

## **HM the King Sends Message to Participants in Crans Montana Forum**

HM King Mohammed VI sent a message to participants in the Crans Montana Forum, which kicked off Friday in Dakhla under the theme "Africa and South-South cooperation."

Here follows the full text of the royal message, read by president of the Dakhla-Oued Eddahab region, Ynja Khattat:

“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 your assembly as you hold the Fourth Crans Montana Forum, which will address the theme Africa and South-South Cooperation. This year, once again, the Forum is being held in the city of Dakhla.

As you know, Dakhla has special significance in the history of Morocco. Thanks to its unique position, it serves as a strategic link between the Kingdom and regions and countries further south in Africa.

I am pleased to see that the Crans Montana Forum has developed considerably and gained renown with each meeting. It is now a must-attend international event that brings together high-level political decision-makers, representatives of the business community, intellectuals, civil society activists from all walks of life and opinion makers from all corners of the world.

The relevance of the themes addressed, coupled with the quality and diverse backgrounds of the participants, are valuable factors. They make it possible to enrich the debate and explore new horizons, enabling the Forum to serve as a powerhouse for proposals. Above all, they help us look to the future with greater serenity and confidence. All of these features give the Forum an international dimension, bringing Africa - the continent of the future - under the spotlight.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa is at a crossroads. The profound changes under way in the continent are multidimensional. They point to a rapidly changing Africa – a continent increasingly removed from the stereotypes and negative clichés it has been labeled with.

Africa is 30 million square kilometers of opportunity. It has the youngest population on earth. By 2050, there will be 2.5 billion inhabitants in the Continent, half of whom will be under 25 years of age.

These young people will constitute an enormous asset, provided the demographic dividend is managed judiciously. This impressive demographic trend will produce a major change of direction which will, in turn, transform the situation in Africa and the world at large. Young Africans are a precious element in the achievement of development; through them, we have an incredible opportunity for emergence - one on which our Continent ought to capitalize.

To achieve progress, however, Africa needs to muster all its energy and build on innovative, win-win partnerships.

I therefore call on African men and women, especially young people, to mobilize resolutely and effectively in order to rise to the nagging challenges our Continent is faced with and to embrace the dynamic of shared growth.

In addition to building on its resources, Africa should make use of all the means at its disposal to meet the legitimate expectations of African populations. One of the favored tools for Africa's emergence is South-South cooperation.

Morocco is one of the African countries nurturing the ambition and desire to ensure that Africa becomes master of its own destiny. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Morocco has made South-South cooperation an instrument for the advent of a new Africa that believes in its potential and looks to the future.

In fact, this is a constitutional commitment enshrined in gold letters in the Kingdom's supreme law. Indeed, our Constitution stipulates that Morocco undertakes to "strengthen relations of cooperation and solidarity with the peoples and countries of Africa, including the Sahara and Sahel countries (...) and to consolidate South-South cooperation".

As I pointed out in my Message to the participants in the last meeting of your Forum, I have made the bold decision to put that cooperation at the heart of my country's African policy. Under my stewardship, Morocco has shaped a truly innovative South-South cooperation model based on the exchange of knowledge, skills, expertise and resources. This model involves all of the Continent's sub-regions and relevant sectors.

The South-South cooperation initiated by my country, which we see as a means for fruitful, principled partnership with African countries, is meant to be integrated and multidimensional. Whether in the areas of the transfer of technology, the sharing of know-how, the establishment of public-private partnerships in various domains, or training and higher education, Morocco has gained expertise which is widely recognized in Africa.

Over the last 15 years, 1,000 cooperation agreements have been signed with 28 African countries. They concern such diverse sectors as education, health, infrastructure development, training and agriculture. Because it puts man at the heart of its concerns and incorporates the economic, social, cultural, spiritual, security and military dimensions, the Moroccan model is unique.

Morocco, which defines cooperation strategies in the light of sister nations' needs, has an African student population attending Moroccan universities and higher education institutions in excess of 25,000.

The Kingdom is also keen to implement major strategic projects in Africa. I will mention just two recent ones: the first is the Africa Atlantic Gas Pipeline, aimed at reshaping the regional electricity market, and the second concerns the establishment of fertilizer production plants, in cooperation with Ethiopia and Nigeria, with a view to improving agricultural productivity and promoting food security throughout the sub-region.

In order to achieve a mutually beneficial relationship based on sharing and to consolidate existing sub-regional partnerships, Morocco has returned to its institutional family, the African Union.

I therefore call on all African sister nations to get more closely involved in this constructive cooperation by helping to enhance the efficiency of our regional and sub-regional institutions as instruments for the achievement of integration across the Continent.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The South-South cooperation Morocco is implementing has a bearing on issues relating to stability and development in Africa, including migration.

