

Tunisia Whets Brazilian Entrepreneurs' Appetite

Contributed by Alexandre Rocha
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The promotion of Brazil-Tunisia relations will proceed today in the city of São Paulo, the largest business center in Brazil, where the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce is going to promote a business meeting with participation of the Tunisian Minister of Foreign Relations, Abdelwahab Abdallah.

"Due to the complementary aspect this meeting has with the seminar in São Paulo, I expect more profound relations between both countries in the future," stated the Brazilian Foreign Minister, Celso Amorim, Tuesday, January 17, at the closing of the meeting of the Brazil-Tunisia Joint Commission, in Brazilian capital Brasília.

But the business possibilities have already started being discussed. On Tuesday, Abdallah met with the Brazilian Minister of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade, Luiz Fernando Furlan.

According to diplomat José Mauro Couto, special advisor to Furlan, who participated in the meeting, Abdallah showed interest in developing joint projects in the area of phosphates.

Tunisia is a great producer of this kind of product. Brazil, in turn, is a great importer, as phosphates are used in the production of fertilizers. The idea, according to Couto, would be to process the input in Brazil, or attract Brazilians to the sector in Tunisia.

Another sector considered of high potential is that of civil construction. With various projects in the area, Tunisia may offer opportunities to Brazilian construction companies. The topic was discussed both at the meeting between Furlan and Abdallah, as in the meeting of the Joint Commission, which included the participation of representatives of some construction companies.

"Tunisia has a series of projects for modernization of the country capital and other locations, and there are therefore possibilities for partnerships," stated Fernando Jacques, the director of the Africa Department at the Brazilian Foreign Office (Itamaraty).

Furlan made use of the meeting to promote the Brazilian industry. He told Abdallah that over 60% of the country export basket is made up of industrialized products.

As examples he mentioned the regional jets produced by aircraft maker Embraer, airplanes that, in his evaluation, are ideal for use in the Mediterranean region.

The minister of Development also addressed the possibility of cooperation in the areas of exploration of oil in deep waters, transport of gas and alternative fuels.

"Minister Furlan showed great interest in Tunisia and there will be other contacts," stated Abdallah.

Business

Apart from the schedule at the Arab Brazilian Chamber, a new meeting between the Brazil-Tunisia Business Council has already been scheduled, this time in Brazil. The last one took place in Tunis, in November 2005.

In the Arab Chamber Space, the organization's event hall on Paulista Avenue, Abdallah is going to participate this afternoon in a seminar about business and investment opportunities in Tunisia.

After that will come business roundtables between Brazilian companies and representatives of Tunisian companies in various sectors who are accompanying the Foreign Minister.

The Arabs have been on an official visit to Brazil since Monday, January 16, as part of a delegation led by Abdallah.

The areas of interest to the Tunisians include the automobile, construction, and agribusiness sectors. The country wants to expand its purchases of sugar, pepper, beef, fish, and coffee and sell such food items as dates and spices, as well as closing deals involving Tunisian olive oil, which could be packaged in Brazil.

In the fertilizer segment, Tunisia intends to meet Brazil's need for phosphate imports and suggests that the product be processed in Brazil.

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