



CONFERENCE "AFRICA XXI"

COMMUNICATION ON THE THEME "TOWARDS AFRICA'S AUTONOMOUS DEVELOPMENT"

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this international meeting on the future of Africa, organized by the Institute for the Promotion of Latin America and the Caribbean (IPDAL), in partnership with the Royal Institute for Strategic Studies (IRES).

Morocco emphasizes the importance of South-South cooperation and places Africa at the heart of its foreign policy priorities. His Majesty King Mohammed VI has always pleaded for an autonomous development of Africa "with a human face", focused on collective mobilization of African countries to succeed in restoring their unity and to establish Africa's leadership internationally. His speeches highlight three imperatives:

- Believing in Africa.
- Working together and exchanging in a fair way, through a win-win partnership.
- Rethinking Africa and pleading in favour of the continent.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Thinking Africa is a real challenge, because of its immensity, its millennial history, its wealth, as well as the extraordinary diversity of its people, its cultures, its reliefs and its richness.

This explains, in part, why, this continent is poorly known. In addition to the difficulty of producing homogeneous data, the conflict situation prevailing in some parts of Africa makes it hard to fully take advantage of its tremendous potential.

In accordance with the Royal Message of August 30, 2013, addressed to participants in the 1st Conference of Ambassadors of His Majesty The King, the dimension "External Relations of Morocco" has occupied a prominent place in the IRES' work program. As part of this program, the Institute gives a special attention to the African continent.

In this regard, several studies have been carried out concerning, in particular, Morocco's relations with West African, East African and Southern African countries, Morocco's return to the African Union, the prospects of Morocco joining ECOWAS, rural development in sub-Saharan Africa, energy transition in light of the Kingdom's new African policy, intra-African migration, reform of the African Union and security governance in Africa.

In addition, IRES has dedicated its 2018 strategic report to Africa's autonomous development. In this context, Autonomy does not mean being independent. It embodies Africa's ability to decide for itself and make its voice heard in the community of nations.

The 2018 strategic report, which includes a large body of information, sought to display the exceptional wealth of African diversity and to show what African countries have to gain by considering Africa as a continent in its own right, a specific coherent reality across the continent.

Its elaboration stemmed from the observation that Africa is on the move and that, to become autonomous, it needs to renew its perception of the world, a pan-African vision, in favor of a global and civilizational African project.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

A deeply mosaic continent, both in its nature and its culture, Africa reflects its plurality through natural ecosystems (biomes) which shape its landscapes, its peoples, whose culture has been informed throughout ages and thanks to the current coexistence of strongly differentiated institutions, operating both under universal and customary laws. There are, indeed, several faces of Africa, but only one continent, a single cradle, and, in the end, a single living reality.

A land of hope and opportunities, Africa will face, by 2050, several issues. In addition to climate change and its impacts on the continent, which have been extensively discussed in IRES' 2017 strategic report, three major nodes of future challenge Africa:

- **Urban sprawl:** the rapid pace of African urban growth is an unprecedented fact in the history of mankind, both in terms of speed and volume (4% per year on average over the last decade). The urbanization rate, at the continental level, increased from 26.7% in 1980 to 42.5% in 2018 and could reach 56% by 2050¹. Fueled by strong demographic dynamics and coupled with a lack of resources, or weak governance, this urban sprawl represents a major systemic challenge to economic growth and human development among other things, including the quality of the environment which involves the stability of society. However, this urban sprawl may become an excellent accelerator of Africa's development if adequate responses are identified and implemented.

- **Rural transformation:** the African rural world is at a turning point in its history. It is the largest rural space in the world. This heterogeneous space included most of the continent (from desert areas to tropical mountains) and populations: around 741 million inhabitants in 2018¹. Difficult living conditions often prevail: endemic poverty, the undernourishment of nearly one in eight Africans in rural areas ²... Three major changes are shaping the current transformation:
 - the intended or unintended mobility of people: because one fifth of the African continent is practically uninhabitable³ (deserts) and about a third is not very hospitable (arid zones and dense forests) or, quite simply, because nomadism is developed, the millennial mobility of Africans is still often their first condition of survival. For illustration, 75% of sub-Saharan Africans and 54% of all Africans migrate within the continent (2017)⁴. In addition, nearly 4 million Africans were forcibly displaced⁵, either because they had to flee from all kinds of abuses (conflicts, persecutions) or because they were driven out of their lands that others had taken control of or sanctuarized, especially indigenous peoples (Maasai in Tanzania, Pygmies in Cameroon...), or because they have been moved to be relocated elsewhere (territorial planning policies).
 - the dangerous deterioration of natural resources. For illustration, 2/3 of African lands have already been degraded, impacting 485 million Africans⁶. Desertification mainly affects the Sahel, Kalahari and the Horn of Africa. With drought, it causes the loss of 12 million hectares of arable lands each year⁷.
 - the insufficient modernization of African agriculture, in view of the continent's food requirements. Despite the continent's remarkable agricultural potential, 256 million Africans in 2018 were undernourished (19.9% of the population) of whom 239 million are sub-Saharan⁸, this represents 22.8% of the overall population.
- **The individual and collective challenge of security and governance:** the evolution of conflict's forms and associated violence shows that while peace is progressing in the continent, it is far from being fully achieved because security of goods and people is also a matter of governance and education. Since 2000, approximately 48% of civil conflicts worldwide have occurred in Africa⁹. In 2016, the African continent recorded the largest number of conflicts, amounting to 19, followed by Asia with 15 conflicts¹⁰. Neither singularity nor exception, African governance is a hybrid system that is still hesitating between emergency management and long-term preparedness.

Africa must regain confidence in itself in order to face overcome major challenges. It is becoming urgent:

- to invent **a new African model of urban planning**, in response to the continent's specific challenges, in particular in Sub-Saharan countries.
- to initiate **a strong process of rural transformation**, while designing a model of agricultural development, able to produce quickly and in sufficient quantities, in order to feed African population and to contribute to world food security.
- to set up **a security system**, taking into account African specifics rather than just relying on a one-size-fits-all doctrine.

Africa must quickly seize the levers of change, granting it access to the world of tomorrow, namely:

- **The economic transition:** It is time for Africa to embrace the economy x.0 which consists in creating added value, through the transformation of its natural resources and moving to a demand-based economy, using the collaborative economy and hybrid innovation.
- **The energy transition:** On the one hand, it is necessary to stop the degradation generated by current energy systems and, on the other hand, to accelerate the electrification of the continent. Without energy, development cannot take place.
- **The digital transition:** operators on the continent, often faster than their international competitors, have already embarked on the digital battle which has only just begun.

As for the springs of autonomy, they could materialize through:

- **taking into account African human capital in its entirety** (migrants, women, youth...),
- **the development of ubuntu**¹ which generates new models of human progress through education, innovation or mobility,
- **reconciliation of the African with himself** through a broad cultural and economic movement, building on confidence, mobility and new governance.

¹ "Unlike the white man, the African sees the universe as an organic whole that progresses towards harmony, where individuals' parts exist only as aspects of universal unity". Thus, ubuntu is at the origin of a humanistic vision "blind to colours" [of skin] called colour-blindness, spread by Nelson MANDELA and Desmond TUTU.

In addition to changing the perception of itself and strengthening its human potential, Africa, to become autonomous, must leapfrog, in terms of development to take another path towards growth.

Three game changers, which have the ability to both disrupt and accelerate, can make a considerable difference:

- **Africa as the green future's Living Lab:** New problems, whether by their nature or by their magnitude, must be matched with new solutions and new modes of design, centered on end users rather than technique.
- **Continental mutualization** that should be regarded as a solution rather than a denial of the historic transcendence of individual African countries. These countries have everything to gain by considering Africa as a continent in its own right and as a specific coherent reality. From a global standpoint, this mutualization process will eventually become a system of governance operated across the largest area in the world – a visionary leapfrog.
- **Blue Africa:** If fully exploited and well managed, Africa's Blue Economy can constitute a major source of wealth and catapult the continent's fortunes. Surely, Africa needs holistic and coherent strategies to harness this full potential.

