



# TUNISIA NEWSLETTER

June 2010

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## TUNISIA AND JAPAN

### **Finance Minister receives delegation of "Rating & Investment"**

Tunis, June 29, 2010 (TAP) - Finance Minister Mohamed Ridha Chalghoum received, on Tuesday in Tunis, a delegation from Japanese rating agency "Rating & Investment."

The minister outlined Tunisia's financial policies and the objectives set for the next stage in accordance with the presidential programme.

He reviewed support measures taken to face up to the fallout of the global crisis, which helped achieve a positive growth rate and improve Tunisia's indicators in matters of control of budget deficit and reduction of public debt.

He also underlined the reforms carried out in the financial sector to boost investment and create projects in buoyant and high added-value sectors.

### **International training session on improving mother and child health held in Tunisia in cooperation with JICA**

TUNIS, June 28, 2010 (TAP) - Works of an international training session on "development of sexual and reproductive health strategy, by means of improving mother and child health," started on Monday.

The three-week meeting is held by the National Family and Population Board (ONFP), in association with the Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA).

ONFP Director General Nebiha Gueddana underlined, at the opening of works, the importance of this event in setting up a prevention programme and strategies to improve mother and child health in Francophone African countries and help them draw on the Tunisian experience in this area.

She added that Tunisia made several gains in this field and managed to bring down the infant mortality rate over the past two decades to 18.4 per thousand and mother mortality rate to 36 per thousand living births per year.

The session is attended by nearly 20 executives specialised in communication and physicians from 11 African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Djibouti, Comoros Islands, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Tunisia.

This gathering is part of co-operation between ONFP and JICA for the 2009-2011 period to improve knowledge and skills in African countries and implement a strategy in the area of sexual and reproductive health focused on improvement of mother and child health.

### **Knowledge Day Ceremony : Aizu University Student awarded a prize**

TUNIS, July 15, 2010 (TAP) - As instructed by President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi, on Thursday morning in Tunis, chaired the Knowledge Day ceremony, celebrated in honour of educational and academic community and the laureates among pupils and students.

The ceremony was marked by the President of the Republic's [address](#) to the education, higher-education and scientific research community, which was read out on his behalf by the Prime Minister.

In his speech, the Head of State underlined the educational and civilisational role assumed by the school, and the special place given to the educational system in the national plans.

On this occasion, he announced several decisions aiming at further promoting the educational system and enhancing the quality of education and training, developing skills and boosting the correlation between higher education and applied scientific research.

The Head of State renewed his permanent keenness, at a time when Tunisia is going through a stage of comprehensive and rapid changes, to develop the country's human resources and invest in intelligence and knowledge, so as to prepare generations distinguished by competence, ambition and high sense of patriotism.

In this connection, he stressed the importance of enhancing the sense of patriotism among students in all cycles of education and through all the relevant subjects, as this will contribute to anchoring their identity with all its foundations and specificities, in light of the changes and challenges the world is currently witnessing, which threaten young generations with estrangement and uprootedness.

As part of Tunisian schools' joining in digital culture, President Ben Ali ordered to step up the pace of production of digital pedagogical contents and establish the necessary mechanisms to enable all students to have access to and benefit from these technologies.

The Head of State also pointed out, in his speech, that the intense international competition in terms of higher education and scientific research dictates that efforts be stepped up to improve quality indicators in terms of supervision, teaching, research and conformity with the international standards.

He called, in this connection, to develop partnerships between Tunisian universities and their counterparts in advanced nations, in the areas of research, exchange of experience and joint supervision of dissertations, or increase the number of joint diplomas.

In materialisation of the action undertaken to help the country become a pole for investment in industries with high technological contents, President Ben Ali instructed to establish a first set of sectoral networks for innovation, composed of economic enterprises, research and higher-education institutions, and support structures in a number of strategic fields, so as to help identify the needs of

economic enterprises, and launch partnership projects in terms of research, development and innovation.

This Knowledge Day ceremony was also marked by the decoration of several instructors and teachers with the insignia of the National Merit for the education and science sector, in consideration of their work and the efforts they have exerted in their sectors of activity.

The gathering also provided the opportunity to honour the educational and university community.

The ceremony was marked by the awarding of the 2010 President of the Republic's scientific research and technology prize, in the communication technologies sector, equally placed to Messrs. Mohamed Adel Alimi from the Sfax Ecole nationale d'ingénieurs, in intelligent systems engineering, and Abderrazek Ben Abdallah from Japanese University of Aizu, in information technology systems and applications in the medical field.

The educational establishments whose maintenance commissions were the most active were awarded the 2010 President of the Republic's Prize for Maintenance.

Then, the Prime Minister handed out the President of the Republic's prizes to the laureates of the national end-of-year school and university exams.

### **Japan's Yazaki to increase presence in Gafsa governorate**

GAFSA, June 9 (TAP)- Japan's car cable manufacturer Yazaki is going to increase its presence in the southern governorate of Gafsa with the setting up in Metlaoui of a new car cable plant scheduled to start working at the end of the current month.

The new plant will specialize in manufacturing car cables for General Motors.

The Japanese group will number 3 plants in the region after those of Gafsa and Moularès. Actually, the Gafsa plant, set up in 2009 and specializing in the manufacture of car cables for Peugeot, now employs some 1000 workers and the plant of Moularès manufacturing cables for Mercedes cars, was set up last February and provides at present some 400 jobs.

Yazaki group also aims to set up a factory in Redeyef to manufacture cables for Volvo cars by the end of the current year.

### **Prime Minister receives Deputy-Chairman of Japanese Yazaki Group**

TUNIS, June 4, 2010 (TAP) - Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi on Friday received Deputy-Chairman of Japan's Yazaki Group, Afonso Duarte.

The latter said that the meeting with the Prime Minister allowed to review co-operation between Tunisia and the Japanese group and look at means to further develop it.

He accordingly pointed out that the project of manufacturing car cables which was set up by the group in June 2009, in Gafsa governorate, has created 1400

jobs and that the recruitment figure could reach 4000 in the coming months.

The talk was attended by Development and International Co-operation Minister Mohamed Nouri Jouini.

## **POLITICS & DIPLOMACY**

### **President Ben Ali receives Speaker of Italy's Chamber of Deputies**

CARTHAGE, June 29, 2010 (TAP) – The Tunisian-Italian relations were the focus of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's meeting, on Tuesday, with Speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies Gianfranco Fini.

The latter said that his talk with the Head of State had focused on the major bilateral issues and confirmed the excellent and long-standing relations binding the two countries.

"I said to President Ben Ali that Italy has many neighbours, yet its relations with Tunisia are of a special nature, as it is not only a neighbouring country but also a friendly one," Mr. Fini said, voicing "conviction that Tunisians, whose number is large in Italy, are well integrated and are known for their seriousness and their exemplary behaviour, which heralds a more efficient new stage in the Tunisian-Italian relations. And we are looking forward to President Ben Ali's visit to Italy."

The meeting was attended by the Minister of State, Special Adviser to the President of the Republic and Official Spokesman for the Presidency of the Republic.

### **Foreign Affairs Minister Kamel Morjane receives Speaker of Italian Chamber of Deputies**

TUNIS, June 30 (TAP) - Foreign Minister Kamel Morjane had talks here late on Tuesday afternoon with Speaker of Italian Chamber of Deputies, Gianfranco Fini, on bilateral relations, governed by the treaty of friendship, neighbourliness and cooperation and regional and international issues of mutual interest.

The FM and his guest voiced satisfaction at the privileged nature of relations between Tunisia and Italy which managed to establish a strategic partnership.

The FM highlighted Italy's appreciable contribution, both financial and technological, to the achievement of development plans in Tunisia and the increasing role of Italian operators in boosting Tunisian economy, speaking at the same time in favour of a comprehensive approach in matters of migration, a concerted management and a solidarity-based development to cope efficiently with the migratory issue.

The FM also said that Tunisia valued the contribution of the Italian parliamentary diplomacy to the development of bilateral relations.

