

H.E. ALI MOKRANI, AMBASSADOR OF ALGERIA

“The EU is Algeria’s largest trading partner and relations are also very close at the institutional level”

Ambassador Mokrani, welcome to Brussels. Could you give us your first impressions about your stay here and broadly outline the priorities you will pursue during your tenure here, both with the European Union and with the Kingdom of Belgium?

Allow me first of all to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Mrs. Barbara Dietrich, CEO; as well as to the entire team of the prestigious magazine “Diplomatic World” for their valuable gesture by offering me this wonderful opportunity which enables me to address their kind readers.

As for my impressions upon my return to Brussels henceforth in the capacity of Ambassador, having previously served as the number two of the Embassy, I can tell you that it gives me immense pleasure and I am honoured to be back living and serving here in the beautiful capital of Belgium and the European Union. Being posted to one of the world’s most important diplomatic hubs, like Brussels, is a rewarding and exciting challenge in a diplomat’s career.

My mission is quite complex and exciting, as I am accredited not only to Belgium, but also to Luxembourg at bilateral level and to the EU and its institutions, NATO and the World Customs Organization (WCO) on a multilateral level. For me it is an absolute priority to spare no effort to promote and strengthen Algeria’s relations with these two countries and the aforementioned multilateral organizations. Algeria and the EU are bound by an Association Agreement since 2005.

The EU is Algeria’s largest trading partner, nevertheless, relations are also very close at the institutional level. Algeria is a member of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue and maintains a constructive dialogue with this latter, as well as with the World Customs Organization, with which Algeria has developed a fruitful cooperation.

On November 1st, Algeria celebrated the 68th anniversary of the 1954 Revolution that restored the sovereignty of the Algerian state. How have these past anti-colonial struggles influenced and help us understand present-day Algeria?

The year 2022, which is approaching to its end, was marked by the celebration of the 68th anniversary of 1st of November 1954, year of the outbreak of the Algerian War of Independence ending 132 years of French colonialism and which culminated in the country’s independence on the 5th of July 1962.

The glorious historical struggle and the Algerian people's commitment to fight against colonialism cemented the foundations of the Algerian Nation. The celebration of the 1st of November as a national holiday is guided by the aim and desire to keep alive the spirit and the achievements of the revolution such as freedom and sovereignty attained by the country after seven years of fierce struggle.

This is where Algeria's commitment and loyalty to the principles of the Algerian Revolution originate from, both at internal and external levels. This crucial and major cornerstone serves as a foundation for the promotion of freedoms, national pride and independence through the enshrinement of these values in the revised Constitution of February 2020 guided by the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune who spares no effort to successfully implement the construction of a new Algeria backed by its people, in particular its youth, based on the rule of law, democracy, inclusive socioeconomic development, fight against corruption, openness to the rest of the world and the principle of living together while insisting on the participatory approach with regard to civil society.

November 1st also constitutes the foundation of the Algerian diplomacy, whose main doctrines include mediation in the resolution of conflicts, such as the peace process in Mali, the support for a way out of the crisis in Libya or the constant support for the just cause of the Saharawi and the Palestinian peoples in the exercise of their inalienable and imprescriptible right to self-determination.

In this context, it should also be emphasized that Algeria has recently been brilliantly re-elected, just like Belgium, to the UN Human Rights Council. Furthermore, Algeria is a candidate for a seat as a non-permanent member on the UN Security Council for the period 2024-2025 with the aim of working with a view to promote respect of the principles of the UN Charter and to make Africa's voice heard.

Algeria assumes an active and leading role in the stabilization of and co-development with its sub-Saharan neighbours as well as within the African Union. Recently, my country successfully organised the Arab Summit, which resulted in the strengthening of intra-Arab relations and the promotion of the Palestinian cause.

Algeria firmly believes in the values of neutrality and non-alignment. My country is a member of the Arab Contact Group on the Ukrainian Crisis and has furthermore applied for membership of the BRICS group with the aim of asserting its assets as an emerging country.

In July 2022, Algeria approved a New Investment Law to stimulate the development of Algeria's natural resources, technology transfer, job creation, and Algeria's export

capacity. What are the main changes of this Law compared to the previous Investment Promotion Law of 2016, in order to facilitate foreign investments in Algeria?

In July 2022, Algeria adopted a new Foreign Investment Law. This legal framework is completely different from the previous law of 2016. The new law was drafted after a wide range of consultations with business circles and experts while taking into account international standards in terms of its content, its objectives as well as its modus operandi regarding the application of the law.

