

Royal Message addressed to the annual meeting of Crans Montana Forum, held in the southern city of Dakhla

13.03.2015

His Majesty King Mohammed VI addressed, this Friday, a message to the annual meeting of Crans Montana Forum, held in the southern city of Dakhla on March 12-14.

Here follows the full text of the Royal message read out by Government Chief Abdelilah Benkirane:

"Praise be to God

May peace and blessings be upon the Prophet, His Kith and Kin

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to send this message to the current session of the Crans Montana Forum on Africa, which is being held under my high patronage, and which has brought together eminent international figures from various walks of life.

I wish you all a pleasant stay in Morocco, particularly in Dakhla, the pearl of Morocco's southern region.

I congratulate you on your choice of theme for the Forum's meeting.

Indeed, the new development model for the Sahara region adopted by Morocco aims to turn this region into a hub between the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa. In this respect, the city of Dakhla will be at the heart of the future African economic hub, which will be devoted to serving peace and stability in the sub-Saharan region.

This new development model is the result of an ambitious policy made possible by a new generation of institutional reforms based on advanced regionalization.

Indeed, the Kingdom of Morocco's ambition is to showcase local specificities, to foster good governance at local level and to devise public policies at regional level that guarantee efficient state action as well as partnerships with local governments.

In this respect, the city of Dakhla is destined to become a platform for multi-form exchange relations between the Atlantic region, the Maghreb and the Sahel.

Therefore, the presence in Dakhla of participants from all walks of life - representing government, civil society, economic stakeholders... - coupled with the important themes to be discussed by the Forum confirm the pertinence of the choices we have made to make sure Africa embraces solidarity and looks resolutely to the future.

I see this as a tribute to the relentless action I have been spearheading in favor of our Continent. Indeed, Morocco has been working untiringly to help forge a modern, bold, entrepreneurial and open Africa; an African continent which is proud of its identity, which derives its vibrancy from its cultural heritage and which is capable of transcending outdated ideologies.

Therefore, I would like, today, to pay a warm tribute to Mr. Jean Paul Carteron, who has successfully drawn on his rich, wide-ranging experience to serve lofty causes through dialogue and sharing.

The reasoned, logical decision made by the eminent institution he represents to convene in the Moroccan Sahara will undoubtedly be a factor for success.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme “South-South cooperation and the development of Africa”, which you have selected for your conference, is both topical and highly pertinent. It reflects a shared ambition to place Africa at the heart of major global geopolitical concerns.

In this regard, the underlying concepts of South-South cooperation should integrate new 21st century perspectives, given the significant impacts of globalization as a multi-faceted phenomenon.

Consistent with the same line of thinking, we have been calling for efficient, solidarity-based cooperation that makes the most of the opportunities offered by triangular cooperation, at regional level as well as with the countries of the North. Needless to say, such cooperation must be rooted in mutual esteem, be based on balanced approaches and show that the interests of the various partners concerned are duly taken into account.

Having made South-South cooperation one of the pillars of its foreign policy, the Kingdom of Morocco has adopted a proactive policy to develop fruitful partnerships with its European, North American and Asian partners. This is precisely the multidimensional partnership model involving several actors that we need to pursue resolutely in order to achieve greater development in Africa.

Our continent bore the brunt of colonization and the Cold War. Sadly, it continues to grapple with the fallout to this day.

In Africa, the borders inherited from colonization often continue to be a major source of tension and conflict. It is up to us - Africans - to innovate in order to turn them into open spaces where fruitful exchange and interaction can flourish between African societies.

Africa is also a continent with many economic, political and cultural fault lines producing multi-faceted crises, at a time when Africa's tremendous human and natural resources should, instead, be a powerful catalyst for regional integration and complementarity to overcome the consequences of the fragmentation Africa was subjected to during the colonial era, and which led to political and ethnic strife.

Furthermore, Africa is a continent with growing and unsettling security issues. Alarming, new transnational perils - including terrorism, organized crime, trafficking in drugs and human beings as well as religious extremism - are on the rise in many parts of our continent. These are major challenges which call for transnational responses and underscore the need for collective and concerted reflection on the security issue.

However, one of the reasons for hope, motivation and a firm belief in our common goals is that Africa today is the continent that has the most significant multi-dimensional assets to embody the future of the world.

