





**TUNISIA NEWSLETTER**  
**May 2012**

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TUNISIA-JAPAN



### Japan donates US\$2.8 million to Tunisia

18 June 2012

Japan granted Tunisia 2.870 million US dollars, about 4.571 million Tunisian dinars, to fund community works and a local participation project for the benefit of the Jendouba governorate.

Funded by the Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF) and managed by the World Bank (WB), this grant aims to “provide an income support to unskilled workers and long-time unemployed persons, by offering them the possibility to participate in works to improve their employability.”

These works will be carried out over a four-year period, up to 2016, in a way that ensures participation of civil society associations.

The grant agreement was signed on 18 June 2012 in Tunis by Investment and International Co-operation Minister Riadh Bettaieb and WB Resident Representative in Tunisia Eileen Murray.

This is one of three grants by the Japanese government; the first two were dedicated to assist the unemployed in the Kasserine and Siliana governorates.

The project will fund, according to Mrs. Murray, notably “the execution of about one hundred public works sub-projects of a high labour force intensity to improve infrastructures and local services in the Jendouba governorate.”

Minister Bettaieb specified that the project proposes, “according to a participatory approach that involves NGO’s, local associations, civil society and people, appropriate formulae and tools aimed to raise youths’ revenues, offer them adequate training and help them set up their own businesses.”

For his part, Japan’s Ambassador to Tunisia Toshiyuki Taga pointed out that “the project provides for supporting concrete action to develop employment, particularly through the restoration of infrastructure and services that were damaged after the Revolution.”

### The Constituent Assembly approves 2 draft laws related to agreements between Tunisia and JICA

6 June 2012

The Constituent Assembly Planning, Finance and Development Commission approved on 5 June 2012 two draft laws related to international agreements between Tunisia and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The first draft law is related to two letters of guarantee dated April 25, 2012, about two loan agreements concluded between “Tunisie Autoroutes” and JICA on the one hand and “SONEDE” and JICA on the other hand.

The loan granted to “Tunisie Autoroutes” amounts to 15.84 billion Japanese Yens as a contribution to the achievement of the Gabes-Medenine highway and the loan allocated to SONEDE amounts to 6.94 billion Yens as contribution to finance drinking water supply in urban areas.

These credits will be repaid over 20 years with a 6 year grace period and an interest rate of 0.95%.

### An event organized by the Embassy of Tunisia in Tokyo in honor of Mrs. Sadako Ogata

18 May 2012

The Embassy of Tunisia organized on 17 May 2012 a lecture given by Mrs. Sadako Ogata, former President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and currently Special Advisor to the President of JICA.

Focused on “Achieving inclusive growth following the Arab Spring and its implication on TICAD V”, Mrs. Ogata’s lecture was attended by the African Ambassadors and Heads of Missions in Tokyo, as well as Japanese personalities and journalists. The lecture was followed by a fruitful discussion with the African Ambassadors, mainly about JICA’s activities in the African countries, the importance of achieving inclusive growth and developing human resources.

In his welcoming remarks, Ambassador Kasri recalled the visit paid in March 2012 to Tunisia by Mrs. Sadako Ogata. He then offered to Mrs. Ogata a photo signed by Tunisian President Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, representing President Marzouki conferring Mrs. Ogata the highest ranked decoration for foreign nationals.





For his part, Mr. Stuart Harold Comberbach, Ambassador of Zimbabwe and Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps in Tokyo, praised the role played by Mrs. Ogata during her mission at the head of JICA. He also underlined the great importance attached by the African countries to the TICAD process, stressing on the necessity of coordination in the preparatory process for the TICAD V to be held in Yokohama, Japan, in June 2013.

The lecture was followed by a reception attended by the African and the Arab Diplomatic Corps in Tokyo and several Japanese personalities representing the Government, business community, universities and journalists.

### **A lecture delivered by the Ambassador of Tunisia at the University of Tokyo**

21 May 2012

The Ambassador of Tunisia to Japan, Mr. Elyes Kasri, gave a lecture at the University of Tokyo on the "The Democratic Transition in Tunisia: Achievements and challenges" on 20 May 2012, on the occasion of a Symposium organized by the members of the association Global Next Leaders Forum (GNLF).



