



Special report

25TH Anniversary of King Mohammed VI's Accession to the Throne

In commemoration of the 25th anniversary of King Mohammed VI's ascension to the Moroccan throne, APA News offers a collection of articles, interviews, and opinion pieces that delineate the significant transformations and far-reaching reforms that have shaped Morocco over the past two and a half decades. Since his coronation in July 1999, King Mohammed VI has initiated and overseen a multitude of significant changes that have affected all aspects of Moroccan society.

The series of articles, interviews, and opinion pieces proposed by APA News aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of Morocco's achievements and challenges under the reign of Mohammed VI. Through expert testimonials, citizen stories, and historical perspectives, the series seeks to present a detailed overview of the changes that have shaped modern Morocco.

File prepared by the correspondents and the editorial team of APA News.



His Majesty King Mohammed VI



Mohammed VI: An African King

Since assuming the throne, the current Moroccan monarch has deliberately pursued a policy of deepening the country's integration with the African continent.



Since assuming the throne, the current Moroccan monarch has deliberately pursued a policy of deepening the country's integration with the African continent. Images are also available for review. Furthermore, statistical data is available. A perusal of the principal thoroughfares of most African capitals reveals the ubiquitous presence of the emblems of major corporate entities, financial institutions, and Moroccan small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

This surge of Moroccan economic actors into Africa is situated within a broader context of more than a thousand agreements signed with dozens of African countries since the ascension of Mohammed VI in July 1999. This represents a significant increase from the approximately 500 agreements signed between 1956, the year of the Kingdom's independence, and the early 2000s.

As a result of this "diplomacy of agreements," 45% of Morocco's annual foreign direct investment flows since 2008 have been directed towards Africa, with approximately 90% allocated to Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) area, where Morocco is currently one of the leading African investors.

The expansion of Moroccan groups in Africa is evident across a range of sectors, encompassing both public and private domains. These include banking, insurance, telecommunications, construction, mining, and others. Notable Moroccan banking institutions, including Attijariwafa Bank (a subsidiary of the royal holding company Al Mada), the People's Central Bank, and BMCE Bank of Africa, have expanded their operations to fifteen African countries, thereby facilitating the growth of Moroccan enterprises.

The Maroc Telecom group, which has a presence in nine other African countries, provides services to over 61 million customers. In the insurance sector, the Saham group, which was acquired by the South African company Sanlam in 2018, had previously expanded into 34 African countries.

In the real estate sector, the Addoha and Alliances groups have entered into a multitude of contractual agreements in Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal. The mining group Managem, a subsidiary of Al Mada, has established a presence in West and Central Africa. Similarly, the phosphate giant OCP has positioned itself as a local supplier of fertilizers for crops typically grown in Africa, including cocoa in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

The volume of trade between Morocco and the countries of sub-Saharan Africa

has exhibited an average annual growth rate of over 9% between 2008 and 2016. This has resulted in a surplus of 1.3 billion dirhams in 2008 and 11.9 billion in 2016.

The King has undertaken a significant amount of travel within the continent of Africa. In the twenty-five years since Hassan II's death, the successor has made nearly fifty visits to the continent.

Since assuming power, Rabat has also undertaken a significant expansion of diplomatic initiatives, evidenced by the establishment of numerous new Moroccan diplomatic missions in countries that had previously been overlooked. Additionally, the government has mobilized religious networks with historical ties to the Kingdom, such as the Sufi brotherhoods that have a vast presence throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

Morocco and Africa as an Example

The Noor Ouarzazate Project: Morocco has disseminated its expertise in solar energy to numerous African countries. The Noor Ouarzazate solar complex, which is one of the largest in the world, serves as an exemplar of South-South cooperation, with analogous initiatives being implemented in other African countries.

Education and Training: Annually, Morocco welcomes thousands of African students to its universities and vocational training institutes. The objective of this initiative is to enhance the skills of young Africans and to promote human development on the continent.

Agriculture and Food Security: The OCP Group has initiated a series of programs with the objective of enhancing agricultural productivity in Africa. For instance, the "OCP School Lab" project provides training to farmers on optimal agricultural practices and the efficacious utilization of fertilizers.

Infrastructure and Transport: Morocco has provided financial and technical assistance for the construction of roads, bridges, and other essential infrastructure in several African countries. These initiatives facilitate trade and exchanges between African nations.

Health: Morocco has spearheaded numerous public health initiatives across the African continent, including medical expeditions aimed at combating prevalent diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis. These endeavors have enhanced accessibility to healthcare services for a considerable number of individuals.

King Mohammed VI reaffirmed the importance of Africa for Morocco: "For Morocco, Africa is much more than just a geographic affiliation and historical ties"

The Atlantic Initiative of King Mohammed VI

The Atlantic Initiative of King Mohammed VI, which was launched in November 2023, represents a significant new development in Moroccan diplomatic strategy. This ambitious initiative aims to facilitate strategic access to the Atlantic Ocean for countries in the Sahel region, with the construction of major infrastructure in the Moroccan Sahara serving as a foundation for this objective. The objective is to establish a dynamic development zone for all countries along the Atlantic coast of the African continent, while facilitating access for Sahelian nations to unprecedented economic and commercial opportunities.

The royal initiative is consistent with Morocco's ongoing efforts to reposition its diplomatic engagement with West Africa and to foster South-South cooperation based on a mutually beneficial partnership. Furthermore, it reflects a strategic vision for the future of Africa, in which economic development and regional stability are inextricably linked. By facilitating direct access to the Atlantic Ocean for landlocked Sahelian countries, Morocco seeks to assume a pivotal role in the economic transformation of the region.

The infrastructure projects currently underway in the Moroccan Sahara, encompassing the construction of ports, roads, and industrial zones, are intended to serve as focal points for commercial activity and investment. It is anticipated that these infrastructure developments will stimulate trade between African countries and attract foreign investment, thereby creating employment opportunities and promoting economic growth.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the Atlantic Initiative is its emphasis on a win-win partnership approach. In contrast to alternative models of international collaboration, this initiative places an emphasis on reciprocity and the mutual benefit of all parties involved. It is recommended that participating countries collaborate closely, share resources, and work together to achieve common goals.

It is imperative that this collaborative approach be maintained in order to ensure the sustainability and long-term success of the initiative. The Atlantic Initiative fosters close cooperation between African nations, thereby strengthening regional ties and promoting deeper economic integration.

In addition to its economic objectives, the Atlantic Initiative also has the goal of promoting peace and security in Africa. Morocco aims to bolster regional stability and combat terrorism in the Sahel region through close collaboration with neighboring countries. Furthermore, the Atlantic Initiative encompasses social development and capacity-building programs, the objective of which is to enhance the quality of life for local populations and mitigate the underlying causes of conflict.



When the King Invites Migrants to Settle in Morocco

Morocco has historically served as a transit space for migrants, but in recent times, it has become a destination of choice for thousands of migrants, particularly those from Sub-Saharan Africa. This transition, initiated by the King, has resulted in the country's adoption of a comprehensive national migration policy.



This was a situation with which the country was not adequately prepared. In the early 2000s, the tightening of migration policies in Europe gradually transformed North African countries into a vast waiting room for African candidates seeking to migrate to the Old Continent. As a result of the significant increase in the number of migrants, it became imperative to address the issue.

In light of the stark choices between tightening entry conditions and border controls or mass repatriation of migrants, it became evident that these countries were confronted with a narrow range of options. However, Morocco, under the impetus of King Mohammed VI, devised a nearly unique option in Africa: to massively regularize those among these migrants who wished to and met certain legal criteria.

This policy, which has officially transformed the Kingdom from a transit space for African migrants into a land of welcome, is the result of extensive deliberation by the authorities, with the King himself serving as a key source of inspiration. In accordance with the preliminary plan of action devised by the Sovereign, the government initiated exceptional operations with the objective of regularizing migrants. In total, 43,000 migrants were granted regular status as a result of these two phases of regularization, which took place in 2014 and 2016.

Additionally, Morocco implemented reforms to its regulatory framework with the objective of guaranteeing migrants and refugees access to fundamental services, including education, health, housing, vocational training, and employment. These measures are designed to facilitate their integration into Moroccan society by providing them with the opportunity to engage in the country's economic and social activities.

Mohammed VI's vision for a "responsible migration policy" extends beyond the borders of Morocco. In the context of the African Union (AU), he was appointed to spearhead this issue on behalf of his fellow African leaders. Additionally, Rabat serves as the headquarters of the African Migration Observatory, an institution tasked with the collection and analysis of migration data across the continent.

A Moroccan Contribution to International Efforts

The United Nations Intergovernmental Conference on Migration, held in Marrakesh in 2018, represented a significant milestone in Morocco's engagement with the international community. The conference resulted in the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, which served to further enhance Morocco's reputation as a model for balanced and progressive migration management.



Under the governance of King Mohammed VI, Morocco has positioned itself as a model for migration management in Africa.

Islam, a Royal Ally in Africa

Since assuming the throne in July 1999, Mohammed VI has reinforced Morocco's reputation as a bastion of moderate Islam, espousing opposition to extremism while simultaneously enhancing the Kingdom's religious influence across the African continent.



This is a reality that has existed for centuries. In Morocco, the monarch is regarded as the Commander of the Faithful. This status situates him at the center of the political order and above the Constitution. In addition, he serves as the protector of religion and its principal interpreter. In this capacity, the Sovereign may, when circumstances require, don the attire of a religious leader, as was the case in April 2004.

In the context of the deadly terrorist attacks that were occurring in Morocco and the proliferation of Islamist attacks worldwide, Mohammed VI underscored the imperative of "blocking expedients and other fallacious pretexts and cutting short the troublemakers," a reference to religious extremists and terrorists.

Additionally, the King of Morocco initiated a comprehensive reform of the religious sector. The objective, as he stated, was to revert to the fundamental tenets of Maliki Islam, which are defined by moderation and tolerance, and to maintain the spiritual unity of the Kingdom.

The initial phase of this royal reform initiative entailed the restructuring of the Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs, a pivotal yet antiquated institution entrusted with the administrative oversight of religious practices since 1955.

In order to guarantee a consistent and harmonious interpretation of Islamic principles, the Supreme Council of Ulemas was constituted as the exclusive authority empowered to issue fatwas. This measure was implemented with the objective of limiting the proliferation of disparate and occasionally extremist interpretations of Islam.

The modernisation of religious institutions constituted a pivotal element of this religious renewal project. The Rabita Mohammadia of Ulemas and the establishment of Dar El Hadith El Hassania were reinforced in order to advance the values of tolerance and moderation. These entities have become esteemed centers of excellence for the dissemination of Islamic knowledge throughout Morocco and beyond. A revised charter for the ulemas now forbids imams from affiliating with political parties or private organizations, while affording them enhanced opportunities to fulfill their religious duties. Consequently, the mosque reclaims its function as a site of worship and learning, unencumbered by any obscurantist influence that, prior to the 2003 Casablanca attacks, posed a threat to its spiritual integrity.

The Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams

This model of moderation, as espoused by Mohammed VI, has garnered interest beyond Morocco, with numerous countries, particularly in Africa, expressing a keen desire for training in this area. At present, hundreds of imams and religious guides from various African countries are undergoing training at the newly established Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams. This institution, which serves as a forum for Moroccans, Africans, and Europeans, is now regarded as a model for the dissemination of moderate Islam and a venue for the exchange of cultural and religious traditions.

In 2015, Morocco established the Mohammed VI Foundation of African Ulemas, an institution dedicated to training religious leaders in African countries. Led by ulemas from various African countries and Morocco, along with networks linked to the Tijaniya Sufi brotherhood, which is based in the spiritual capital of the Shereefian Kingdom, Fez, this framework represents a significant instrument of Morocco's considerable religious influence in Africa.



Religious relations between Morocco and Sub-Saharan Africa are rooted in history and culture.



Mohammed VI, the King Defender of Women

Following Mohammed VI's ascension to the Moroccan throne in July 1999, the country witnessed a notable transformation in its human rights reform efforts. One illustrative example is the modification of the family code, which now grants women greater rights.

Prior to Mohammed VI's ascension, those who critiqued the "Moudawana" often characterized the Moroccan Family Code as a compendium of Muslim legal interpretations, predominantly shaped by ultra-traditional and conservative interpretations. Consequently, they were elated when Hassan II's successor initiated the formation of a commission to review this legislation. The overarching objective was to align Morocco's marital and family legal framework with the universal principles of human rights, ensuring that the revised texts adhered to the fundamental tenets of Islam.

The 2004 amendment to the Moudawana introduced substantial alterations to the existing text. In contrast with the preceding version, the reformed code acknowledges the entitlement of an adult woman to enter into matrimony without the approval of a guardian and establishes the concept of shared responsibility between spouses.

In 2011, the adoption of a new Constitution reinforced the existing gender equality guarantees but also identified certain aspects of the Moudawana as being inadequate. Concurrently, the implementation of measures such as the establishment of a national register of female candidates in parliamentary elections and the conferral of nationality upon children born to Moroccan mothers have served to enhance the status of women. Nevertheless, further efforts are required.

For example, the proportion of women in the labor force has declined by 3.5% over the past fifteen years, reaching only 22.4% in 2021. Additionally, a significant number of employed women receive no compensation for their work.

The report, published in March by the High Commission for Planning and titled "Moroccan Women in Figures," provides a stark illumination of the socio-economic circumstances of Moroccan women. This decline in female labor force participation gives rise to questions regarding the efficacy of public policies aimed at promoting gender equality. The issue of women's access to the labor market remains a significant challenge, constrained by structural impediments such as gender stereotypes, underrepresentation in decision-making roles, and the continued prevalence of unpaid domestic labor.

In light of this situation, King Mohammed VI called upon the Supreme Council of Ulemas to contemplate a series of proposals for amending the Family Code, drawing inspiration from the tolerant tenets of Islam. This approach is intended not

only to adapt family law to contemporary demands but also to enhance the coherence between the legal framework and social realities. The role of ulemas, as religious scholars and spiritual guides, is of paramount importance in guaranteeing that the proposed reforms are both equitable, inclusive, and respectful of Moroccan Islamic traditions.

This royal initiative is part of a broader vision of modernization and human development. The process of revising the Moudawana is not merely a reaction to the deficiencies of preceding reforms; it is also an endeavor to align Morocco's legal culture with the legitimate aspirations of its citizens and with the standards set forth by international human rights instruments.

The objective of the proposed revision of the Moudawana is to align Moroccan legal culture with international standards.



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a king Who Reigns and Reforms

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From the outset, Mohammed VI made it clear that his intention was to reign and govern, while simultaneously rejecting any comparisons between the Moroccan monarchy and other monarchies. The successor of Hassan II characterized the Moroccan regime as an executive monarchy.

In response to calls for constitutional reform, the king underscored the necessity of reforming and modernizing political parties, emphasizing that "there is no democracy without democrats."

From 1999 until his speech on March 9, 2011, Mohammed VI never made an explicit reference to the matter of constitutional reform. For a period of ten years, the monarch's speeches eschewed any mention of this topic, even when presenting the autonomy project proposed to resolve the Sahara issue between Morocco and Algeria, with the involvement of the Polisario Front. In lieu of referencing prospective amendments to the fundamental law, the monarch opted for the use of terms such as "institutional governance" and "institutional reform."

In his inaugural address to Parliament in October 2009, the monarch identified three key areas for "profound institutional reform": substantial justice reform, advanced regionalization, and extensive decentralization. The Sovereign adopted an "incremental tactic," focusing on decisions affecting sectors such as justice or local governments.