As regards Tunisia-EU ties, the FM and the Italian speaker agreed to endeavour together to increase political

dialogue between Tunisian and European partners , to boost social, cultural and scientific relations between them and promote Tunisia's economic integration into the European area. After reminding of Tunisia's constant stance in favour of the just cause of the Palestinian people and of the urgent need of a negotiated settlement of the conflict, the FM emphasized Tunisia's constant position in favour of disseminating the values of solidarity and tolerance, especially among youths as well as for the dialogue of cultures.

At the end of the meeting, the Italian official said to TAP news agency that his talks with the FM had been held in a cordial atmosphere and that the ties between Italy and Tunisia "are very old and constantly renewed."

He added that Italy supported the process of reinforcing relations between Tunisia and the EU and that Tunisia's access to an advanced status in its relations with the Union will benefit all the peoples of the region.

### **Italy backs up Tunisia's move to access the status of advanced partner of the European Union.**

TUNIS, June 29, 2010 (TAP) - Italian Chamber of Deputies Speaker Gianfranco Fini underlined that Italy backs up Tunisia's move to access the status of advanced partner of the European Union.

Mr. Gianfranco Fini, who met the press on Tuesday at the Tunis-Carthage airport's main hall before leaving Tunis, pointed out that the political development experienced by Tunisia "helps it to access this status with aptitude."

"The privileged relations binding Tunisia and the European Union and its policy which is in harmony with the values of this entity have earned it acknowledgement to this status," he added.

In another connection, the Speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies described the Tunisian-Italian relations as "excellent," underlining that Tunisia represents a link between Europe and North Africa.

Answering a question on transformation of the Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership Facility into a Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank, a proposal made by Tunisia to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA), Mr. Gianfranco Fini pointed out that Italy and EMPA support this proposal which is a necessary mechanism to develop small- and medium-sized enterprises, voicing optimism about the "success of this project."

Regarding the issue of migration, Mr. Gianfranco Fini emphasised importance of compliance with the Italian law which allows foreigners' labour in Italy as part of approved-of job contracts, underlining that Tunisian workers in Italy are entitled to this measure.

### **Foreign Affairs Minister Kamel Morjane' s visit to Spain**

TUNIS, June 26, 2010 (TAP) - Prospects for developing and strengthening Tunisia-Spain relations, the future of ties between Tunisia and the European Union and regional and international issues of mutual interest were

the focus of Foreign Affairs Minister Kamel Morjane's meeting, on Friday in Madrid, with Spanish Minister of External Affairs and Co-operation Miguel Angel Moratinos.

Mr. Kamel Morjane, who paid a working visit to Spain on Thursday and Friday, underlined during the talk that Tunisia, under President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's impetus, is determined to impart an exemplary and privileged nature to its relations with Spain, placing emphasis, in this regard, on the relations of friendship and neighbourhood binding the two countries whose people share a common cultural heritage, that of the Western Mediterranean.

He reiterated Tunisia's sustained commitment to make of the Mediterranean basin a haven of peace, security, solidarity, prosperity and understanding.

For his part, the Spanish FM reiterated his country's will to further intensify and strengthen the relations with Tunisia "a strategic partner in a region of a great importance for Spain," he said.

On the future of the Tunisia-EU relations, he expressed Spain's support to Tunisia to access an advanced status with the Union.

Mr. Moratinos also congratulated Tunisia on the success of the recent meeting of the foreign affairs ministers of the 5+5 Dialogue held in Tunis.

The two ministers also focused special attention on the forthcoming events involving Tunisia and Spain.

They agreed, in this regard, to examine the dates of the visit of their Majesties, the King and Queen of Spain to Tunisia and for the holding early next year in Tunis of the Tunisian-Spanish high-level meeting.

These events are likely to further foster the ties of co-operation and partnership, particularly in the areas of investment, energy, transport, health, agricultural, vocational training and culture.

The two ministers also addressed the recent developments on the international and regional scene, particularly the Mediterranean.

On the Middle East peace process, Mr. Morjane said time has come to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people by bringing a just and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

During a meeting with representatives of the Tunisian community in Spain, the minister emphasised the special care lavished by the Head of State on Tunisian expatriates and on their key role in backing the overall development process in Tunisia.

Members of the Tunisian community asked the foreign affairs minister to convey to President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali their deep gratitude and consideration for his wise and clear-sighted policy which allowed Tunisia to be referred to as an example in matters of stability, openness and tolerance.

### **President Ben Ali receives Lebanese Prime Minister**

CARTHAGE, June 25, 2010 (TAP) - The long-standing and strong relations binding Tunisia and Lebanon, and prospects for further boosting bilateral co-operation and

the current issues, were the focal points of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's meeting, on Friday, with Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

The latter said at the end of the meeting that he "had excellent talks with President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, who is a friend of Lebanon and all the Lebanese, to whom I extended the regards of Lebanon's President, General Michel Sleiman."

After reminding of the long-standing historical ties binding Tunisia and Lebanon since the age of Tyre and Carthage and their shared values of moderation and dialogue, Mr. Saad Hariri asserted that Tunisia has always sided with Lebanon, as testified to it during the July 2006 Israeli aggression on Lebanon.

He said that he had extended thanks to President Ben Ali for his stand. The Lebanese Premier laid emphasis on the need to boost economic, trade and cultural relations between the two countries, notably as part of the agreement to energise the Tunisian-Lebanese High Joint Commission.

He also stressed the importance of reinforcing relations between the Tunisian and Lebanese private sectors as a means to develop the two countries' relations, and to exchange experiences in several sectors, notably in tourism and foreign direct investments.

In another connection, Mr. Saad Hariri commended in his statement the co-ordination established between the two countries, be it regarding the creation of the Arab free-trade zone, the Union for the Mediterranean or Lebanon's representation in the Arab Group at the UN Security Council. He said that the talk with the President of the Republic had confirmed similarity of views on the need to reach a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue, on the basis of the Madrid Conference's reference system and the Arab Peace Initiative.

He recalled the two countries' efforts to consecrate the Palestinian people's right to an independent State, with Al-Quds as its capital, and Israel's total pull-out from the occupied Lebanese and Syrian territories. He also said that the meeting had helped review the regional situation in the context of the Israeli blockade imposed on Gaza and continuation of the settlements policy in the West Bank.

Lebanon's prime minister voiced wish that President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali will shortly pay a visit to Lebanon.

At the end of the meeting which was attended by the Prime Minister, the Head of State invited the Lebanese Premier to lunch.

### **Third session of Tunisian-Djiboutian Joint Committee**

DJIBOUTI, June 24, 2010 (TAP) - The third session of the Tunisian-Djiboutian joint committee was held on June 23-24 in Djibouti, under the co-chairmanship of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in charge of Maghreb, Arab and African Affairs Abdelhafidh Herguem and Djibouti's Foreign and International Co-operation Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssef.

On this occasion, Mr. Abdelhafidh Herguem stressed Tunisia's constant keenness to strengthen its fraternity and co-operation relations with the Arab and African countries, in the service of mutual interests and in materialisation of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's political will.

In this connection, he stressed the importance granted by Tunisia to strengthening its co-operation relations with Djibouti, to hoist them to the highest level, and to develop the two countries' trade exchanges.

For his part, Djibouti's Foreign and International Co-operation Minister commended the privileged level reached by bilateral relations, hailing Tunisia's active contribution in the consolidation of his country's development efforts, particularly, in the fields of social development, solidarity, education and health.

He voiced his country's will to make the most of the Tunisian experience in several fields.

At the end of the Joint Committee's works, co-operation agreements were signed in the following fields:

- Social affairs,
- Youth and sports,
- Housing, town planning and territory development,
- Culture
- Promotion of women, family, children and the elderly,
- Higher education and scientific research, and
- Information (co-operation agreement between the two countries' news agencies).

On the fringes of the Tunisian-Djiboutian Joint Committee's third session, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in charge of Maghreb, Arab and African Affairs conferred with Djibouti's Foreign and International Co-operation Minister.

The talk provided the opportunity to review the balance of the bilateral co-operation and its prospects.

The meeting also allowed to discuss the Arab and African issues of mutual interests.

Mr. Abdelhafidh Herguem also had talks with the National Education and Higher Education Minister, the Minister of Women Promotion, Family Wellbeing and Social Affairs and the Secretary of State to Prime Minister in charge of National Solidarity.

These meeting helped examine means to strengthen co-operation between the two countries in the different fields.

Holding of the third session coincided with the visit to Djibouti of a Tunisian businessmen delegation who examined with their counterparts in this sisterly country means to develop trade exchanges and prospect new partnership opportunities.

On this occasion, a co-operation agreement was signed between the Tunis Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Djibouti's Chamber of Commerce.

### **Djiboutian President hails Tunisian considerable gains**

DJIBOUTI, June 24, 2010 (TAP) - Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh commended the important gains and great achievements made in Tunisia in all areas, since the advent of the Change, thanks to President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's pertinent policies and forward-looking vision, which has enabled the country to hold a distinguished position among the emerging countries and become a model in matters of comprehensive development.

President Ismail Omar Guelleh paid tribute to Tunisia as he received, on Thursday, Secretary of State in charge of Maghreb, Arab and African Affairs Abdelhafidh Herguem who is leading the Tunisian delegation to the third session of the Tunisian-Djiboutian Joint Committee, held on June 23-24, 2010 in Djibouti.

He entrusted the Secretary of State with extending to President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali his fraternal greetings, his esteem and high consideration. He also expressed will to further strengthen the bilateral co-operation relations in the different fields, particularly social development.

Djibouti's President also voiced hope to carry on drawing on Tunisian experiences and expertise to consolidate his country's development process, step up trade exchanges between the two countries and establish partnership between Tunisian and Djiboutian businessmen and economic actors.

### **President Ben Ali receives Maltese deputy Premier**

CARTHAGE, June 24, 2010 (TAP) - Tunisian-Maltese co-operation relations at the Euro-Mediterranean level were the focus of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's meeting, on Thursday, with Malta's deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Tonio Borg.

Mr. Tonio Borg said that his meeting with President Ben Ali had been excellent and had allowed to review several issues, including economic relations between Tunisia and Malta, particularly relations between the two countries' businessmen.

He added that the meeting had also centred on Euro-Mediterranean co-operation, as part of the "5+5 Dialogue" and the Union for the Mediterranean as well, voicing the pride his country takes in Tunisia's support to Malta to host the summit of Heads of State of the 5+5.

The meeting also provided the opportunity to look at relations between Tunisia and the European Union. He said, in this regard, that "Malta, as a friend of Tunisia within the European Union, backs up Tunisia in its endeavour to access the status of advanced partner."

Mr. Tonio Borg also spoke of the Maltese Prime Minister's expected visit to Tunisia and preparations for it so that this visit takes place as soon as possible.

The meeting was attended by the Foreign Affairs Minister and the Malta's ambassador in Tunis.

### **Tunisian-Maltese Joint Committee's 8th session closes**

TUNIS, June 24, 2010 (TAP) - The 8th session of the Tunisian-Maltese Joint Committee ended, on Thursday in Tunis, with the signing of a memorandum of understanding, a co-operation agreement related to elderly, a co-operation agreement in agricultural research and education, and a document crowning the technical meetings between the Tunisian and Maltese experts in the health field.

Minutes of this 8th session, which opened on Wednesday in Tunis, were also signed.

In his address, Foreign Affairs Minister Kamel Morjane stressed the joint keenness to mobilise efforts to strengthen Tunisian-Maltese co-operation and contribute to enrich bilateral relations and bring the two friendly peoples closer.

"This Joint Committee is a perfect evidence of our strong partnership, based on such shared values as consultation, consensus and participation, as well as on a sincere will to give a fresh impetus to bilateral relations," also underlined the foreign minister who pointed out that results scored at this session show the diversity and density of relations between the two countries which have chosen to place their relations under the sign of confidence and efficiency.

Mr. Kamel Morjane also said that "Malta is an important strategic partner for Tunisia," given the historical and cultural ties binding the two countries, the tighter closeness and interdependence of their economies, their shared destiny in the Euro-Mediterranean space and similarity of the economic, political and environmental challenges they are facing.

For his part, Maltese FM Toni Borg emphasised the excellent climate of understanding and friendship that had prevailed during this 8th session of the Joint Committee.

He commended, in this regard, the remarkable results recorded on this occasion which will certainly boost bilateral relations and bolster co-operation between the two countries in variety of areas.

He highlighted, in this regard, the need to "carry on the consultation approach to ensure a sustained pace for the development of these relations," pointing to similarity of views between both sides on current regional and international issues.

He also said that his country will always be a strong ally of Tunisia in strengthening its relations with the European Union.

### **Prime Minister receives special envoy of Uganda's President**

LA KASBAH, June 19, 2010 (TAP) - Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi received, on Saturday morning, Mr. Henry Okello Oryem, special envoy of Uganda's President and State Minister for International Co-operation.

Following the meeting, Mr. Oryem said he had handed over to the Prime Minister a message from Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni to President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, specifying that the message contained an invitation to President Ben Ali to take part in the Summit of

African Heads of State and Government due next July in Kampala.

He went on saying that the meeting had provided the opportunity to discuss several regional issues of mutual interest and look at ways to further boost inter-African co-operation in various fields, particularly mining exploitation and information and communication technologies sectors.

The Ugandan official expressed hope that Tunisia and Uganda will create a direct flight as soon as possible and contribute to strengthening the relations of co-operation and partnership between the two countries.

## SOCIETY

### **Mrs. Leila Ben Ali awarded 2010 WWO Prize**

NEW YORK, June 29, 2010 (TAP) - The World Women Organisation (WWO) awarded its 2010 prize to First Lady Leila Ben Ali, Chairwoman of the Arab Women Organisation (AWO), in consideration for her valuable efforts to promote women's status and their empowerment in the various fields of public life, as well as in acknowledgement for her initiatives and participation to develop family potentialities and promote the disabled.

The Prize was presented to Mrs. Bebia Bouhnaq Chihi, Minister of Women, Family, Children and the Elderly Affairs, during a ceremony held on Tuesday in the premises of the United Nations Organisation (UNO), in New York, at the closing works of the WWO meeting.

These works were held on the fringes of the high-level meeting of the UNO Economic and Social Council, for 2010, on "Implementation of the Internationally Agreed Goals and Commitments in Regard to Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women."

On this occasion, Mrs. Deisi Kusztra, WWO chairwoman, commended the dimensions and significance contained in the address by Tunisia's First Lady to participants in this meeting.

In this connection, she paid tribute to the active and leading role played by the wife of the President of the Republic in raising international awareness about the causes of women, family and categories with specific needs, and her laudable initiatives in this field.

For her part, Mrs. Bebia Bouhnaq Chihi pointed out that this prize reflects the renewed consideration of the international community for Tunisia's approach, its commitment and prospective vision, under President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's leadership, to disseminate the values of gender equality and building the future in line with a clear-sighted thinking and joint approaches guaranteeing equity.

The awarding ceremony was attended by ministers representatives of the participating countries, as well as an large number of UNO senior officials, activists and civil society and experts in the field of family and social gender.

### **Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi receives Mrs. Sigrid Kaag, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa**

TUNIS, June 29, 2010 (TAP) - Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi received, on Wednesday morning in Tunis, Mrs. Sigrid Kaag, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), who is on a working visit in Tunisia.

At the end of the meeting, Mrs. Kaag said she had discussed with the Prime Minister prospects of co-operation between UNICEF and Tunisia which, she added, "represents for us a key country in the region ».

She described relations between the United Nations Organisation and Tunisia as «cordial and sincere », expressing satisfaction at the numerous gains achieved in Tunisia to fulfill the objectives of the millennium and quoting notably the programme of action dedicated to the youths and teenagers of the region that will be implemented in the coming period.

The meeting also allowed, she added, to highlight the challenges facing the countries of the region in general, as regards violence against children and mothers' death rate in inland areas.

With Tunisia which already carried out important achievements in matters of generalisation of education, Mrs. Kaag said, the efforts will be focused on enhancing the quality of education through the conception of new teaching approaches and the creation of new schools such as "child friendly schools" to improve the participation of pupils within schools.