In his speech, Ambassador Kasri highlighted the situation and issues of the democratic process in Tunisia after the Revolution of 14 January 2011. He explained the political reforms underway by the new Government and the challenges Tunisia is facing in the economic and social fields. He also delivered a message of hope, challenge and encouragement for young generation who will be leaders in Japan.

GNLF is an association of students at the University of Tokyo and other universities, which aims to gather at an international conference, professors and students from different parts of the world, in order to discuss hot topics. The main objective is to foster in the young generation the spirit of leadership and prepare them for positions of responsibility.

GNLF will hold its next forum in Tunisia (Sousse) from 30 September to 10 October 2012.

### **Japanese participation in the "Tunisia Investment Forum 2012"**

The Second Tunisia Investment Forum (TIF 2012), in its post-Revolutionary version, opened, on 14 June in Gammarth.

More than 1,580 participants from 36 countries, including 17 Japanese participants representing 13 Japanese organizations, attended this international economic gathering organized, on June 14-15, on the theme "New Tunisia Facing Future Challenges and Opportunities".

Led by the Representative of FIPA in Tokyo, the Japanese delegation was composed of representatives of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), as well as the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) from Paris and Dubai, Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi UFJ (from Paris and Cairo).

The representatives of the Japanese organizations and the private sector showed interest and confidence in Tunisia which was the epicenter of the "Arab Spring" and expressed their willingness to come back.

One of Japanese participants said he was surprised by the support given by many European and American organizations to Tunisia. He added that "he believes that Tunisian economy will bounce back soon".

TIF 2012 is a large-scale communication action to strengthen Tunisia's image as an investment site and make known to international promoters and decision-makers the investment opportunities and Tunisia's business climate.

The aim is also to increase, from now till the end of the year, the foreign direct investments (FDIs) to 2,400 million Tunisian dinars (MTD), against 1,711 MTD in 2011 (-29.2% as compared with 2010).

Opening the Forum, Investment and International Co-operation Minister Riadh Bettaieb asserted that "the Tunisian economy has shown signs of recovery and that various indicators related to investment have improved," which evidences, according to him, the confidence placed by foreign investors in the Tunisia site.

The FDIs reached, he specified, during the first five months of 2012, 890 MTD, against 632 MTD during the same period of 2011, i.e., a rise of 41%. Compared with the first five months of 2010, this rise is of about 12.5%.

Up to late May 2012, 62 new enterprises have been created, including 37 companies operating in the sector of manufacturing industries and the remainder in the services. One hundred and fifteen enterprises already implanted in Tunisia have been extended, including 93 operating in the industrial field.

Mr. Bettaieb said that the Government is planning to elaborate an "investment map" to identify the opportunities in the country's different regions, as well as create a national structure for investment, single interlocutor whose mission will be to co-ordinate among the various stakeholders and economic operators.

The minister pointed out that a specific portal for investment will be created and it will post all data and make known the services provided by the support structures. "This will make businessmen's and investors' task much easier and help them achieve their projects in optimum conditions."

### Meeting with Mr. Sakihito Ozawa

12 May 2012

Mr. Elyes Kasri, Ambassador of Tunisia, had a meeting on 11 May 2012 with Mr. Sakihito Ozawa, Member of the House of Representatives of Japan (The Democratic Party of Japan).

The meeting was an opportunity to have a fruitful exchange about means and ways to further strengthen the bonds of friendship and relations of cooperation between Tunisia and Japan and the possibilities of promoting the exchange between parliamentarians in both countries.



## POLITICS

### Former Prime Minister Béji Caid Essebsi announces creation of party named "Tunisia's Call"

16 June 2012

Former prime minister Béji Caid Essebsi officially announced on 16 June 2012 the creation of a party named "Tunisia's call" at a meeting held at the congress palace in Tunis.

Caid Essebsi announced the creation of a party which was, in the start, an initiative meant to gather various political forces.

He had indeed published last January 26 a declaration that had aroused numerous reactions.

It was a call on national political and intellectual forces to "gather round an alternative likely to reinforce political balance and secure peaceful changeover of power."

### Curfew Lifted

15 June 2012

The night time curfew imposed on 13 June 2012 in 8 regions in Tunisia has been lifted on 15 June 2012.

This decision was made after "the improvement in the security situation and to preserve citizens' interests", says a statement of the Interior and Defense Ministries.

The curfew had been imposed following riots by salafis and other groups in the districts of Greater Tunis and inland regions over an art exhibition they considered insulting to Islam.

## DIPLOMACY

### Prime Minister Jebali visits Morocco

15 June 2012

Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali said, on 15 June 2012 in Rabat, that Tunisia and Morocco share common values and a firm political will to boost bilateral relations.

At the end of his talk with his Moroccan counterpart Abdelilah Benkirane, Mr. Jebali stressed, in a statement to the media, the two governments' will to hoist bilateral relations to the level of the two peoples' expectations, a will "that needs materialization on the field," he added.

The Prime Minister, who started on 14 June 2012 an official visit to Morocco to take part in the 17th Tunisian-Moroccan High Joint Committee, visited on 15 June 2012 the mausoleum of King Mohamed V and King Hassan II.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by the Foreign Minister and the Minister in charge of Economic Affairs.

### **NCA Speaker confers with UFM Secretary General**

15 June 2012

National Constituent Assembly (NCA) Speaker Mustapha Ben Jaafar received on 15 June 2012 Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UFM) Fathallah Sijilmassi and stressed the need to revive the union mechanisms, objectives and working methods.

He highlighted the positive role the UFM can play in favour of the Maghreb region and the Palestinian cause.

The economic and social challenges facing Tunisia, he said, require that the UFM contribute to favour the creation of new job opportunities for youths, launch projects and ease the movement of people and goods.

Sijilmassi affirmed for his part that the Union seeks to promote a common future and a fruitful co-operation between the two shores of the Mediterranean, emphasizing Tunisia's role in the Mediterranean and Maghreb areas.

He also spoke of the structural developments within the Union for the Mediterranean likely to enable it to take a new start that would serve the interests of the region peoples.

### **'Our Visit Is a Message of Support and Its Nascent Democratic Process,' Says the President of the United Nations 66th General Assembly**

11 June 2012

The President of the United Nations 66th General Assembly Nassir Abdulaziz al-Nasser said, at the end of his meeting on 11 June 2012 with Foreign Minister Rafik Abdessalem, that his visit to Tunisia was meant "to assert all kinds of support to Tunisia and to its nascent democratic process."

He also affirmed the General Assembly's readiness to make all its expertise available to "reinforce democracy and human rights, good governance and anti-corruption fight in the country where the first spark of the Arab Spring was ignited."

For his part, Mr. Abdessalem pointed out that his talk with the UN official had been an occasion to discuss the various issues posed on the Arab scene, especially as he is the voice of the Arab group in the Assembly, to reach a joint vision about what is happening in the region and the world.

The meeting also turned on the positive developments Tunisia is living through, its democratic transition process and the general impact it is having on the Arab region, and the vision Tunisia has of the UN reform system, being a country very much attached to Arab and African groups' joint vision.

### **Tunisia elected member of Unesco Governmental Commission of Intangible Heritage Safeguard**

11 June 2012

Tunisia has been elected by 74 votes as member of the UNESCO Governmental Commission of Intangible Heritage Safeguard for the 2012-2016 period, at the 4th session of the Signing Parties' General Assembly of the International Convention for the Safeguard of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, held on June 4-8 in Paris.

This announcement was made public in a communiqué, on 11 June 2012, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The press release also adds that Tunisia will endeavour during its tenure within the commission to step up international efforts to protect the intangible heritage and contribute to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels about the importance of intangible heritage.

### **Tunisian Govt takes part in 101st Session of International Labour Conference**

7 June 2012

Tunisia took part, May 30-June 14, in the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva.

In his capacity as guest of honour to this meeting and in tribute to the Tunisian Revolution, President Mohamed Moncef Marzouki delivered a speech on the occasion.

The conference held under the theme of: "Building a Future with Decent Work," discussed several issues related to social welfare, the youth unemployment crisis, the fundamental labour laws and the implementation of pertinent international conventions.

A meeting of solidarity with the Palestinian people was scheduled on the sidelines of the conference.

### **Tunisia hosts the Fifth Arab-Chinese Ministerial Co-Operation Forum**

31 May 2012

Under the slogan of "Deepen the strategic cooperation and promoting common development", the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of -China-Arab Cooperation Forum was held on 31 May 2012 in the city of Hammamet in Tunisia.

Prominent figures attended the conference to encourage all forms of collaboration with the Chinese Government in the strategic sectors.

The Tunisian President, and Prime Minister attended the meeting and the Foreign Minister Rafeek Abdessalam welcomed his Chinese counterpart YANG JIECHI. The Tunisian Minister said that the meeting was very successful as all the Arab and Chinese participants had agreed on sharing a common vision and goals in the future.

The Secretary General of the Arab League Nabil El Arabi expressed his satisfaction with the initiative because it created an alternative way of collaborating in the region as the Arab and Chinese counterparts truly believe in the importance of expanding their political, economic and cultural relations.

The Chinese Foreign Minister talked about the importance of promoting dialogue and collective collaboration in all the strategic sectors. He also addressed the Palestinian cause and expressed the Chinese government's full support to the creation of a Palestinian state. The Minister called on Israel to free the Palestinian prisoners as a way of encouraging stability in the region.

### **Preparations for next Maghreb Summit discussed as President Marzouki confers with AMU S.G.**

25 May 2012

Preparations for the Maghreb Summit scheduled next October in Tunis were discussed at a meeting held on 25 May 2012 in Carthage between President Mohamed Moncef Marzouki and Arab Maghreb Union Secretary General Habib Ben Yahia.

Secretary General Ben Yahia briefed President Marzouki on the ongoing preparations to "ensure the success of the Summit and give it a historical dimension on the way of materializing the unity of Maghreb peoples and their aspirations," a statement of the Presidency of the Republic said.

Mr. Habib Ben Yahia said the regional situation and changes taking place in the Maghreb countries have given the needed impetus to the restructuring of AMU institutions which "now should meet the expectations of peoples of the region," the statement added.

## **BUSINESS & ECONOMY**

### **French SMEs are determined to stay in Tunisia**

13 June 2011

"The French enterprises implanted in Tunisia are determined to stay and vitalise their activity", said Mr. Jean François Roubaud, Chairman of the General Confederation of Small-and Medium Sized Enterprises in France (CGPME).

Mr. Roubaud said that his visit in Tunisia aimed to develop the B to B business relations between the Tunisian and the French SMEs, favour exchange of visits between the Tunisian firms and their French counterparts and establish a win-win partnership between the two countries.

He said that Tunisia, given its strategic location, constitutes for France an access gate to the different markets of the Mediterranean basin underlining that "Tunisia is undoubtedly the most open country in the region where an extraordinary democracy is being drawn."

Mr. Roubaud underlined interest to develop partnership between the Tunisian and French SMEs, notably, in the sectors of ICTs, mechanical-electronic, innovation and food industry.

"Planet SME 2012," an annual event for the SMEs economy, which is due on June 28, 2012, in Paris, will be an occasion, he said, for the Tunisian enterprises and their French counterparts, to identify business and investment opportunities offered for the two countries.

### **U.S. Loan Guarantee supports Tunisia's democratic transition**

11 June 2012

The United States reaffirmed its strong commitment to the people of Tunisia and their democratic transition by signing a sovereign loan guarantee agreement with the Tunisian government.

The loan guarantee, signed June 8 in Washington, will help the government of Tunisia access international private capital and strengthen its capacity to manage the transition to an economically sound and prosperous democracy.

The guarantee will make it easier for Tunisia to borrow money from international markets to provide critical services to its citizens, such as vocational and technical training, higher education and programs that help banks provide financing to small businesses, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

"I am honored to be signing this agreement today with [Tunisian] Ambassador [Mohamed] Tekaya," said Mara Rudman, assistant administrator for the Middle East Bureau at USAID.

