

FIPA News

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New Airbus plant in Tunisia – Agreement signed

A branch of Airbus, has signed an agreement with the government of Tunisia for the construction of a plant producing plane components. The agreement was officially signed in Tunis on January 28th 2009

The agreement was signed on the Tunisian side, by the Minister of Development and International Cooperation Mr. Nouri Jouini, and was announced during a press conference organized by Fabrice Bergier, Director General of Airbus and Christian Cornille, chairman of the European aircraft maker's branch, Aerolia.

The project will be located south of the Tunisian capital on an area of 20 hectares with 10 hectares reserved for potential extension.

Its achievement requires a global investment of about 60 million Euro and will create once completed in 2014, 1,500 jobs in high technology.

The site will actually be an « aeronautics park » which will host around the Aerolia plant traditional French partners who will create companies in charge of manufacturing basic parts, sheet metal, mechanics, composite and surface treatment. Mr. Cornille expects the first deliveries of aeronautical components to start by the end of the first quarter 2010.

Fabrice Bregier, general director of Airbus asserted that the Tunisian site was chosen because it proved to be “competitive” and that it did not aim at “ruining jobs in France or Europe.”

"[our decision was taken] to have a more competitive system. There is a temporary crisis in 2009 and maybe in 2010 too, but globally we will be delivering more and more planes. We will therefore need to produce more and more. And instead of manufacturing everything in France or in Europe, where we are not always the most competitive, we decided to relocate in a foreign country and we chose Tunisia," said Bergier.

Mr. Bregier declared that there were 3,700 Airbus planes in the 2009 order book.

Support Measures to companies and actions reinforcing competitiveness

A ministerial council was held on December 23rd, 2008 in order to examine the policy designed to support the plans of companies and sectors which might be affected in the coming period by the drawbacks of the financial world crisis and in view of helping them maintain their activity rhythm as far as production and exports are concerned. The ministerial council was devoted to the review of a strategy designed to support companies having their activities slowing down, to develop their competitiveness and to support economic activity.

To this end, several measures were defined. They are presented in detail in the document hereafter: <http://www.investintunisia.tn/document/429.pdf>

Tariff reduction for local call centers

On Friday 01/16/09, a decision was taken aiming at encouraging outsourcing of local call centers' functions to private operators. Tunisian government hopes hence to make a contribution to the creation of no less than 8,000 new jobs.

To encourage these new operators, preferential rates will be granted to these local call centers that will get thus a tariff cut by 30 % on incoming calls from fixed lines and a reduction of 40 % on incoming calls from mobile lines.

Tunisia: Third most attractive destination in the MENA area

According to the English web site nubricks.com, expert in overseas property investment, Tunisia ranked third as one of the most attractive site in the MENA area (Middle East and North Africa), right after Dubai and Egypt for the year 2009.

Analysts of the website referring to the situation dominating Europe and the rest of the world have described these property markets as “built upon solid investment fundamentals.”

Analysts based their assessment on a report by Agence France Presse. According to this report, there is intense international investment commitment supporting a construction and real estate boom in Tunisia. The government’s pledge to change the law to allow foreigners the right to buy freehold property in the North African country has brought corporate investors and real estate developers from locations several locations and namely those from the Gulf area. Steve Worboys, Managing Director of Experience International comments: “the nation’s proximity to Europe, its increasing accessibility and underlying political and economic stability are supporting this level of investment commitment, and for an individual buyer looking for their own reasons to enter the property market in Tunisia, the nation’s tourism potential really makes it worth closer inspection.”

He adds: “According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the next decade will see strong consistent annual gains in terms of activity growth of around 4%. This is because the nation’s government and private sector investors are committing to a massive overhaul and diversification of the tourism product in Tunisia, and there is a national plan for the international promotion of tourism in Tunisia to 2016.”

“The Dunes at El Kantaoui” is among the projects which were described as having maximum interest and potential for 2009. In conclusion, Experience international reports that the attractive low-rise apartment development has a beachside setting in a prime residential area close to Port El Kantaoui, and it boasts all the facilities such as a 36-hole golf course, a marina, restaurants and world-class spa facilities.