- The African continent has had the fastest growing economy since 2000; over this same period of time, its trade with the rest of the world has increased by more than 200 per cent.
- By the year 2050, Africa will have a population of approximately 2 billion people, and our continent will have to harness this tremendous demographic asset properly - particularly African youth - in order to consolidate the continent's standing in the global economy.
- Africa is the continent with the largest potential for natural resources; they should be used to foster sustainable human development for the benefit of African populations.
- Africa is also the continent in which democracy and good governance have been developing and reinforced day after day.

To this end, Africa should free itself from the shackles of the colonial past, look resolutely to the future, be more self-confident and believe in its own capabilities.

Africa needs to develop and support win-win partnerships.

It needs to bolster its share in the global wealth creation chain.

Africa needs to push forward regional economic integration and develop common areas for shared prosperity that allow for the free movement of goods and people.

Africa needs to invest massively in infrastructure and improve the living conditions of African citizens.

Africa must also meet tremendous energy needs to support its development agenda successfully. It has huge potential for renewable energy production which should be tapped to promote sustainable development.

In this respect, the idea of a project devoted to renewable energy in Africa is especially pertinent, given the vast wind and solar energy production opportunities available in African countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean.

Just as pertinent is the need to muster the levers of inter-African cooperation. One of the lessons of history is that economic, political and social interdependence is a prerequisite for progress. That is why we firmly believe in Morocco that isolated development will not succeed.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Morocco has made Africa one of the strategic priorities of its foreign policy. This choice is partly due to geography, since Morocco is part of Africa, but also to history, given its deep, time-honored bonds with Africa, which have shaped Morocco's African culture and identity. This has naturally reinforced Morocco's African calling as a hub for regional advancement, stability and cultural development.

The various visits I have paid to African countries attest to my firm desire to strengthen cooperation with sister African nations. Those visits have led to concrete projects and many cooperation agreements have been signed in different fields.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which has consistently rejected Afro-pessimism, advocates resolute, proactive and solidarity-based action to forge a "new Africa". This is a most cherished wish, and we shall continue to try and pool efforts to fulfil it.

Morocco's African policy is based on a comprehensive, integrated and inclusive approach designed to promote peace and stability, encourage sustainable human development and safeguard the cultural and spiritual identity of our populations, while respecting the universal values of human rights.

This policy derives its originality from the fact that state and institutional actors no longer have an exclusive monopoly over it. Quite the contrary, it is increasingly devised and conducted by private economic operators, with the involvement of civil society organizations.

Morocco's action in this respect aims to support sister African nations in their efforts to build strong economies, through the transfer of know-how, human resource training, investment in key sectors of the economy and the pooling of resources.

Furthermore, and considering the importance of sub-regional groupings, Morocco has been calling for fresh momentum to be injected into the Arab Maghreb Union, which celebrated its

26th anniversary this year. The Kingdom of Morocco has also been a particularly active member of the CEN-SAD, which will hold its next summit in Morocco. Furthermore, my country has been developing closer relations with several other regional groupings in West and Central Africa.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We welcome the initiatives undertaken by your Forum to promote cooperation among African countries bordering the Atlantic. The setting up, on the sidelines of this meeting, of the "Atlantic Africa Club" reflects a shared desire to support development and regional integration in Africa and foster a more proactive policy regarding the Atlantic coast.

Indeed, for many years, this important dimension of Pan-African action has been neglected. Far from being an obstacle, the Atlantic Ocean is a key element conducive to development; it can be a bridge for fostering more openness, interaction and integration between African countries bordering the Atlantic.

Another initiative which deserves to be lauded is the "African Women's Forum", which will serve as a platform for exchange and debate among women participants. This will also be a fitting opportunity for African women to plead in favor of their full rights and to encourage their active contribution to the development of their respective countries. Indeed, our continent needs to pool all available resources and energies in order to achieve the desired objectives.

In this respect, I have always attached special importance to promoting the status of women and advocated greater participation of women in various political, economic, social and cultural spheres. Gender parity, which is enshrined in the Kingdom's new Constitution, is a goal we are seeking to achieve.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding, I wish to pay tribute to the Crans Montana Forum and its President, Jean-Paul Carteron, for devoting the theme of the Forum's annual conference to Africa and Africans. I commend them on their dedicated, untiring efforts over more than three decades to promote closer cultural bonds and coexistence.

The Crans Montana Forum will always find in the Kingdom of Morocco the support needed to promote and expand its action to serve the just causes of peace and development.

I also wish to commend ISESCO and its Director General, His Excellency Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, for having actively contributed to the organization of this important event and for their commendable efforts to ensure its success.

I wish you a successful conference and a pleasant stay in your second home.

Thank you.

Wassalamou alaikoum warahmatoullahi wabarkatouh."