

**Mr. Taoufik BACCAR, Governor of the Central Bank of Tunisia and Mr. Afif CHELBI, Minister of industry, energy and small and medium-sized businesses chaired on Wednesday 18 February 2009 in Kasserine, works of partnership and investment enhancing day.**

42 projects representing a global investment of 16.7 MTD and likely to create some 1788 jobs were approved by banks and investment companies out of 51 projects presented during this day.

This includes 24 projects in the agricultural sector amounting to some 4.233 MTD (82 jobs), 14 in the industrial sector for some 10.030 MTD (520 jobs), 3 for projects in services with some 800 thousand dinars (27 jobs) and a project in handicraft that amounted to 1.7 MTD (1159 jobs).

In his intervention, Mr. Taoufik BACCAR underlined that investment promotion is essential in this critical situation, given its role in boosting development and employment. Therefore, the banking sector interventions in this area grew by 14% in 2008, with a 30% progress in granting investment loans.

The Governor of the BCT, stressed the need for the banking sector to assume its role as per the established rules through deep study of the presented projects to ensure their sustainability and safeguard investment and jobs. He added that the decrease in the key rate from 5.25% to 4.50% represents a major incentive to investment and helps to reduce costs.

He indicated that the presidential strategy in this area targets development of banking services and boosting of corporate financial basis to further develop the banking sector.

Mr. Taoufik BACCAR and Mr. Afif CHELBI visited on this occasion the Alfa rope and bale company (SCMB) and the packing and aluminum processing company (CETRAM).

They have also inaugurated the business incubator at the high school of technological studies (ISET) in Kasserine.

An agreement was concluded on this occasion between the Industry Promotion Agency (API) and the ISET – Kasserine concerning management of business incubators and other agreements related to funding of these incubators by the bank to finance small and medium-sized businesses (BFPME), the investment company in west-center and the national company of cellulose and Alpha pulp (SNCPA). More agreements were concluded in order to accompany new promoters and help them achieve their projects in the best possible conditions.