"Coming on the heels of Secretary Clinton's May 17 acknowledgement of the \$100 million Cash Transfer Agreement between our two countries, this loan guarantee agreement represents the continued strong commitment of the American government and people to the success of Tunisia's transition."

The amount of the Tunisian bond to be guaranteed by the United States has not yet been determined, but is expected to be more than \$400 million for a seven-year bond. This will be the first international bond Tunisia has issued since 2007, and could be a turning point in Tunisia's access to and integration in global capital markets, USAID said. Final terms, pricing and the face amount of the bond will be determined at official entry into force of the agreement and shortly before the financial closing, which is expected to be in June or July, the aid agency said.

The U.S. Congress authorized the use of up to \$30 million to provide this loan guarantee facility for Tunisia. The signing of this loan guarantee agreement fulfills the commitment made by Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner and Tunisian Finance Minister Houcine Dimassi on April 20, when they signed a declaration of intent to proceed as quickly as possible on a loan guarantee agreement that would allow Tunisia to move forward with a debt issuance.

The U.S. loan guarantee for Tunisia is also an example of how the Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition has helped transitioning countries reintegrate into international capital markets under reasonable financing terms to fill their sizable financing gaps and to allow their enterprises to invest in job-creating projects, USAID said.

"We look forward to continuing to work with the Tunisian government and people as they lay the groundwork for a future of economic prosperity that empowers women and youth, strengthens civil society, and solidifies the foundations of democracy," said William B. Taylor, special coordinator for Middle East transitions at the State Department.

### **Gulf Businessmen's Forum, to Be Held Next Year in Tunisia**

11 June 2012

A Forum of the Gulf Countries' Businessmen will be organized early next year in Tunisia by the Union of the Chambers of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Countries, its secretary-general Abderrahim Hassan Naqi announced.

Holding this Forum in Tunisia is meant to introduce the country's investment opportunities. Briefing the media at the end of his meeting, on 11 June 2012, with Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali, Mr. Naqi said that under the former regime, Gulf countries' businessmen had faced such problems as bad governance and corruption, and the land ownership law.

He called on the Tunisian government to identify one single structure tasked with the foreign investment incentives.

The Gulf countries' market, which is characterized, according to him, by "flexibility," is in need of the Tunisian skilled labour force which has shown its competence on the foreign markets.

It is worth reminding out that the Union of the GCC Chambers, founded in 1979, is a non-profit organisation representing the private sector in the Gulf Co-operation Council countries.

### **'TuNur' project to make Tunisia the world largest solar energy exporter in the world**

7 June 2012

British "Nur Energie" Group is planning to achieve the "TuNur" project, an integrated project of solar energy exporting connecting Tunisia's sunny desert to the European power markets.

This project, which consists, in the beginning, in developing in the "Regim Maatoug" locality, governorate of Kebili, of thermodynamic plants, or CSP plants, which could produce stable and predictable electricity thanks to the capacity of storing heat for the night power production.

With a capacity of 2 gigawatt (GW), the project whose construction period is over the 2014-2020 period (2012-2014 engineering stage), will install a land and sea power line over 1,000 km to connect the Tunisian Sahara Plant to the Italian power network. The start of the power exportation towards Europe is scheduled for 2016.

The global cost of the project is about 10 Billion Euros (about 20 Billion Tunisian Dinars). Once achieved, this project whose employment capacity is estimated at about 21,500 jobs (1,500 direct jobs), will help Tunisia to be the largest exporter of solar energy in the world, according to TunNur Tunisia company.

During a meeting with the press, held on 7 June 2012 in Tunis, Kevin Sara, project manager said "that the project will be a reference for energy projects in the Arab Maghreb region."

"It will have positive socio-economic and technological impacts insofar as most of its components will be made in Tunisia, which will help establish an industrial fabric based on advanced and innovative technologies," further said the manager.

Mr. Sara went on saying that all the economic, technical and environmental feasibility studies confirmed the possibility to achieve the project in Tunisia, notably as regards the environmental impacts. The project will not need building material which will be harmful to the Tunisian Sahara.

The project concerns only 0.2% of the Tunisian Sahara surface.