The ingredients of these three important projects are already present: the only thing left to do is to move to a new scale, both at the continental and the local one.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As an African land, Morocco is determined to contribute to the construction of a stable and prosperous continent.

By returning to the concert of African countries, the Kingdom has resolved to offer support to its African partners in the process of economic, social and institutional convergence. Morocco's African policy, thus, hinges on bolstering mutually beneficial partnerships with African countries as well as on Morocco's diligent involvement in favor of the continent's major causes.

Morocco has quickly realized that its contribution to Africa's autonomous development can only take a multifaceted character. This contribution is as follows:

- **The governance of the continent** in favor of a more active and united African Union, able to find solutions to the main concerns of Africa, which requires a real reform of the pan-African institution.

- **The African Agenda on Migration**, which the Kingdom put forward to the African Union, aims to be the prelude to a fresh perspective on the migration issue and a key enabler of free movement of people in Africa.
- **Increasing skills and building African human capital:** Morocco is well engaged in training African managers in various fields. Indeed, between 1986 and early 2017, 5,000 African administrative executives fostered their knowledge and expertise in Morocco.
- **The fight against radicalization and the spread of a tolerant Islam:** Morocco shares its experience with African countries in managing the religious field. In 2017, 1,000 imams were trained, of whom 78% came from Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Rwanda and Tanzania.
- **Morocco's contribution to the continental peacekeeping.** In 1960, Morocco took part in the first peacekeeping mission in the Congo (ONUC); since then, it has never ceased to help bring peace to the continent. Currently, according to the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 1,596 Moroccan soldiers are participating to peacekeeping operations in Africa.
- **Morocco's contribution to Africa's economic transition:** Morocco is a stakeholder in Africa's economic transition. Indeed, its contribution is particularly clear in three areas: economic integration, investment and sectors of excellence:
 - Since 2000, Morocco has concluded over 1,000 agreements with over 40 African countries, as compared to only 500 between 1956 and 1999. Nearly 426 agreements have been signed since 2014 with 15 African countries, involving 80 public and private economic operators and 300 African partners.
 - Moroccan direct investment flows to Africa rose sharply between 2007 and 2017, from 114 million to around 1 billion dollars¹¹. In total, over this period, Morocco invested nearly 3.7 billion dollars, or 57% of Moroccan direct investment abroad.
 - Over 1,000 Moroccan operators are present in Africa. From 2008 to 2015, they have invested over 2.2 billion dollars on the continent.
- **Africa's eco-transition:** Morocco is very active in the international debate on climate and environment. On the sidelines of the COP22, held in Marrakesh, in November 2016, Morocco initiated the first Africa Summit of Action which has allowed, in particular, Africa to speak with one voice in favor of climate justice and to set the axes for sustainable co-emergence.

Finally, Morocco has expressed its willingness to contribute, in particular, **to the Agenda 2063 objectives**, targeting the sectors and populations in which Morocco's action would be most effective, both for the African Union and for individual countries.

NOTES

¹ World urbanization prospects: the 2014 Revision. Online database. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. < <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/> >

² IRES analysis _ FAO Database and World Urbanization Prospects.

³ FAOSTAT Database

⁴ IRES analysis _ Data from UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

⁵ IRES analysis _ Database of the Observatory of Situations of Internal Displacement.

⁶ Economic Commission for Africa. Africa review report on drought and desertification. 2007

⁷ Official website of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

⁸ FAO database. <<http://www.fao.org/statistics/databases/fr/>>

⁹ FAO and al. The state of food security and nutrition in the world: building resilience for peace and food security. 2017

¹⁰ SIPRI. SIPRI Yearbook 2017: armaments, disarmament and international security. 2017

¹¹ Foreign Exchange Office.