and added that he will be “watching very closely their performance at the African Nations Cup”, for which Algeria is selected.

Coach Bradley also admitted that “the Algerians have surprised me with their combativeness and Antar Yahia is not just a defender.” Algeria and the United States are part of the same pool and are scheduled to meet for the first round of competition playoffs. For the record, Antar Yahia, a star of Algerian soccer plays for the Algerian National Soccer Team and European teams, scored the winning goal during that epic game in which Algeria’s “Desert Foxes” defeated Egypt’s “Pharaohs” in Khartoum, Sudan, on November 18, 2009.

Interviewed by British soccer television “Sky Sport” earlier this month, Coach Bradley said that “Whoever thinks that I do not know the Algerian team is very mistaken. I have followed their progress during the double confrontation against the Pharaohs and I told myself that this team deserves a lot of respect.” He added that “Les Verts”, as the “Desert Foxes” are known throughout Algeria and elsewhere around the world because they wear green jerseys – hence the name, which means “green” in French, “have a game plan similar to that of Latin American teams, meaning that they base their game on technique and physical condition. This team has players, such as Karim Matmour, Ziani, and Antar Yahia who is a defender but has a lot of offensive qualities, who are likely to change the end result of the game.”