The "TuNur" Company is ready to give Tunisia, freely, a part of its power production, i.e. 133 MW (the equivalent of one third of the Rades Power Plan production), while leaving the choice to the Tunisian government to fix the period to have this share.

Mrs. Noura Laroussi Ben Lazreg, Director-General of the National Energy Mastery Agency (ANME) announced that Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali, had decided, after his meeting with managers of the "TuNur" project, the creation of a technical committee to study the project and other similar projects for obtaining authorizations.

### **Q1 GDP Rises 1.2 Percent**

24 May 2012

Tunisia's GDP rose by 1.2% in the first quarter of 2012 at constant prices, compared with the fourth quarter of last year, according to statistics published by the National Institute of Statistics (INS).

In annual slide, the growth rate reached 4.8%, whereas it had dropped by 3.7% in the first quarter of 2011 as a result of the January 14 Revolution. The resumption of growth (+4.8%) results, according to the INS, from the rise in the added value of most sectors, including manufacturing industries (+4.6%), following the increase in production of chemical, mechanical and electrical industries (+ 19.8% and +3.7% respectively).

Non-manufacturing industries' production rose as well, notably in the mining sector (+20.4%).

## **TOURISM**

### **Tunisia: Guest of honour at 10th Session of Arab Tourism Ministers Council**

26 May 2012

Tunisia took part, as guest of honour, in the 10th meeting of the Executive Committee of the Arab Tourism Ministers Council held from May 26 to 27 at the headquarters of the Arab Tourism Organisation (ATO) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Tourism Minister Elyes Fakhfakh, who represented Tunisia in this event, conferred, on 26 May 2012, with Prince Sultan Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz, President of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities.

The meeting discussed ways to increase the flow of Saudi tourists visiting Tunisia.

Several tourism projects to be carried out in Tunisia were presented on the occasion. They include, mainly, the Arab Fund for Tourism Financing and the Tourism Village.

On the sidelines of his participation in this meeting, Mr. Fakhfakh signed with Mr. Bandar Bin Fahd Al Fahid, Chairman of the ATO, a co-operation agreement between the Tourism Ministry and the ATO. The tourism minister also conferred with his Jordanian, Sudanese and Qatari counterparts.

As part of the promotion campaign of the Tunisia destination, Tunisia (Tunisian National Tourism Board) had taken part in the 4th edition of the Riyadh Travel Fair held from May 15 to 18.

Over 300 exhibitors from 36 countries took part in this exhibition.

### **Tunisian Tourism Minister: 'A Road Map to jump-start tourism sector (2012-2013)'**

23 May 2012

The Tourism Ministry issued a 2012-2013 road map aimed to revive the tourism sector whose revenues fell by 41% in 2011, said on 23 May 2012 Tourism Minister Elyes Fakhfakh.

Mr. Elyes Fakhfakh specified that the document targets notably the diversification of the tourist product, presently by 80% of seaside tourism. It also aims to increase the country's tourism earnings which stagnated at about 1.8 billion Euros since 2001, he said.



The Minister established a rapid diagnosis of the sector's situation, "weakened" for fifteen years and suffering from a profitability problem of hotel units, which had a direct impact on investment and on the hotel trade indebtedness.

The purpose at present is to develop other products, such as well-being, health, golf, business tourism, as well as cultural, Saharan and environmental tourism.

A comprehensive study was conducted on the sector's indebtedness to tackle this issue and encourage investment in tourism, by means of reforming the investment incentives code, further said the Minister.

He announced that he will start, on May 24 in Brussels, talks with the European Commission on the Open Sky issue to work out a road map for opening skies with Europe. These negotiations will last one year and take into account the interests of the national carriers.

### SPORTS

#### **London Olympics 2012 - Open Water - Oussama Mellouli qualifies in 10km Marathon**

11 June 2012

Tunisian swimmer Oussama Mellouli qualified for the first time in the 2012 London Olympics Open Water 10km Marathon event after finishing first in the Olympics qualifier in Setubal on 10 June 2012.

The Tunisian World and Olympic Champion in 1500m freestyle clocked 1h 45'18", ahead of Canadian Richard Winburger (1h45'30") and Bulgarian Peter Stoychev (1h45'34").