### **UNICEF Regional Director: "Tunisia, a key country in the region"**

TUNIS, June 28, 2010 (TAP) - Receiving on Monday afternoon in Tunis Mrs. Sigrid Kaag, UNICEF Regional Director for Middle East and North Africa (MEAN), on a working visit to Tunisia, Foreign Affairs Minister Kamel Morjane praised prospects for developing co-operation between Tunisia and UNICEF which has been strengthened and diversified throughout the years to cover all areas related to child promotion.

The minister pointed to the good functioning of the current Tunisia-UNICEF co-operation programme for the 2007-2011 period which is based on education, health, child protection, follow-up and dissemination of child rights and partnership.

Mr. Kamel Morjane also reiterated readiness of Tunisia, in its capacity as UNICEF Board member for the 2010-2012 period, to back up UNICEF programmes and action plans to contribute to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals.

In a statement to TAP agency, Mrs. Kaag said she had held a "constructive talk" with the foreign minister on the close co-operation between UNICEF and Tunisia established since the 1950s.

"This co-operation," she pointed out, "reflects Tunisia's success at the socio-economic development level and

also in matters of child protection." "For UNICEF, Tunisia is a key country in the whole region, given its assets and successes, particularly regarding women's status and child protection."

"Yet," she said, "challenges that are posed to the whole region need to be taken up, including the issue of violence within the family, a very sensitive issue to which we should all together bring adequate solutions, for a better balance of societies."

### **United Nations' tribute to Tunisia for its choices in children's rights**

GENEVA, June 17, 2010 (TAP) - The United Nations Children's Rights Committee paid tribute to Tunisia for its choices in matters of children's protection, on the occasion of Tunisia's presentation, on June 4, 2010, in Geneva, of its third regular report on the implementation of the International Convention on Children's Rights.

The Committee commended, on this occasion, Tunisia's efforts in the field of children, efforts reflected by the implementation of several measures that consist in the ratification of the conventions and protocols pertaining to children's involvement in armed conflicts, banning of children's sale and prostitution, protection of rights of the disabled and fight against all forms of discrimination suffered by women.

The Committee also hailed the measures establishing the children's parliament, the youth's parliament and the position of delegate to children's protection.

Tunisia also strives to strengthen the appropriate measures to eradicate regional inequalities in the field of children, to ensure a better co-ordination between the central and regional administrations in this field and devise a national programme of fight against violence inflicted to children and against the economic exploitation of girls employed as housemaids.

The country's efforts also touch on the consolidation of the measures aiming at enlarging the opportunities of education and in favour of children, health coverage and amendment of the legal age for girls' marriage, making it henceforth the same as boys' age, i.e., 18 years.

Besides, it had to do with guaranteeing equality of chances in matters of access to employment in favour of the disabled, strengthening the role of Higher Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Committee and broadening of its attributions, regarding notably its unannounced visits to prisons and young people's rehabilitation centres.

The aim is to check up the degree of implementing the national legislation on human rights and fundamental liberties.

### **ITUC's consideration for social policy in Tunisia**

VANCOUVER (Canada), June 26, 2010 (TAP) - The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) expressed consideration for the vanguard social policy in Tunisia.

At the closing of its second congress held on June 21-25 in Vancouver, Canada, ITUC voiced satisfaction at the adoption in this social policy of principles of dialogue, negotiations and mutual respect between social partners, which led to continuous wage increases for labourers, during seven successive rounds of social negotiations, despite a difficult global economic situation.

Tunisia was elected Deputy Chairman of the Confederation and member of its Executive Board and of the General Assembly, in the person of Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) Secretary-General Abdessalem Jerad.

This election took place at the end of the congress which was attended by 3500 participants and several regional and international trade union organisations.

## **BUSINESS & ECONOMY**

### **Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi receives Algerian Minister of Industry, SME and Investment Promotion**

TUNIS, June 30, 2010 (TAP)-Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi received here this morning Algerian Minister of Industry, Small and Medium Enterprises and Investment Promotion Mohamed Ben Meradi, currently on a working visit to Tunisia.

The latter said that the meeting had turned on bilateral relations and on the assessment of the development of industrial cooperation between the two countries.

He voiced will to see bilateral investment projects meet the political relations between the two sister countries. He also said that Algeria had worked out a large investment programme worth 280 billion US dollars for the next five years and that several economic players will be made partners in this programme.

The meeting was attended by the Minister of Industry and Technology and the Chargé d'affaires of Algeria's embassy in Tunis.

### **Foreign Affairs Minister Kamel Morjane closes national seminar on exports development**

TUNIS, June 22, 2010 (TAP) - Foreign Affairs Minister Kamel Morjane underlined that thanks to President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's leadership, his forward-thinking and pertinent approach to the situation prevailing on the regional and international scene, Tunisia has been among the first countries to have anticipated the profound and swift changes taking place in the world and to be aware from the outset of the scope of resulting challenges.

Chairing on Tuesday afternoon, at the Exports Promotion Centre (CEPEX), closing of the national seminar on the "Role of Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements in Developing Exports," the minister said to face up to these challenges, Tunisia adopted realistic and well-thought approaches that helped draw on developments of the

international scene to serve national interests to the best, strengthen the economy's competitiveness and prompt its positive integration in the new global economic order.

He added that Tunisia adopted, as part of its foreign policy, a set of guidelines aimed to make the most of the new development opportunities and boost the pace of exports, in accordance with a gradual approach that favours openness on the world economy.

The minister emphasised Tunisia's strong determination to protect its national economy, strengthen its performance, explore new markets for goods and services and expand the relations of co-operation with different partners at bilateral and multilateral levels.

He also stressed that Tunisia seeks, under the Head of State's impetus, to finish off construction of the Arab Maghreb Union which is a strategic choice for all peoples of the region and one of the essentials of Tunisia's foreign policy.

He stressed Tunisia's sustained action to contribute actively to boost the Maghreb Union's institutions, energise Maghreb economic complementarity and bring together the region's peoples, to help this entity gain the economic and political weight it deserves on the international stage.

The minister reminded of Tunisia's adherence, as part of partnership between the Arab Mediterranean countries, to the free-trade zone that came out of the May 2001 Agadir Declaration, stressing the advanced stages covered by the Tunisian-European relations, notably with the enforcement of the free-trade zone, in January 2008, and the progress recorded by the national economy in various fields, which has allowed to combine the best working conditions to hoist these relations to the "status of advanced partner."

Besides, he reasserted Tunisia's keenness to diversify its economic partnerships and boost co-operation relations with several sisterly and friendly countries, in the African, American and Asian spheres, given the potentialities they conceal.

In this connection, the minister underscored Tunisia's success, thanks to the sincere political will to conclude a series of trade agreements which offer real opportunities to vitalise the Tunisian exports and conquer new markets, in such a manner as to help Tunisian economic players be world- market-oriented, with confidence and aptitude.

Mr. Kamel Morjane pointed out that the Tunisian diplomacy continues, under President Ben Ali's unremitting impulse, to strive to energise integration and co-operation relations and complementarity in the country's spaces of regional and international belonging, in materialisation of the ambitious targets set by the presidential programme "Together We Meet Challenges."

The meeting closed with a series of recommendations, including, in particular, the imperative to associate the private sector in defining the priorities, while stressing the strategic zones, by means of optimum use of the available agreements, development of the preferential bilateral agreements concluded with sisterly and friendly countries.

Emphasis was also placed on the need to speed up the conclusion of the agreement with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), an eight-member-state grouping, and support State efforts to make known the advantages of bilateral and multilateral accords to promote the exports sector.

The closing session of the works was notably attended by the Secretary of State in charge of foreign trade.

### **Tunisia and Spain sign co-operation and partnership agreements**

TUNIS, June 23, 2010 (TAP) - Several co-operation and partnership agreements in the transport field were signed at the end of the working visit of Transport Minister Abderrahim Zouari to Spain on June 21-23.

The agreements provide for mutual recognition of driving licences and a memorandum of understanding for establishing partnership in the areas of sea, air, land and railway transport and logistics, as well as a memorandum of understanding on co-operation in the port field (port engineering, port management, safety, training, etc.).