Migration is an opportunity, not a threat. The migration-related crisis the world is witnessing today is not new; nor should it be perceived as inevitable. It calls for greater cooperation, first between African countries, then between the latter and the countries of the North.

As the African Union Leader on the Question of Migration, I proposed, at the 30th AU Summit, an African Agenda on Migration. That Agenda recommends the setting up of an African Migration Observatory and the appointment of an AU Special Envoy for Migration in order to tackle the migration phenomenon properly from a comprehensive perspective.

In this respect, my country has played a leading role in terms of receiving irregular migrants and managing migrant flows on its territory. This inherently humanitarian policy is not just a new

form of solidarity with our African brothers and sisters; it also enhances our immutable commitment to African peoples.

This commitment is not a slogan Morocco brandishes in international forums. In fact, it epitomizes a resolute, irreversible policy of the Kingdom.

Another example of the inter-African cooperation Morocco has developed with the rest of the Continent concerns the fight against the devastating effects of climate change. Indeed, the Kingdom is fully aware of the threat this phenomenon poses to development, peace and security in our Continent.

Clearly, Africa is paying a heavy price in this regard, even though it is responsible for a mere 4 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. As the COP22 host country, Morocco was keen to ensure the Paris Agreement was put into effect through an action-oriented COP during which Africa's concerns held center stage in the discussions. Once again, I call on the countries of the North to honor the commitments they reiterated in Marrakech, particularly with regard to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and financing developing countries' climate strategies.

I availed myself of the opportunity of the global climate meeting to convene the first Africa Action Summit, which was attended by Heads of State and Government of 41 African sister nations. We were thus able to exchange on the challenges relating to the climate change consequences we are facing and agreed on urgent, practical measures to tackle those effects.

At my suggestion, the Summit decided to give priority to the development of the Sahel, and to the Lake Chad Basin, Island States and the Congo River Basin in particular.

During that Summit, Morocco also submitted some concrete initiatives to help ensure food security in Africa. Particularly noteworthy are the Adaptation of African Agriculture project, which is designed to ensure capacity-building for the benefit of agricultural stakeholders, and the Blue Belt initiative, which aims to fight the effects of global warming on oceans.

Similarly, the Kingdom expressed its willingness to share its successful experience in the promotion of clean, renewable energy, the development of responsible agriculture and the sustainable use of marine resources.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our Continent is clearly facing a paradox: it has practically all the natural resources required for sustained human development, and yet African populations are suffering from poverty and marginalization in the global economic system.

Intra-African trade accounts for only 13% of all commercial activity in Africa and represents a mere 2 per cent of global trade. Today, more than ever, the African continent must make the most of globalization.

Africa lacks neither the ambition nor the desire to move forward. However, it needs new, collective types of organization for local administrative and management purposes. It is with that in mind that I have decided to put advanced regionalization at the heart of my country's economic development model.

More than a simple territorial or administrative planning measure, advanced regionalization reflects a strong desire to revamp and modernize state structures in order to consolidate the integrated development of our regions and rally all stakeholders around a common project.

Today, regions are expected to become local governments wielding the kind of powers that enable them to shape their destiny within the framework of the Kingdom's territorial integrity.

My objective is to foster a new form of economic growth in the twelve regions making up Morocco – one that ensures inclusive growth and is supported locally by public and private sector actors. I especially want to enhance national cohesion and increase access to public services in regions with high potential.

In no other place is this reality more obvious than in the beautiful region where you are today, right here in Dakhla: indeed, and as is the case elsewhere in the Southern Provinces, the city has witnessed a political, economic and social transformation. My ambition is to press ahead with this endeavor so that the Moroccan Sahara may reclaim its historical role and serve, once again, as a crossroads in the Continent.

Morocco has consistently expressed a commitment to share its experience in this area with its African partners, through the implementation of bilateral agreements and through the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, which has its headquarters in Rabat.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having embarked on the right course of action, Africa today is firmly on the path to emergence thanks to the wisdom of its leaders and the involvement of its populations in an irreversible democratic process. This will enable the Continent to fulfil its legitimate aspirations for peace and human development, and to ensure optimal use of its potential.

I am sure the Forum which has brought you together today will be an opportunity for you to formulate constructive recommendations and proposals that can help respond effectively to the multifaceted challenges the world - particularly Africa – is currently facing.

I invite you, in this regard, to discuss the benefits of adopting efficient, multidimensional South-South cooperation mechanisms as well as participatory approaches to be used as tools for collective emergence.

I wish your conference every success and would like, once again, to welcome all the participants to the Kingdom of Morocco and to tell them how much I value their important contributions to this meeting of the Crans Montana Forum. I also deeply appreciate the efforts they are about to make to determine the best practices conducive to human development in the countries of the South in general, and especially in Africa.

Thank you.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh."