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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

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SUBJECT: IDA credit of
\$5 million to Tunisia

The International Development Association, an affiliate of the World Bank, today extended a credit of \$5 million to Tunisia for secondary and technical school construction. The credit is the first made by IDA for education, and is also the first operation in Tunisia by either IDA or the Bank.

Tunisia's development planning lays great stress on education. The country has few natural resources; although it has almost the same land area as England or New York State, about two-thirds is infertile or desert. In these circumstances, improvement of the living standards of the four million inhabitants is particularly dependent on the development of human skills to form the basis for more productive agriculture and the expansion of industry and services.

On becoming independent in 1956, Tunisia inherited an efficient but small educational system based on French and (to a lesser extent) Islamic influences. This system provided an excellent education to a minority of the country's population, but urgently required expansion to meet modern needs. An Education Reform Act was passed in 1958 and a 10-year program, 1962-1971, has now been adopted, with the objectives of universal primary education and a great expansion of the secondary school system. The latter includes schools providing a general six-year high school course, specialized

technical high schools, and so-called middle schools which offer three years of training with a practical bent for children who cannot attain full secondary school level or who cannot afford to spend another six years without employment. The middle schools are intended to provide the pupils relatively quickly with the basic skills needed in the lower ranks of industry, government and business.

The 10-year educational program is expected to cost the equivalent of \$210 million, of which almost two-thirds will be spent on secondary and middle schools. During the next three years, the Government intends to spend \$31 million equivalent on the expansion of secondary and middle education and the IDA credit of \$5 million will help to meet this cost, providing just over half the financing for the construction and equipment of six schools for which the need is particularly urgent.

A part of the credit will finance an extension of the Ecole Normale de Professeurs Adjoints in Tunis. This is a training college for teachers for the new middle schools and the first half of secondary schools, and is at present housed in overcrowded and unsuitable conditions. Also in the Tunis area, the credit will help to build the Lycee Technique de Rades (designed to provide a six-year secondary education with emphasis on mathematics and technical subjects) and to construct the new Lycee de Jeunes Filles de Rallia Parc, a secondary school for girls. In Sfax, the second largest city of Tunisia and the economic center of the South, it will finance expansion of the Lycee Technique de Sfax. The remainder of the credit will be used to build two large middle schools. One, the College Moyen et Secondaire de Grombalia, will be situated in the principal town of the Cape Bon area; the other will be at the important agricultural center of Medjez-el-Bab. Altogether, these six

schools will provide places for 4,000 students. Because pupils of secondary school level are scattered, well over half of these places will be for boarding students.

Plans for these schools have already been prepared, and their construction will begin very soon. Meanwhile, long-term plans for future construction are being drawn up, and the Bank is assisting the Tunisian Government in organizing a team of experts of international caliber to advise on the standardization of secondary school buildings and the reduction of building costs.

The IDA credit is for a term of 50 years. Repayment of the principal will begin on February 1, 1973. Thereafter, 1% of the principal will be repayable annually for ten years and 3% will be repayable annually for the final 30 years. The credit is free of interest, but a service charge of $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1% per annum on the amount withdrawn and outstanding will be made to meet IDA's administrative costs.