

HM the king Sends Message to Third Parliamentary Forum of Regions

(Full Text)

HM King Mohammed VI sent a message to the participants in the third parliamentary forum of regions, which opened Wednesday in Rabat.

Here follows the full text of the Royal Message read out by HM the king's advisor, Abdellatif Mennouni.

"Praise be to God,

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

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to send a message to your forum, whose activities have been held under my patronage ever since its creation. This reflects my keenness to ensure the success of the large-scale, structural reform project regarding advanced regionalization. This project is designed to consolidate the modernization of our country's institutions, strengthen the foundations of a nation committed to solidarity, dignity, social justice and inter-regional equality, and promote integrated, sustainable development for the benefit of all citizens.

In this regard, I should like to praise the approach that involves making proposals and engaging in reflection on a regular basis, for which the House of Counselors, together with its institutional partners - the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, the National Human Rights Council and the Moroccan associations of regions and local governments - have opted. These institutions have taken the initiative of convening this third session of the Parliamentary Forum.

I hope this session will provide an opportunity to deepen the constructive debate and find appropriate, creative and practical solutions to enable advanced regionalization to play a pivotal role in the production of tangible and intangible wealth, create employment opportunities - especially for young people - ensure the integration of various social groups, guarantee responsible, broad-based civic participation, and contribute to the promotion of cultural diversity in our country, within the framework of our undivided national identity.

You realize, I am sure, that the optimal implementation of this crucial project does not hinge only on the scope of the powers vested in local governments, particularly regions. In fact, it depends mostly on how those powers are exercised and on the ability of all stakeholders - especially elected officials and councils - to show a keen sense of responsibility, commit to effective joint action and make the provision of services to the citizens the foremost priority, far from any narrow considerations.

Moroccans do not want regional institutions to be mere ink on paper. They want efficient regions that respond to their pressing concerns and contribute to improving their daily lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The measures and important projects we have initiated recently - particularly those relating to devolved administrative powers, to the reform of the social services, to the vocational training system and to the reassessment of regional investment centers' legal and regulatory framework - are part of my overall policy. This policy is aimed at providing the conditions for the success of the regional development agenda, increasing the pace of its implementation and enabling regions to acquire the skills needed to exercise their powers in an optimal way.

In this regard, I wish to emphasize the need to ensure consistency and complementarity with respect to the tasks entrusted to all public institutions, especially local authorities and governments. According to laws governing these institutions, the task of promoting integrated, sustainable development has been assigned to regions. Furthermore, prefectural and provincial councils have been entrusted with the mission of achieving social development in both urban and rural areas, and local governments have been given the mission of providing proximity services to the population.

In this regard, I invite you to help develop a methodical, time-based framework for the various phases involved in the regions' exercise of their prerogatives. It should take into account complementarity between region-specific, shared and devolved competencies. The financial and managerial capabilities of each region are also to be taken into consideration, in addition to modern institutional solutions that have proven to be effective.

All the Kingdom's regions have made progress - albeit at varying degrees - in laying down regional development programs. However, to turn these programs into concrete achievements that tally with sectoral policies, regions need to consider mobilizing funding beyond the usual channels. In this respect, careful consideration should be given to ways of raising funds and diversifying funding sources for the implementation of these programs through various partnerships, such as decentralized cooperation.

In the same vein, I call on regions to seize the opportunity of the upcoming mid-term assessment of regional development programs to strengthen the financing package for the projects included in these plans in order to make sure they are realistic and efficient.

As regards financing, I do not think I need to remind you that state resources are limited. Local authorities are therefore called upon to come up with development plans and programs of action that take these constraints into account. They should, in particular, ensure efficient and effective management of financial resources, and invest them in productive activities that create jobs and respond to the actual, pressing needs of the population.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the second session of your forum, I invited elected officials to devise appropriate solutions to the problems young people are facing in their respective regions.

I have noted, however, that the initiatives undertaken by regions in this regard have fallen short of my ambition. Moreover, they do not fulfil the aspirations of the population segments concerned.

I therefore wish to remind you that this is a priority; no postponement can be tolerated. I wish to insist, in particular, on the need to adopt a participatory approach to develop regional plans and programs for the integration of young people; they need to be consistent with the national strategy for the integration of young people and with regional development programs.

I also call on the government, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council and the other public agencies concerned to support regional authorities in this regard and to help them achieve this objective. The aim is to give concrete substance to economic, social, cultural and environmental rights and to enhance mediation mechanisms at the regional and local levels.

To that end, I invite your forum to think about ways and means to operationalize participatory mechanisms for dialogue and consultation, including how to involve new actors in different social dynamics at the regional level. The goal is to ensure effective participatory work with regional councils and to highlight the inclusive nature of these mechanisms, particularly where women and young people are concerned.

In this respect, I asked local governments in the past to include projects in their programs that would achieve greater social justice and inter-regional equality and reduce marginalization and exclusion.

I call upon local governments to work with the central government as well as with other local authorities to develop programs and projects aimed at achieving capacity building for the middle class in urban areas and foster the emergence of a middle class of farmers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I realize the magnitude of your expectations regarding the implementation of the new administrative devolution charter and of the regional investment centers in their new format, given the practical and extensive powers now vested in those centers.

In this regard, I call on local governments to keep abreast of developments and take into account the swift and profound changes taking place in Morocco and the world around us. They also need to engage in effective, productive partnerships with devolved administrative bodies, the private sector and civil society and stay abreast of the improved investment climate and regulations at the regional and local levels.

Observing good governance principles and linking public office with accountability remain the cornerstone for the achievement of greater institutional efficiency and the promotion of integrated regional and local development.

With that in mind, I urge local governments and all participants in this forum to give their undivided attention to this issue - both in their discussions and in terms of implementation on the ground. Indeed, we do not want good governance to remain a hollow slogan, with no concrete substance or tangible impact in terms of improving citizens' living conditions.

Whether it is human resource development, accountability, modes of governance or modern implementation mechanisms, the list of issues calling out for your attention is long. You need to examine the root causes of the current situation in order to devise realistic, transparent solutions to the problems faced, and effectively meet citizens' demands and expectations.

This is the proper way to increase institutional performance at the national, regional and local levels, enhance people's confidence in institutions and contribute to the achievement of integrated development, social justice and inter-regional equality.

To conclude, I wish to emphasize that I ensure regular follow-up to the conclusions of the Parliamentary Forum on Regions. I hope this session will lead to practical recommendations and proposals that will not only help respond to current and future challenges in connection with advanced regionalization, but also enrich the development model being devised.

May Almighty God grant you every success.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh."