

A health market open to all

INTERVIEW WITH ABDELMALEK BOUDIAF

MINISTER OF HEALTH, POPULATION AND HOSPITAL REFORM, PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA



ABDELMALEK BOUDIAF was born in N'gaous Wilaya of Batna (East of Algeria) After graduating in his university studies in political sciences, Minister Abdelmalek Boudiaf worked as a university professor and was nominated in various administrative positions, notably, Wali of the Provinces of Ghardaia, Constantine and Oran. He is the author of many publications. He has been Minister of Health, Population and Hospital Reform since the 11 September 2013.

Pharmaceutical research using biotechnology is a top priority

What are your aims and objectives for the visit to London by HE Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal and the Algerian delegation?

Besides the realisation of ongoing projects in the health sector that will be discussed in the London forum, I think that the visit of His Excellency Abdelmalek Sellal will constitute a major stage in developing further the bilateral cooperation in all the domains and show that the achievements realized in a short time are only a small sample of an enormous field of opportunities. In the light of the achievements in the health sector and in other domains, British businessmen must know that Algeria is not a captive market but an attractive market open to all who adopt the win-win logic.

GSK and AstraZeneca already have significant presences in Algeria and British companies participated in the new University Hospital of Tlemcen. What further British involvement would you like to see in the Algerian health and pharmaceutical sectors?

In the pharmaceutical domain, we would like to see British companies investing in the full process production of essential pharmaceuticals, both medicines and vaccines. The pharmaceutical research in the area of innovative medicines resulting from biotechnology represents perspectives to which we attach special interest. In other sectors, the investment in health facilities (private hospitals), in



the production of medical furniture, in medical and surgical equipment as well as the expertise and the participation in the programme designed to develop public health infrastructure, represent growth areas.

How could Britain help Algeria in the areas of preventive medicine, the application of robotic technology in surgical procedures and the fight against certain diseases such as cancer and diabetes?

We are here to attract expertise and pilot projects. I think that we can develop a partnership that includes systems of epidemiological surveillance and warning, the integrated fight against communicable diseases as well as organising the system of cancer treatment. Besides, pilot projects could be concluded in the area of mini-invasive robotic technology. This concerns equipment and training because telemedicine constitutes a key part of the health sector's development programme.

While the government's commitment to expand and upgrade medical coverage and healthcare services in Algeria will prove attractive to foreign pharmaceutical companies, the issues of weak intellectual property rights, approval delays for patented products and restrictions on foreign investment have been cited as disincentives. What is your ministry doing to increase the attractiveness of the sector for foreign investors?

Problems of intellectual property do not exist because we scrupulously implement the international conventions ratified by Algeria. Besides, the period for registering medicines is being brought up to the best standards in force. But the process is subject to the clinical experts' approbation in order to decide the timing of their registration, and the obligation of the commercialisation in their country of origin. In addition, the registration time for medicines produced locally in Algeria, whatever the nationality of the investment, has been greatly shortened and constitutes an important advantage for the investor. In general, the density of the health care network and the universal access to health care covered by medical insurance and by public funds represent appreciable comparative advantages for every organisation investing in our health industries.