It enshrines legal certainty for foreign investments, transparency, an equal treatment with domestic investors, the right to appeal, the establishment of the Algerian Investment Promotion Agency, access to numerous benefits and incentives on the basis of size, type, sectors and installation areas.

This new law ends the so-called 49 percent versus 51 percent rule and opens the door to attract broad and autonomous foreign investment. This new law also aims to promote national priorities, such as economic diversification, building a competitive industrial sector, promoting exports outside from the hydrocarbon sector, wealth and job creation, technology transfer and mutually beneficial partnerships.

It helps attract and support foreign investors in a country the size of a continent, endowed with immeasurable advantages in terms of its domestic market, but also in terms of fossil and renewable energy sources, regionally oriented basic infrastructures, a young and skilled workforce, and a strategic geographical position serving as a gateway for Europe to the Mediterranean region and Africa.

The launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the construction of the Trans-Saharan highway coupled with the Algeria-Nigeria optical fibre link are structural elements for continental integration and the development of Euro-African relations.

In these difficult moments for Europe's energy security, how can Algeria and the EU strengthen cooperation in the field of energy? What potential does the renewable energy sector (solar, green hydrogen, etc.) hold for Algeria?

Nowadays, the news all over the world, but particularly in the EU, is largely dominated by the energy issue. Algeria is a long-standing and reliable partner for the EU when it comes to gas supplies. In July 2003, a Strategic Partnership Agreement was concluded between Algiers and Brussels.

The 4th meeting of the Algeria-EU High Level Energy Dialogue – co-chaired by the Algerian Minister of Energy and the European Commissioner for Energy – was held in

Algiers on 10 October 2022. Parallel to this, the 2nd Algeria-EU Business Forum on Energy took place on the 11th and 12th of that same month.

These meetings culminated in operational conclusions to further promote relations in the fields of gas as well as new and renewable energies. Algeria has a huge potential in carbon-free energy, such as hydrogen or solar energy – with a total sunshine duration of 3,000 hours per year and the EU, with its technology and investment, is ambitiously aspiring to develop a win-win partnership in that field.

The completion of the Algeria-Nigeria Gas Pipeline Project is also a prospect that would contribute significantly to further strengthening this partnership. Algeria and the EU share common goals on Climate Change Resilience under the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Algeria is very interested in exporting its surplus electricity production to Europe via submarine cable links. Moreover, a third gas pipeline to Italy, called Gasdotto Algeria–Sardegna Italia (GALSI), in addition to the two already in operation, is in the launch phase, with the prospect of increasing gas exports to 100 billion cubic meters. On another level, a Memorandum of Understanding on hydrogen has been lately signed with Germany.

The year 2022 marked the 60th anniversary of relations between Algeria and the Kingdom of Belgium. How has the multifaceted cooperation between the two nations evolved over time and what are the prospects for the coming years?

Indeed, the year 2022 coincides with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Algeria and Belgium. During these six decades, Algiers and Brussels developed traditional bonds of friendship and cooperation. Both countries have immense potential respectively, and there is a shared willingness to further promote a fruitful partnerships and economic opportunities in their mutual interest. A comprehensive and diverse legal framework has been put in place to facilitate further broadening and strengthening bilateral relations in the future.

Belgium is Algeria's leading trading partner in the Arab world and the African region. Renewable energy, particularly in the fields of hydrogen, waste recycling, logistics, transport, digital technology, vocational training and higher education are the main sectors offering strong and concrete potential for cooperation and partnerships between the two countries. The exchange of visits, at both political and economic levels is on the agenda for 2023.

On the human dimension, a large community of Algerians that lives in a peaceful and integrated way in Belgium contributes to cultural exchanges between the two peoples and to the development of relations between the two countries in general. For its part, the Algerian community in Luxembourg, although less significant, plays an important role in bringing the two countries and peoples closer together.

In this regard, Algeria will never forget the Belgian friends' contribution to its struggle for liberation from French colonialism. celebrating and honouring their memory is a duty to transmit to the younger generation the values for which they sacrificed themselves.

To wrap up my words, allow me to highlight the fact that Algeria shares same views with Belgium and Luxembourg on many current issues of common interest at multilateral level.

May the new year of 2023 bring peace to the world and success and happiness to the staff of your esteemed magazine!