The two sides also signed a framework co-operation agreement between Tunisia's National Railway Company, SNCFT, and the Spanish Railway Company to strengthen partnership in the areas of new technologies, railway transport and maintenance.

Tunisia and Spain also agreed to create a maritime museum at the Goulette harbour.

Mr. Zouari praised, in a working session held on the occasion, the fruitful relations of co-operation between the two countries, stressing Tunisia's will to strengthen partnership as part of the Euro-Mediterranean space. He called to explore new opportunities of co-operation through the creation of innovating projects.

Mr. José Blanco Lopez, Spain's Transport Minister, lauded, in turn, the strides made by Tunisia in matters of development, emphasising his country's will to stimulate bilateral co-operation.

He expressed the readiness of Spain's public and private economic operators to support Tunisia's development strategy, particularly in the transport sector.

Mr. Zouari also had talks with representatives of Spanish transport companies and visited the port of Barcelona. He also became acquainted with the Spanish achievements in the railway transport field.

### **Opening of "Texmed 2010"**

TUNIS, June 16, 2010 (TAP) - The 11th Euro-Mediterranean textile-clothing exhibition, "Texmed 2010," was opened on Wednesday afternoon at El Kram Exhibition Centre by Minister of Industry and Technology Afif Chelbi and Minister of Trade and Handicrafts Ridha Ben Mosbah.

This three-day exhibition is held with the participation of 280 exhibitors, i.e., 207 Tunisian and 73 foreign exhibitors from Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, Syria and Jordan.

Representatives of renowned brands in textile and clothing, principals as well as international experts in this field are among participants.

This event provides the opportunity to stakeholders in the textile and clothing sector to get acquainted with opportunities offered by this activity in Tunisia and establish partnership and business relations between enterprises in the Euro-Med space.

The Tunisian textile and clothing sector posted a 4.1% increase in the first five months of 2010 while imports rose by 9.2%.

On the sidelines of this exhibition, conferences and business meetings will be held along with seminars on different topics: prospects for Tunisian-Spanish exchanges in textile and clothing industry, opportunities for co-operation in technical textile sector in the Euro-Mediterranean zone, European directives in the area of labelling "Made in Europe" and their impact on industrial textile in the Agadir agreement countries.

### **Inauguration of "Linde gas Tunisie"**

BEN AROUS, June 16, 2010 (TAP)- Industry and technology Minister Afif Chelbi on Tuesday inaugurated at the industrial estate of El M'Ghira in the province of Fouchana (Governorate of Ben Arous) a new plant of «Linde gas Tunisie» company, a subsidiary of the German group «The Linde», world leader in the sectors of industrial gas and engineering. The investment of this new plant which will specialize the production of air, industrial and medical gas, is worth about 24 million dinars.

The production capacity of air gases of the new plant which extends on about 2 hectares and employs 55 people is estimated to range between 30 and 35 tonnes a day with a 16% market share.

The minister said that the new unit will reinforce the sector of chemical industries in Tunisia which includes 600 enterprises employing 11 000 people. "The Linde" has set up in Tunisia in May 2008 as part of partnership with a Tunisian firm.

### **Findings of survey on German off-shore companies presented**

TUNIS, June 15, 2010 (TAP) - Tunisian-German Industry and Trade Chamber, AHK Tunisie, held, on Tuesday in Tunis, a meeting with the press during which results on the German off-shore activities ("German Exporting Firms in Tunisia: State of Affairs and Prospects in 2009/10") were presented.

Overall, the research points up some slowing-down of business activities when compared to the previous year. The surveyed 105 German off-shore companies have been adversely affected by the global financial and economic crisis (59%), but they generally speaking remain optimistic (56%) as to progress of their sales in Tunisia.

The German enterprises still show a great interest in the Tunisian site. The latter has preserved the major essentials of its attractiveness, i.e., its political stability

(91%), geographical to Europe (83%) and fiscal incentives (76%). In 2009, 58% of these German firms described their business operations as not having been satisfactory; and 59% among them said that they had recorded a drop in the volume of their exports compared to the previous year.

Forecasts for 2010, however, are remarkably positive. It appears from the survey that 56% of the German exporting enterprises are expecting a rise of their exports turnover, against 12% which expect a fall. In the textile sector, 32% of the surveyed firms are forecasting a recruitment increase.

Progress of investments for 2010 has also been assessed positively, as 43% of the studied enterprises are planning to increase their investments, as opposed to only 7% among them which are expecting a decrease, compared to the previous year.

### **Tunisia takes part in Berlin International Aviation and Spatial Industries Exhibition**

TUNIS, June 11, 2010 (TAP) - Tunisia is taking part in the Berlin International Aviation and Spatial Industries Exhibition, held on the 8th-13th instant.

Tunisia's first participation in this important event was marked by the holding of a partnership day on aviation industry in Tunisia, chaired by Development and International Co-operation Minister Mohamed Nouri Jouini, who is leading the Tunisian delegation to this event.

Mr. Jouini had a working session at the Federal Economy and Technology Ministry, which turned on the forthcoming bilateral events, notably the holding next year in Tunisia, of the German-Tunisian Business Forum "Nefta V."

Mr. Mohamed Nouri Jouini proposed to widen the scope of bilateral co-operation by focusing notably on development of renewable energies and reinforcement of scientific and technological co-operation, suggesting the signing of a bilateral scientific co-operation and technological agreement. The German side promised to see to it with the German business community that the German delegation to "Nefta V" includes enterprises operating in high-value technological sectors.

Besides, they expressed wish to speed up procedure of revising the bilateral agreement on the mutual promotion and protection of investments and the non-double taxation agreement, in order to send a forceful message to German investors.

### **Inauguration of «Tunisia Olive Oil Expo»**

TUNIS, June 8, 2010 (TAP)- Secretary of State in charge of renewable energy and food industries, Abdelaziz Rassaa, inaugurated today in the resort city of Hammamet the first international olive oil exhibit "Tunisia Olive Oil Expo," held there June 8-10.

Organized by the technical packaging centre PACKTEC and Médina-Events, this first exhibition is part of the packaged olive oil promotional campaign financed by the fund for the promotion of packaged olive oil FOPROHOC under the aegis of the ministry of industry and technology.

The aim of this event is to make known Tunisia's packaged olive oil supply and promote opportunities of partnership between all the parties involved, that is suppliers and potential customers .

### **Debate on offshore services in Tunisia**

TUNIS, June 5, June 2010 (TAP) - The state of such sectors as offshore services and ICTs in Tunisia was the focus of the third panel held on Friday as part of the 12th Carthage forum on investment.

According to the evidence given by companies operating in this field, the Tunisia site harbours the necessary human skills and provides a propitious technological environment, which is likely to further attract investment in these high added value sectors.

Communication technologies minister Mohamed Naceur Ammar said that the aim of the presidential programme for 2009/2014 is to raise Tunisia to the highest level in this field, especially through the development of infrastructure and human resources and the promotion of electronic services. He reminded that Tunisia's ranking by the Davos forum testified to the efforts made in the country in matters of promoting high added value activities.

Head of « Mckinsey and Co » international consultancy group Cyril Grislain affirmed that Tunisia provides a developed technological environment, specialised human resources and a good level of computer safety, which increases its attractiveness on the international services market.

Chairman of the High Committee on Science and Technology Mohamed Ennabli highlighted in turn Tunisia's care to work out strategies to develop offshore services and human skills in this field.

### **Performances of Tunisia, a guarantee for FDI in technology sectors**

GAMMARTH, June 4, 2010 (TAP)- Good ratings awarded to Tunisia by international agencies and specialised structures are a pledge of confidence to ensure a higher rate of foreign direct investments (FDI) particularly in innovating sectors.

This was one of the conclusions of a debate held on Friday in Tunis by participants in the second panel of the 12th Carthage Forum on Investment entitled " Tunisia as perceived by international business community." Participants said Tunisia, just like foreign investors, is closely following these indicators to identify reforms that should be adopted to lay the foundations of a competitive economy with high technological value.

They underlined that Tunisia seeks to establish an economic model increasingly based on services and innovation, in addition to technological sectors with high knowledge content.

The purpose, they said, is to boost exports, attract FDI and generate jobs. Mr. Ndiame Dip, Permanent Representative of the World Bank in Tunis reminded that Tunisia has reached, according to the recent report of the

World Bank, the first stage of development, in which innovation plays an important and decisive role.

He reiterated Tunisia's ability to produce technology and even adjust to those produced abroad which helped it lay the foundations of an innovating economy by capitalising on its human resources and skills and thereby ensuring a high level of economic productivity and efficiency.

Mr. Ndiame Diop said the strengths of Tunisia rest in the stability of indices of its global economic which represent a guarantee for all investors.

The official also emphasised the ability of the Tunisian economy to integrate in the global economy which helped it attract FDIs and thereby promote sectors of research and innovation.

Secretary of State in charge of International Co-operation and Investment Abdelhamid Triki reminded that in 2009 Tunisia has managed to improve its ratings despite the fallout of the global financial crisis which upset the strongest economies in the world.

The IMF report was positive and the Human Development Index too. The latter, Mr. Triki underlined, has continued to improve since 2009, adding that this situation reflects Tunisia's will to carry on its development process, particularly through the establishment of an institutional framework to monitor the results of this report.

### **Tunisia, Malta set up business council**

TUNIS, June 1, 2010 (TAP) - A Tunisian-Maltese Business Council was set up on Tuesday in Tunis, under an agreement signed by the Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA) and Malta's Chamber of Commerce, Enterprises and Industry.

The agreement was signed by UTICA Deputy Chairwoman, Mrs. Zohra Idriss, and Chairman of the Maltese Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry Michael Ferrugia, on the sidelines of the Tunisia-Malta Economic Forum: "Opportunities of Co- operation and Business."

It aims to boost and diversify economic exchanges and develop complementarity between Tunisia and Malta.

According to statistics made available by the Exports Promotion Centre (CEPEX), Tunisia is the 19th customer of Malta and its 28th supplier, while Malta is the 55th customer of Tunisia and its 15th supplier.

Addressing the Forum, ambassador of Malta in Tunis, Mrs. Vicky Ann Cremona, said the objectives of the presidential programme "Together We Meet Challenges," include areas of interest to the business sphere in Malta, particularly regarding innovating services, information and communication technologies (ICTs), financial services and internationalisation of enterprises.

Papers presented by representatives of the Foreign Investment Promotion Agency (FIPA) and the Export Promotion Centre emphasised the assets enjoyed by Tunisia to stand out as an attractive site for foreign direct investments.

### **The 12th edition of the Carthage Investment Forum**

The Foreign Investment Promotion Agency, ( FIPA Tunisia) organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Development and International Cooperation, the 12th edition of the Carthage Investment Forum which took place on the 3rd and 4th of June 2010, at the Ramada Plaza Tunis. The forum was attended by over 1000 people, including 400 foreigners coming from 26 European American, Arab and Asian countries. 200 foreign, private firms, 17 engineering and consulting firms and 14 professional associations were present.

Apart from Tunisian and foreign journalists whose number has reached 92 people, this 12th edition of the Carthage Forum was attended by 68 foreign ambassadors and representatives of foreign embassies accredited in Tunisia.

During the second day of the Forum, three panels were organized. The second day of the Forum was also devoted to the organization of a multi-sectoral partnership meeting, attended by 80 foreign companies and 40 Tunisian companies. 118 contacts were made and 35 project ideas were identified during this 12th edition. 83 % of foreign participants expressed their satisfaction with the quality of partnership and business meetings.

## **ENERGY & ENVIRONNEMENT**

### **Tunisia Solar Plan: Public-Private Partnership for the promotion of renewable energies**

TUNIS, June 28, 2010 (TAP)-Tunisia solar plan is to be conducted as part of a public-private partnership in 40 energy efficiency projects during the period 2010-2016. It comes particularly timely to strengthen the national effort in promoting the use of renewable energies from 2011 onwards.

Integrating all areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources in line with the Mediterranean solar plan, the plan adopted as part of the policy of energy development fits well with the national policy guidelines in this area.

As described by the National Agency for Energy Management (AMNE), Tunisia solar plan is divided into five major sections classified by areas of activity and energy involving 40 projects. This ambitious plan will require raising funds worth 3.6 billion dinars and will span 2010-2016.

It will be funded by the National Fund for Energy Control (FNME), up to 260MD, the public sector, namely the STEG (800MD) and private (2500MD) while international cooperation should contribute up to 40MD.

Of the 40 selected projects, 29 projects will be implemented by the private sector while the public sector will be carrying out 5 projects, 3 of which will be entrusted to Société Tunisienne de l'Electricité et du Gaz (STEG).

These projects will, once all the work completed, allow saving 660 kilotons of oil per year, say 22% of the total amount of energy to be saved by 2016.

Additionally, these projects have a strong environmental impact as they will prevent the emission of 133,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.

According to the same source, implementing Tunisia solar plan embodies a long-term economic strategy insofar as it has real job-creating potential.

Finally, the solar plan aims at enabling Tunisia to become an international platform for energy production and export, namely with respect to solar energy.

### **Desertec network for EUMENA region set up in Tunisia**

TUNIS, June 28, 2010 (TAP) - A workshop was held, on Monday in Tunis, on the launch of the Desertec University Network, an academic and research network in desert technologies.

The National Consultative Council of Scientific Research and Technology (CCNRST) has been working for a year, jointly with "Desertec Foundation," on the launch of this network which will be based in Tunis and bring together all countries of the EUMENA region (Europe, Middle East and North Africa).

Desertec seeks to meet the needs in electricity through electricity generated by solar, wind and water energies in desert regions. In a six-hour period, the desert receives more solar energy than the amount consumed by humanity during a whole year.

This concept proposes a comprehensive solution to the key challenges for the coming decades, such as water and energy scarcities, in addition to climate change.

According to Mr. Mouldi Miled, CCNRST member and Desertec Foundation co-founder, as far as Tunisia is concerned, the project will help reverse the energy equation, by converting 90% of fossil energy consumption into renewable energy by 2050.

He indicated that the creation of this academic research network will offer a space for consultation, for exchange of expertise and partnership with world-known research institutions.

In his opening address, Secretary of State in charge of Scientific Research Refaat Chaabouni pointed out that Tunisia has during the last two decades adopted an energy policy compatible with sustained development.

Mr. Chaabouni called for making the most of the institutional and legislative achievements accomplished for the sector's benefit, by the creation of new job-generating industrial sectors.

The meeting was organised by CCNRST, jointly with Desertec Foundation, created in 2003, at the initiative of "Club de Rome."

Several academics and representatives of international research institutions took part in the meeting.

### **Prospects of nuclear-energy-generated electricity**

HAMMAMET, June 25, 2010 (TAP) - Reinforcing Arab, regional and international co-operation in the field of nuclear power stations' construction and supporting the Arab Atomic Energy Agency's efforts to implement the Arab strategy of peaceful utilisation of nuclear energy, were the main recommendations of the first Arab conference on this theme organised on the 23rd-25th instant in Hammamet.

Participants called on Arab countries who aspire to construct nuclear power stations to prepare well by reinforcing their basic infrastructure.

The conference, on "prospects for electricity generating and desalination of sea-water by means nuclear energy," was an occasion to discuss Arab national programmes in the field of nuclear power stations' construction and to present international experiences in the matter.

The meeting was attended by 111 Arab and foreign researchers and experts from 27 countries, as well as representatives of several Arab and international organisations.

Secretary of State in charge of Renewable Energies and Food Industries Abdelaziz Rassaa said, in his closing address, that nuclear-energy electricity production has become indispensable, pointing out that the Tunisian Electricity and Gas Company has been tasked, jointly with the Higher Education and Scientific Research Ministry, to conduct a study on the technical and economic feasibility of creating an electrical- nuclear power station and its integration into the electricity-production system.

### **MENA region: exchange of expertise in waste management**

TUNIS, June 21, 2010 ( TAP) - The first meeting of the regional network for the exchange of information and expertise in the waste sector, "Sweep-net," held on June 21-23 in Tunis focused on waste management and fight against its negative impact on environment.