Aeronautics : Safran opens in Tunisia

Telnet and Safran announced the signature of a partnership agreement on Tuesday February 10th at the Transport Ministry headquarters. Following this agreement the aeronautics group will relocate activities in Tunisia.

The group is the second European leader in aeronautics and high technology to open in Tunisia after Aerolia.

The joint venture was announced on Monday February 2nd, 2009 in a press conference held at the Transport Ministry headquarters by Mr. Abderrahim Zouari, Transport Minister. The joint venture will create about 500 jobs for higher education graduates.

Let’s remember that the group lead by Safran includes the subsidiaries Snecma, Turbomeca, Airelle and Labinal.

Safran has a total of 54,500 employees, and industrial, design and commercial operations in more than 30 countries with a total turnover of more than 12 billion Euros. Its activities include aerospace propulsion, aircraft equipment and defense security.

It should be noted that Telnet is a consulting and engineering company expert in innovation and high technology. It operates in the sectors of telecommunication, multimedia, automotive & transport, avionics & defense, security & chip cards, electronics and industry.

Yazaki Settles in Tunisia

According to TAP, Japanese Yazaki Group specializing in manufacturing car components (cables) is planning to open a factory which will be operational in June 2010.

First the Japanese group will set up a pilot plant in charge of training until 2009 the future workers (800) and executives (150) of the factory, declared Mr Joaquim Bernardo (Portugal), Director of logistics and new projects of Yazaki group.

Personnel training will start on February 15th with an average of 40 newly hired employees per week, the ultimate objective being to start production beginning March. The unit will be managed by Tunisian competencies added Mr. Bernardo.

The total cost of the project realization and equipment will come up to 24 million Euros (more than 43 million Dinars) and will create about 2,500 direct jobs (of which 308 executive positions – university graduates), stressed Mr Joaquim Bernardo while pointing out that choosing Tunisia, the second African country where the Japanese group realizes a project, is mainly due to managers' competence level.

Concerning infrastructure, the Director has asserted that the presidential project aiming at linking Gafsa governorate to the highway network will undoubtedly consolidate the basic infrastructure in the region. The highway network should reach a length of 1,200 km by the year 2016, as compared to 359 km at present.

He noted that the Japanese plant's activity will undoubtedly breathe new life into land transport (trucks carrying the produced merchandise which is exclusively exported) and air transport (transfers and travel of technicians, executives and suppliers).

Let's remember that Yazaki group is one of the world leaders in cable manufacturing. Its international market share is of 30%. This group includes 154 subsidiaries all over the world with about, avec 200,000 employees.

Elvia PCB starts production of printed circuits in Tunisia

Elvia PCB Group, one of the French leaders in the manufacture of professional printed circuits boards has just started its manufacturing activity in a new production unit in Monastir – Tunisia, according to French *Electronique internationale*.

After taking over the site in the first quarter 2008, Elvia PCB invested about 2 million Euros in an automated manufacturing line.

The new unit called CIV Tunisia has a production capacity of 60 000 m² circuits per year and will be totally operational starting from January 15th, 2009.

The produced technology is totally complementary with the other group's plants: single – face; double – face with metal-coated holes as well as progressively multi layers with 4 to 6 layers.

"With Tunisia we can compete with Chinese costs, and we offer a more dynamic service facilitating exchanges and reassuring as for the supply points and quality control with a good monetary

stability," said Bruno Cassin, chairman of Elvia PCB group.

Industry- Quality- High Tech: Measures Metrology Laboratory, MEM Invests in high technology.

Tunisian industry can now rely on new measurement and control means which are adapted to their highest requirements.

Located in Mégrine, MEM laboratory has invested in last generation technological equipment in order to provide the reliability and precision that are said to be unique on the African continent.

Smartscope OGP 500 namely features concurrent functions including laser scanner, optics, touch probe functions (see picture below). Expertise and 3D measurements of items and tools in qualification or processing phases are hence accessible whatever their shapes or the complexity of the zones to be measured.



In addition and as a complement, thanks to the scanner function of the Smartscope, MEM provides engineering firms with the possibility to gather point clouds or the DFN of a component.

This is one step further towards design expertise and technical production quality "made in Tunisia."

For further information, contact:
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Tunisia-Algeria: in the Arab free trade zone since January.

Tunisian exports to UMA countries (*Union du Maghreb Arabe* or North African Union) have come up to 1832.8 MDT in 2008 with a deficit balance since imports originating from UMA countries have reached 2322.2 MDT.

Trade exchange between Tunisia and Algeria is not an exception to the rule (that of trade balance deficit) since Tunisia has imported in 2008 worth 890 MDT Algerian goods and exported to this country only for a total amount of 455.1 MDT. Nevertheless, trade exchange has recorded a growth as Tunisian exports to this neighbor country of the West were of only 367.3 MDT in 2007 as against imports worth 3838.5 MDT during the same year.

Algeria in the Arab free trade zone

New opportunities are now available to businessmen in the two countries to improve trade exchanges. Since January 2009 Algeria has actually become member of the Arab Free Trade Zone (ZLEA) which hence includes the 18 Arab countries (except Mauritania, Djibouti, Somalia and Comoro Islands) which have signed since February 27th, 1981 an agreement to facilitate commercial exchanges and develop trade between Arab countries.

The ZLEA namely stipulates that products from Arab countries should benefit from custom duties and tax exemption.

And a preferential trade agreement...

Besides, and since last November, Tunisia and Algeria have signed a preferential trade agreement which should lead to open a free trade zone between the two countries. For the time being, the preferential agreement grants Tunisian products in Algeria the same treatment as for those originating from the European Union, with which Algeria is already in free trade zone since September 2005.

According to the terms of the agreement between Tunisia and Algeria, commercial exchange liberalization will be carried out according to 3 lists:

- The first one will not be submitted to customs duties,
- The second will be subject to a customs duties elimination schedule over a period of 7 years
- The last includes sensitive products and will be carried out over ten years.

Even if the agreement was signed in 2008, Tunis and Algiers have already agreed on the principle of enforcing the customs duties elimination schedule since 2007. Under the terms of this agreement, 70 % of Tunisian exports and namely industrial products will receive the same treatment as European products at Algerian frontiers.

Both parties, Tunisia and Algeria agreed on two lists of Tunisian agricultural products which will cross the Algerian border duty free but this will be done according to quotas to be defined by the two countries.

All these initiatives will certainly boost commercial exchange between the two countries and will perk up investments.

Enfidha Airport: Within Scheduled Deadlines

“Construction works of Enfidha Airport, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali are progressing at a global rate of 65%. Completion deadlines scheduled for October 2009 will be respected if not reduced,” said Mr Haluk Bilgi, chief executive of TAV Tunisia, subsidiary of Turkish investor TAV Holding Co and successful bidder of the concession for the creation and operation of Enfidha Airport, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Located in the central eastern region of Tunisia, the new airport is the result of a strategic study of Tunisian airports by the year 2020, which defined additional needs and capacity for processing air transport and namely tourism traffic in this area.

The air terminal’s capacity in its first stage will be of 5 million passengers for an investment of 800 million dinars. This capacity should reach 30 million passengers in its final phase.

Outsourcing and ICT solutions Show

The international show on outsourcing and ICT solutions "Outsourcing & IT solutions" will take place this year from the 15th to the 17th of April 2009 in Tunis at El Kram Fair.

This year the show will encourage attendance of companies and service providers involved in outsourcing.

This orientation towards ICT sectors in general and more specifically IT can be explained by the success of two previous Outsourcing sessions, namely that of March 2006 and that of November 2007.

It should be noted that this annual appointment of outsourcing and ICT is characterized by the quality of visitors most of whom are chief executives and professionals as well as by the richness of the conferences and workshops which are organized during the show.