

A new era of cooperation

By **H.E. AMAR ABBA**

AMBASSADOR OF ALGERIA TO THE UNITED KINGDOM



AMAR ABBA graduated in diplomatic studies from the National Administration School in 1972. After postings in Angola, Brazil, Geneva, Tanzania and Greece, he became Director General for Multilateral Relations in 1997, Ambassador to Russia in 2001 and Director General for International Economic Relations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2008. He has been Ambassador to the UK since 2010.

The official visit by Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal, from the 9th to the 11th of December 2014 to London, represents the fruit of a number of years of excellent cooperation between Algeria and the United Kingdom as well as the beginning of a new phase, characterised by the building of a solid partnership between our two countries and the increasing involvement of our business communities.

It represents the crowning of a number of years of cooperation and rapprochement that have been marked by historic visits by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to the United Kingdom in July 2006 and that of Prime Minister David Cameron to Algiers in January 2013.

These years have allowed the establishment of our relations to be set within a legal framework by the signing of a number of agreements between our two governments, especially in the consular sector and that of defence, as well as the establishment of mechanisms to ensure dialogue and cooperation, especially the bilateral committee and the mechanism for strategic dialogue concerning matters of security. These agreements and mechanisms function in a completely satisfactory way, and have contributed to better understanding between the leaders and institutions of our two countries.

In addition to the oil and gas industry, within which British companies such as BP, Shell, BG, Petrofac and a number of others have for many years had a strong presence in Algeria and are traditional partners for our country, these years have also allowed the establishment of regular contacts between the Algerian and British business communities in other areas. These contacts have improved the awareness of companies with regard to the immense potential for cooperation that exists between Algeria and the United Kingdom.

Thus, between 2006 and 2014, a number of British companies decided to establish themselves in Algeria, whether in banking (HSBC), detergents (Unilever), pharmaceutical products (GSK and AstraZeneca), construction of hospitals (International Hospitals Group) or education.

At the same time, a remarkable growth of trade flows was recorded between the two countries from £1 billion in 2010 to £4 billion in 2013.

The visit of Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal represents the beginning of a new stage of our cooperation in that it takes place at a moment where our two business communities are becoming aware in a more precise way of the multiple benefits that more in-depth cooperation can bring to our companies and our countries.

In fact, although globalisation gives rise to challenges for all nations, the Algerian and British people understand more and more the urgency of establishing new directions and building partnerships in order to face these challenges. These partnerships are no longer a choice but have become a necessity.

Algeria, a country of 40 million inhabitants, at the centre of the western basin of the Mediterranean, gives privileged access to the African continent, within which it is the country with the largest land mass, and has many natural resources, especially gas and oil.

The financial ease and political stability that it enjoys have allowed it to launch an ambitious development programme, especially with regard to infrastructure. One of the major concerns of the Algerian authorities is that of modernisation and diversification of the economy, so as to reduce its over-dependence on hydrocarbons.

In this regard, a number of opportunities arise for economic cooperation between Algeria and the United Kingdom. Of course, by deepening partnerships within the sectors that I have just mentioned, but also by launching new projects within the key sectors of agriculture, ICT, tourism, and supporting Algeria in the modernisation of its financial sector – an area in which British companies have a unique know-how. The delegation accompanying Prime Minister Sellal is important not only because of the number and level of executives that make it up, but also by the variety of sectors that they represent. These executives have come here with the desire to progress towards a qualitatively new stage in our relations. Most of them have projects which are identified and ready to be submitted to their British counterparts, including terms of finance.

I would like to reiterate how much Algeria is open to British companies and to what extent it is determined to build, with the United Kingdom, a win-win partnership to the benefit of our two countries. **E**