According to data presented at this meeting, partner countries in this network from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region produce annually about 44 million tons of municipal waste.

Town planning and economic growth in the region might lead to an increase in waste at an annual average of 127 million tons which might be exploited by the informal waste collecting sector and small and medium recycling enterprises.

Chairing the opening of the meeting, Environment and Sustainable Development Minister Nadhir Hamada said the national strategy adopted in this area focuses on the expansion of the network of controlled dumps which helped absorb 95% of domestic wastes.

Mr. Anis Ismail, Secretary-General of "Sweep-net," reminded of the objectives of this structure which was created in June 2009, with the support of the German Technical Agency (GTZ) and Tunisia's National Agency for Waste Management.

This network, including among its members 10 Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Mauritania, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen), seeks to strengthen technical co-operation and exchange of expertise in matters of waste management and conducting studies on priority sectors.

Mr. Ismail reminded that the network's activities started by the exchange of expertise between Tunisia and Morocco.

Mrs. Sandra Schenke, Director of GTZ office in Tunisia, expressed her country's readiness to support all proposed initiatives.

## **EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

### **Tunisia and "SunGard" multinational company sign convention**

TUNIS, June 11, 2010 (TAP) - A convention was signed on Thursday between the Tunisian State and multinational company "SunGard", which is specialised in developing and marketing software and computer solutions dedicated to international financial institutions.

The convention provides for developing activities of SunGard Technology Services (STS), a subsidiary of the SunGard group, particularly in the areas of developing software dedicated to financial services as part of the "Global Delivery Model," and providing a set of services, such as technical assistance, consulting, etc.

Under the convention, the company plans to employ 450 engineers and university graduates in 2010, 650 in 2011 and 1000 in 2012.

This multinational company whose annual turnover is of 5.5 billion dollars, employs over 21,500 executives and provides its services to over 25,000 customers in 70 countries.

The signing ceremony was chaired by Minister of Communication Technologies Mohamed Naceur Ammar, in the presence of Mrs. Lamia Chaffai Sghaier, Secretary of State in charge of Information Technology, Internet and Free Software.

The Minister said Tunisia has opted for investment in ICT and provides today all conditions for success to investors and large companies.

He said that the choice made on Tunisia by this multinational company confirms once again the excellent image enjoyed by the country on the international scale, given the climate propitious for investment and creation of innovating and high-employability projects and the availability of highly skilled human resources.

Mr. Mack Gill, Chairman of SunGard Global Services, underlined, in turn, that activities of the SunGard centre in Tunisia have an increasing importance in the strategy of SunGard, similarly to the centres of India and China.

Tunisia offers a considerable potential of high qualified skills who contribute to developing products and solutions of SunGard, he also said.

Mr. Adel Torjmen, Director General of SunGard Technology Services in Tunis, pointed out, in turn, that Tunisia offers to such multinational companies as SunGard a climate propitious to business and optimum means in terms of human resources and infrastructure in an environment of political and socio-economic stability.

### **Tunisian students rank 2nd at international scientific contest**

TUNIS, June 30, 2010 (TAP) - A group of Tunisian students from the Tunis Higher Technology and Computers Institute ranked second in an international scientific contest held recently in France on "Mobile Robots."

The Tunisian contestants won one gold, 6 silver and 4 bronze medals. Seven groups of students trained in information technology in French, Russian and South Korean universities and higher institutes took part in the annual event.

### **Tunisia heads for technologies**

GAMMARTH, June 4, 2010 (TAP)-" Heading for Technologies: Assets and Decisive Factors of a Choice " is the theme of the 12th Carthage Investment Forum which works started Thursday afternoon in the northern suburb of Gammarth.

1300 participants including 498 from 34 countries are taking part in this gathering.

The aim of this new forum is to highlight and brief Tunisia's different partners about the progress made by the site of Tunisia in matters of ICT, the drive of basic infrastructure in this sector, the various distinctions awarded to Tunisia in matters of ICT, the development of technological poles and the efforts expended in matters of human resources promotion.

Development and International Co-operation Minister Mohamed Nouri Jouini said that this forum, which has become a reference event in the Mediterranean area, is being held at a time when the world is living through one of the most serious economic crisis in spite of some signs of revival.

In spite of this difficult situation, he added, Tunisia has carried on looking for fruitful partnerships, diversifying its industrial fabric and stepping up the integration of its economy into its international environment.

Besides, he underlined that the government strategy is focused on developing a high technological content economy, commanding new technologies and achieving sustainable growth.

Tunisia's Industry, Trade and Handicrafts Union (UTICA) Chairman Hédi Djilani affirmed, for his part, that in view of the setting up of new regional groupings and the opening out of new markets, Tunisia has adopted the different mechanisms meant to improve the competitiveness of its economy which now depends on the command of advanced technologies.

He reminded, in this context, of Tunisia's constant investment in knowledge as well as the development of infrastructure, one of the major State concerns, aimed to provide a climate favourable to investment.

He also stressed the will of Maghreb businessmen to set up the Maghreb market, adding that "the dearest wish is Euro-Africa.

Then, Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi handed over prizes to this year's winning firms, namely Yazaki Group (car cable manufacturing), Rieker company (anti-stress and safety shoes production), Téléperformance (customers' relations), Sagem Software and technologies, Somfy Group, Altran Telnet Corporation and GITAS.

### **Copyrights Training Academy to be launched**

TUNIS, June 7, 2010 (TAP) - A co-operation agreement was signed, on Monday, between the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and the National Standardisation and Intellectual Property Institute (INNORPI), providing for the creation, in Tunisia, of a Copyrights Training Academy.

The Academy will notably ensure the training of trainers, jurists, experts in matters of intellectual property, researchers, students, industrialists, artists and related professions.

WIPO aired readiness to support INNORPI's plan to set up such an institution and to follow up its activities.

The agreement was signed at the end of a meeting held between Secretary of State in charge of Renewable Energies and Food Industries Abdelaziz Rassaa and WIPO Director-General Francis Gurry.

Mr. Rassaa stressed the need to ensure follow-up of co-operation work between the two sides and to jointly endeavour to help Tunisian industrialists make the most of the advantages of direct access to data for Tunisian enterprises.

Mr. Francis Gurry said that Tunisia benefits of a regular and structured co-operation programme, notably ruled by an outline co-operation agreement and regular implementation programmes.

He notably highlighted Tunisia's assets, allowing it to play a dynamic role in matters of intellectual property in Africa and the Arab world.

## **TOURISM & CULTURE**

### **Tunisia, French tourists' favourite destination for summer 2010**

TUNIS, June 10, 2010 (TAP) - Competitiveness, attractiveness, proximity, quality of product and targeted and intelligent promotion are the major assets of the Tunisian tourism which, despite an extreme world economic situation, particularly in the euro zone, the country's major market, has not only preserved its

momentum but more importantly strengthened its positioning.

Thus, the French market, which ranked first in the past four years in terms of arrivals of non-residents with over one million tourists a year, is still showing a certain dynamics and providing a significant potential that need to be capitalised.

Thanks to the good results in the first fourth months of the current year, i.e. 310,726 arrivals by late April 2010, the French market provides good prospects for the current summer season when demand on Tunisia remains satisfactory.

Confirmation has been made by the Chairman of the French highest tourism authority, Georges Colson, president of the French National Union of Travel Agencies (SNAV), who said to "Relaxnews" that Tunisia will be this year among the top 3 destinations of French tourists.

A preference that justifies the quality of the national tourist product which has witnessed over the past years continuous diversification and competitiveness.

Mr. Colson pointed out that for summer 2010 "the French people's favourite destinations have not varied much," since Tunisia, Spain and Morocco are still seen as "sunny destinations, within reach of average household's budget."

At a time when Tunisia has more than shown resistance, other destinations are stagnating, such as Greece or other distant ones such as Thailand, Mexico, etc.

The French market is witnessing a renewed dynamism and a recovery at the level of bookings and it is even expected that last-minute bookings would reduce the backlog recorded since the beginning of this year.

Tunisia has hosted till last April 674,362 European tourists generating foreign currency revenues of 814.6 million dinars.

