

Brazil Looks for a Greater Role in Building Libya

Contributed by Isaura Daniel
Wednesday, 14 May 2008

Brazil's Foreign minister, Celso Amorim, discussed the need for a direct flight between Brazil and Libya with authorities in the Arab country. Amorim visited the Libyan capital after participating, on Sunday, in a ministerial meeting between India, Brazil and South Africa in Cape Town.

In Tripoli, Amorim met the minister of Foreign Business, Abderrahman Chalgam, and the minister of Public Works, Abuzeid Omar Dorda. Brazil has been trying to improve relations with the Arab country, which is in North Africa.

According to a spokesperson for the Brazilian Foreign Office (Itamaraty), the importance of a direct flight was one of the matters discussed. Currently, the only direct flight between Brazil and the Arab world is to Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates.

Amorim also spoke to Chalgam and Dorda about bilateral and even trilateral cooperation. That is, he also discussed cooperation between the two countries and another, which, in this case, would be African. With the minister of Public Works, the discussion was around Libya-Brazil cooperation, and also included Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe.

With the Foreign Business minister, multilateral cooperation was also discussed, especially in the United Nations (UN). According to the Itamaraty, Amorim has already known both of the ministers with whom he met for many years.

The Brazilian Foreign Minister and Chalgam also discussed the participation of Brazilian companies in the Libyan market. There is a chance for greater operation there, mainly in civil construction. Amorim also met with representatives of Petrobras and Odebrecht in the Arab nation.

Petrobras has been in Tripoli since 2005 and is prospecting an offshore block, the result of a contract the company obtained in a local government tender. Construction company Queiroz Galvão also operates in Libya.

The operation of Brazilian construction companies in the Arab country involves from urban infrastructure, in the areas of water supply, sewage, drainage, public lighting, telephony, street building and urbanism, to the construction of airports and highways. The Queiroz Galvão contracts in the Arab country are worth US\$ 500 million, according to the company.

The minister of Public Works of Libya, according to the Itamaraty, praised the efforts being made by Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to generate closer ties with the Arabs.

It was Lula's initiative to organize the Summit of Arab-South American Countries, whose first edition took place in Brasília, in 2005, and he has already visited several Arab nations. The president of Brazil visited Libya in December 2003. Since then, relations between Brazil and the Arab country have grown expressively, even in the trade area.

Brazilian exports to the country rose from US\$ 52 million in 2003 to US\$ 238 million last year. In the first four months of this year, they rose to US\$ 78 million. Among the main products exported by Brazil to the Libyans are ores, meats, sugar, butane, tobacco and granites.

Sales from Libya to the domestic market, however, are much larger. The country had revenues of US\$ 530.9 million with exports to Brazil between January and April this year. The products shipped were oil and naphtha.

Anba