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03 May 2010

## **A coffee break with... Samir Ben Abdallah, President of the Chambre Syndacale des Fabricants de Lingerie Tunisiens**

**Samir Ben Abdallah explain us the advantages of bringing production back to countries closer to Europe, like Tunisia.**



- Could you tell us what, for outsourcers, are the advantages of bringing production back to countries closer to Europe, like Tunisia?

*Production in Tunisia offers European manufacturer many advantages. Let's take Italy as an example: thanks to its closeness to Italy (a one-hour flight from Rome, an hour and a half from Milan, 20 hours by ferry from Genoa), Tunisia can provide rapid turnaround on orders for Italian clients. In the same way, the flexibility shown by Tunisian companies allows production of those small quantities currently requested by the market situation. What's more, Italian companies can use Italian fabrics for their orders. Pursuant to Decree-Law 72, Tunisian exporters have in-house customs clearance, with their own customs officers and bonded warehouses. This flexibility allows rapid temporary importation of all fabrics, exempt from customs duties. So an order sent from Italy on the Friday is cleared through customs in the Tunisian company the following Monday and can be sent back to Italy on the Saturday of the same week. An order can therefore be turned around in ten days from receipt of the Italian fabric and even faster if the fabric is already in Tunisia. This flexibility means that Italian and European companies do not need to send their orders so far in advance, as they are obliged to do with other countries, and allows much faster response to market changes.*

- What are the medium- and long-term development opportunities in Tunisia? In this context, what is the role of the Underwear Show in Tunis?

*Thanks to its bank and tax system, Tunisia has become a very popular choice with investors. Exporting companies benefit from numerous advantages, in particular total exemption from corporate income tax for a period of ten years. The law provides certain guarantees for foreign investors: total freedom of investment and holding of 100% of capital, repatriation of dividends and profits from the transfer of capital and freedom of exchange for operations on current accounts with the possibility of operating with bank accounts held abroad. The labour market is extremely flexible and working hours can be adapted to suit the needs of the company with a part of wages based on productivity. Given the same qualifications and training, the wage of a Tunisian engineer is one fifth that of his peer in countries in Southern Europe. Tunisia is the fifth European distributor and absorbs 96% of the total of exports in this sector (2.9 billion euro in 2008). This includes 206 Italian companies, which produce most of the Italian brands, like Dolce & Gabbana, LA PERLA, PRADA, DIESEL, VALENTINO, Roberto Cavalli, MaxMara, MISSONI etc. Thanks to the country's political and economic stability, foreign companies dislocated in Tunisia benefit from a very encouraging economic climate for development of their production, above all due to the fact that the state has put in place a system of universities and professional education (30 schools, institutes and training centres) that covers almost all the supply chain and provides the market with people having increasingly more specialised skills. A textile- and clothing-oriented competitive hub, which ensures a driving role for the sector, with an innovation-centric strategy. This was the background for the first underwear show in Tunisia, Lingerie-MED ([www.lingerie-med.com](http://www.lingerie-med.com)), which expresses this sector's awareness and provides a real showcase for visitors, showing all its know-how and maturity. This first edition was an undisputed success, registering participation by 50 exhibitors from five countries in the Mediterranean basin and attendance by over 8,000 visitors from nine different countries.*

- MarediModa - IntimodiModa was the first exhibition that understood the outsourcing potential of the Euro-med area and has for this reason been imitated by others. How do you judge the cooperation with MarediModa?

*The MarediModa show has always supported the sector and has always encouraged Tunisian companies to show there. It was the first to understand the interest for Euro-Med outsourcing because it allows Italian companies to find a nearby competitive supply chain. It is an intelligent approach that has been developed in close collaboration with Mare di Moda and the Chambre Syndicale des Fabricants de Lingerie Tunisiens ([www.csn-lingerie.com](http://www.csn-lingerie.com)), together they organised the visit by Italian fabric producers to Tunisia, promoting B2B meetings with Tunisian businesses. This exemplary collaboration has allowed very close successful business relationships to be set up between Italian fabric producers, considered to be some of the best in the world in terms of creativity and Tunisian outsourcers, who are attempting to go from manufacture as subcontractors to co-contracting and the finished product.*

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