### **Tourism: Repositioning Tunisia in the Mediterranean**

TUNIS, June 27, 2010 (TAP)- Observance of National Tourism Day on June 28 is an annual event which provides the opportunity to take stock of the gains made in the tourist area and challenges to be taken up to make the sector a lasting industry facing changes taking place on the international tourist scene.

The promotion of tourist product and its marketing methods based on the use of new information and communication technologies (ICT) is the major challenge to be taken up to strengthen the Tunisia destination and preserve the position and share of the Tunisian tourism in the Mediterranean and international market.

Problems posed today to the tourist activity in Tunisia are closely connected to the production modes, distribution of tourist offer, diversification of accommodation modes, basic infrastructure and the capacity to attract tourists with high purchasing power.

The administration and professionals are striving to establish an efficient partnership to improve the overall quality of the product and all its components. Efforts are exerted to diversify both products and modes of tourist

accommodation in such a manner as to extend the tourist season.

Board opportunities are offered in matters of marketing to better publicise the tourist product.

Special interest will be taken in the promotion of products with high added values such as golf, cultural, environmental, Saharan and health tourism.

A coherent policy will also be set up in the areas of animation and organisation of events.

Golf tourism attracts nearly 60 million golfers in the world and 6 million in Europe. Tunisia attracts 70 thousand of those players, i.e. 1.2% of the European market.

The strategy designed to promote golf tourism provides for the creation of a structure bringing together public and private sectors, operating as part of the convention signed in May 2009 between the international association of golf tourism travel organisers and the

National Sanitation Board to identify shortcomings and propose programmes to promote this product.

Tunisia also seeks to develop thalassotherapy and increase the number of centres specialised in this activity which are 50 now, by opening 6 centers in 2010 out of a total of 10 under construction.

To reach a level of quality tourist services, intransigence and firmness are needed to allow the sector to recover its brilliance.

For this reason, Tunisia has devised a programme to upgrade the sector's components (hotels, travel agencies, tourist restaurants...) as well as a thorough programme of training in the tourism field, in addition to stepping up control operations and the application of hotels classification criteria.

Regarding the furtherance of the hotel units upgrading programme, the steering committee of the programme has approved sofar 86 files (nearly 45 thousands beds) with total investments estimated at nearly 360 million dinars.

To materialise the guidelines and objectives of the 2009-2014 presidential programme, particularly chapter 26 pertaining to "achieving a better performance to the tourism sector" and chapter 27 entitled "approaching the goal of receiving 10 million tourists a year by the end of the next five-year period," Tunisia started devising a strategy for national tourism ahead of 2016 to assess the situation of the sector and determine future orientations.

The tourism sector has a great socio-economic importance for Tunisia. It contributes by 7% to the GDP, generates from 18 to 20% of revenues in foreign currency per year which helps meet 56% of the trade deficit and provides over 400 thousand direct and indirect jobs.

Tunisia attracted 7 million tourists in 2009 with the number of tourist-bed nights reaching nearly 35 million per year.

The total accommodation capacity is of 240 thousand beds available in 850 hotel units and the country has 580 five-star hotels.

Revenues in foreign currency during the same year are estimated at 4.3 billion dinars.

Tunisia also has eight training centres in hotel and tourism fields.

### **Tunisia and China sign 2010-13 cultural co-operation programme**

TUNIS, June 24, 2010 (TAP) - Culture and Heritage Preservation Minister Abderraouf el Basti's working visit to China was crowned with the signing in Beijing of a cultural co-operation programme between Tunisia and China for the 2010- 2013 period.

The programme is designed to boost cultural co-operation between the two countries in the areas of arts, cinema, theatre, music, archaeology, museums and restoration of historical monuments.

It also provides for seeking to sign an agreement on the protection of cultural heritage against theft, piracy and illegal use, in addition to the possibility to forge relations of co-operation between the Tunisian Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts ("Beit al-Hikma") and similar Chinese institutions, as well as between the two countries' national libraries.

The programme also stipulates intensifying co-operation at the level of festivals, international cultural events, book fairs, exchange of creators' visits and intellectual property rights, in conformity with international standards.

Two articles of this co-operation agreement need to be highlighted: the first pertains to China's willingness to contribute to the training of executives and staff of the Culture City; the second stresses the need to encourage the translation of both countries' literary works as part of co- operation between China and the Secretariat General of the Arab League.

Moreover, Mr. El Basti conferred with his Chinese counterpart Cai Wu. He placed emphasis on the Tunisian-Chinese friendship and the importance of cultural partnership between the two countries.

On his part, Mr. Cai Wu praised the level reached by the bilateral relations and expressed consideration for Tunisia's cultural policy, as well as Tunisia's cultural contribution to the Arab culture in the intellectual, literary and artistic fields.

### **Five Tunisian films participate in 10th session of Arab Film Festival of Rotterdam**

TUNIS, June 24, 2010 (TAP)- The 10th session of the Arab Film Festival of Rotterdam (Netherlands) is being held this year June 23-27.

Five Tunisian films will be screened at this event, namely the feature films "Zarzis ou Vivre Ici" (Zarzis or Living Here) by Mohamed Zran, "Dawaha" (The Secrets) by Raja Laâmari and "Cinecitta" by Brahim Letaief as well as short films "Tandid" by Walid Matar and "Lambouba" by Nadia Erraies.

The feature films jury is chaired by Egyptian Madhkour Thabet and the short films jury by Oman's Khaled Zadjali.

### **Tunisia takes part in Arab Arts Festival in China**

TUNIS, June 19, 2010 (TAP)-Tunisia took part in the Arab Arts Festival held on June 8-25, 2010 in China, on the role of cultural exchange in Arab-Chinese co-operation to strengthen dialogue and partnership between the two sides and achieve co-development.

The festival is held on the sidelines of the 2010 Shanghai International Fair and within the framework of the Arab-Chinese Forum for International Co-operation which was created in 2004.

Minister of Culture and Heritage Preservation Abderraouf el Basti is leading the Tunisian delegation in Beijing.

The minister will present a paper on "Tunisian approach in the area of dialogue of culture and civilisations."

Tunisia is also taking part, alongside 12 Arab countries, in the Arab plastic arts exhibition held as of June 21 at Beijing Museum, with paintings by Tunisian artists Ali Ballagha, Nja Mahdaoui, Habib Bouabana, Mongi Maâtoug, Asma Mnaouar, Nadia Zouari, Lamine Sassi and Mohamed Ben Slama.

On her part, fashion designer Fatma Ben Abdallah, accompanied by six models, will propose a fashion parade on Tunisian traditional costumes inspired from civilisations that followed in Tunisia.

Mechanisms of the Arab-Chinese co-operation forum include the ministerial meeting, the setting up of a commission made up of senior officials, the businessmen congress, the symposium of Arab-Chinese relations and dialogue between the two civilisations, whose third session was held in 2009 in Tunisia, the Arab-Chinese friendship group, the Arab-Chinese co-operation congress in energy, the symposium of Arab-Chinese media co-operation and the exchange of cultural activities as part of the arts festival mechanism.

### **Tunisia's approach to dialogue of civilisations and culture highlighted**

TUNIS, June 23, 2010 (TAP)- During his participation in a round table on the " role of cultural exchanges in Arab-Chinese co-operation" held as part of the 2nd session of the Arab Arts Festival in Beijing (June 18-25, 2010), Minister of Culture and Heritage Preservation Abderraouf el Basti highlighted the interest Tunisia takes in dialogue and tolerance.

He reviewed the initiatives taken by President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali to boost dialogue between civilisations and lay down bridges of solidarity and complementarity among peoples and cultures, in addition to enhancing values of peaceful co-existence based on cultural diversity.

Mr. El Basti stressed President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's initiative to proclaim 2010 International Youth Year, recommending to step up the exchange of youth visits and involve this segment of society in all cultural activities.

Mr. Abderraouf el Basti is leading the Tunisian delegation to the Arab Arts Festival.

He attended, in this context, the Arab plastic arts exhibition, organised at Beijing Museum. Sixteen painting by Tunisian artists are on display at this exhibition.

He also attended the opening of this session which featured a parade of Tunisian traditional costume across ages.