

## **Algeria – Netherlands: a promising relation**

Algeria commemorates, at the beginning of this November, a particularly important date of its contemporary History. It is indeed the first of November 1954 that the Algerian people decided to take in hand its fate and to turn over the darkest page of its long history; that of 132 years of colonization and domination.

It is the day on which the Algerian people decided to make all sacrifices, including the ultimate sacrifice, the self-giving, in order to achieve its aspiration to freedom and dignity. Almost one million and a half martyrs was the price of this freedom. More than an armed uprising, the war of liberation that has begun that day was a real revolution against the colonial system, a revolution that shaped the personality of the Algerian people and forged its values and principles, which guided its moving forward. The notions of freedom, independence, self-determination of people and solidarity are immanent values for the Algerian people.

The solidarity that the fighting Algeria benefited from Brother countries, neighboring countries and friend countries is binding the independent Algeria. It is naturally that it constitutes the cornerstone of its foreign policy, mainly the African one. It is in this solidarity that there is good reason to draw out the foundations of the commitment of Algeria to support the striking people for their freedom and self-determination. It is also in this solidarity that one can draw out the foundations of Algeria's contribution to the resolution of the conflicts, often wished and requested, in Africa and Sahel. It was the case in Eritrea, Guinea, Niger, Mauritania and more recently in Mali, where the implication of Algeria was concluded by the signature of the Agreement of peace and reconciliation of 2015.

To reach this result, Algeria had succeeded, under the impetus of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, to create a dynamic of peace, to establish a serious, methodical and well-made dialogue between the actors of the Malian crisis, and, especially, to involve in this process all the external actors and partners of Mali, mainly the neighboring countries as well as other States and international organizations.

And in this respect, I would like to invoke the eloquent testimony of Mr. Bert Koenders, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, who declared during the dinner offered in his honor, on June 9th, 2016, by the Council of Arab Ambassadors in

*The Hague: "Two years ago, I celebrated Ramadhan every evening in Algeria with a good friend of mine, the Algerian Ambassador who is in this room. This was when I was working as the special representative for the Secretary General of the United Nations in Mali. And what I really enjoyed was the solidarity, the warmth and strength of people fasting together and of course at that time in Mali, Algeria was of the intelligence to organize also peace meeting during Ramadan. It created spirit of togetherness. Sitting together, the government and other forces, instead of fighting each other, talking about the northern part of Mali."*

What does appear, in fine, from this declaration and that I would like to highlight, is the full implication of Mr. Koenders and the Netherlands in the quest of peace and stability in Mali and in the Sahel Region. Mr. Koenders brought, thanks to his personal commitment and high qualities, a decisive contribution in the implementation and the deployment of the MINUSMA, and thus to the stabilization of the situation in Mali, in a particularly complex and difficult context. In this vein, the Netherlands supplied a significant assistance through military staff and logistics, mainly air assets, with the provision of helicopters, a contribution that was so precious for the realization of the objectives of United Nations. This commitment of Mr. Koenders and the Netherlands are clearly compatible with their consciousness that the peace and stability in this region have a direct impact on the Security of Europe, even in terms of migration, an issue that dominates the political debate today.

Algeria and the Netherlands decided to build on this friendly and sincere cooperation in favor of the peace in Mali and the Sahel region, in order to undertake a re-energization of the bilateral relations, which were moreover always good, since their establishment in 1604.

Within two years, Mr. Ramtane LAMAMRA, the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, has paid two visits to The Hague, while Mr. Koenders, in his capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs, has visited Algiers followed by the visits of Mrs Lilianne Ploumen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, and Mr. Henk KAMP, Minister of Economic Affairs. During this period, three cooperation agreements were signed in the sectors of agriculture, renewable energies and harbor activities. The bilateral cooperation took a new dimension and is diversifying more and more. The second Algerian-Dutch mixed-commission, held in The Hague, on March 9th, 2016, was an occasion for both parties to boost the bilateral cooperation, on the basis of an ambitious road map aiming at the consolidation of the economic and technological cooperation in

diverse sectors in particular agriculture, industry, Water resources, harbour activities, energy ...

The current challenge consists in the strengthening of these relations and expanding the commercial dynamism, while realizing a diversification and an extension of sectors concerned by this cooperation, dominated at present by hydrocarbons. In 2015, the Netherlands were the 5<sup>th</sup> customer of Algeria and its 12<sup>th</sup> supplier, with around 5 billion dollars of exchanges.

More than being a reliable supplier in energy products for Europe and the Netherlands, Algeria is also an important economic partner due to the dynamic potential of the Algerian market and the opportunities offered for investors and Dutch products. In the same time, Algeria works hard to diversify its economy and finds in the Netherlands a partner of choice to develop its agriculture, hydraulic sector and transport network.

Algeria, which has gone through a tragic period and has lonely faced a wave of large-scale terrorism, did not wait for the last events to alert against the danger of terrorism and the security problems related to it. Algeria did not stop pleading to achieve a cooperation with good faith and a coordination of international efforts in the struggle against this transnational phenomenon.

Algeria who succeeded in curbing this phenomenon and in restoring peace and security in the country through the national reconciliation policy, initiated by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, has since undertaken the implementation of a scope of structural reforms that have deeply transformed the institutional and political landscape, and metamorphosed the economic and social situation of the country.

These structural reforms have enabled Algeria to reach all the Millennium Development Goals. According to the latest ranking of the UNDP, it is a country with a high human development index. It ranks 88<sup>th</sup> worldwide and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Africa.

The country looks nowadays as a pole of peace and stability and a real bastion against terrorism which threatens the region and the rest of the world. Algeria's natural resources and the dynamism of its economy offer real potentialities of growth, development and investment.

For several countries, including the Netherlands, Algeria is definitely a reliable partner.