The establishment of an expert commission to develop a comprehensive regionalization plan was a strategy designed to preserve the status quo and adopt a technocratic approach at a time when public discourse was becoming increasingly active. The approach was not merely confined to the selection of the technical aspects of the constitutional problem; rather, it sought to transform these aspects into tangible challenges that the advisory commission for regionalization (CCR) experts were tasked with addressing.

A Long-Awaited Constitutional Reform

The necessity of constitutional reform had been a long-standing demand of the country's principal political forces. However, it was only in the context of the regional upheavals that the reform process could gain traction. In anticipation of the "Arab Spring," which saw the overthrow of several regimes in the Middle East and North Africa, King Mohammed VI of Morocco initiated a comprehensive



constitutional revision process, aligning his actions with the expectations of his citizens. The objective of this initiative was to reinforce democratic institutions and ensure the protection of individual liberties.

On July 1, 2011, the new Constitution was adopted by referendum with an approval rate of 98%. This sixth fundamental law in Morocco's history, which succeeded those of 1962, 1970, 1972, 1992, and 1996, introduced significant changes to the country's constitutional framework. It is also noteworthy that the new Constitution strengthened executive power, with the appointment of the head of government now directly linked to the results of legislative elections. Furthermore, the recognition of Amazigh (Berber) as an official language and the enshrinement of individual freedoms represented a significant advancement.

Governmental Deadlock

Nevertheless, eight years after its adoption, some changes remain merely theoretical. A number of organic laws are required for the implementation of the new constitutional provisions, but these have yet to be enacted. The legislative process itself has not undergone a substantial transformation. In practice, some constitutional provisions have proven to be a source of impasse. For example, Article 47 stipulates that "the king appoints the head of government from the political party that leads the elections of the House of Representatives," yet does not provide a solution in the event that this party fails to form a parliamentary majority.

This gap, which emerged following the 2016 legislative elections and resulted in a seven-month governmental deadlock, highlighted the necessity for constitutional revisions to prevent future impasses, as observed by numerous political actors and analysts.

The new 2011 Constitution was adopted by referendum with a 98% approval rate.



Tourism: When the Kingdom Aims for the Top 20 Worldwide

The political and economic stability of Morocco under Mohammed VI has contributed to the country's growing reputation as a major tourist destination in Africa and the Mediterranean.

During the Tourism Conference held in Marrakesh in January 2001, King Mohammed VI highlighted the significance of the tourism sector in the country's economic and social advancement. "We are honored to meet with tourism promoters, as we place a high value on the tourism sector as a means of achieving economic and social progress, creating employment opportunities, and increasing the flow of tourists to align with the significant natural and cultural tourism potential of our country," His Majesty stated.

The royal aspirations are firmly rooted. Morocco is fortunate to offer a variety of exceptional tourist landscapes. With nearly 3,000 km of coastline, the Kingdom offers a variety of exceptional opportunities for seaside activities. The historic cities, which have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, offer visitors the opportunity to experience a rich cultural heritage. For those seeking discovery and adventure, the mountains and desert offer a compelling draw.

The Plan Azur, which was launched in 2001 as part of the Vision 2010, formed the basis of the new tourism policy that Mohammed VI was keen to implement. The goal was to position Morocco among the top 20 tourist destinations worldwide by 2010. The plan envisaged the creation of six modern seaside resorts along the Moroccan coast, each equipped with sophisticated infrastructure and world-class amenities. This initiative aimed to diversify the tourism offer, making Morocco an attractive destination not only for its rich cultural and historical heritage but also for its beaches and seaside resorts.

One of the principal factors contributing to Morocco's success in tourism under the reign of Mohammed VI has been the substantial enhancement of infrastructure. The expansion of airports, roads, and public transportation has enhanced accessibility to diverse regions of the country for both international and domestic tourists. For instance, the Marrakesh-Menara airport has undergone significant expansion to accommodate the growing number of visitors, reaching several million each year. Similarly, the construction and improvement of road infrastructures, such as the highway linking Casablanca to Agadir, have greatly facilitated internal tourist travel.

In 2014, the tourism sector represented 14.7% of foreign direct investments (FDI), amounting to 4.8 billion dirhams. Over 50% of these investments originated from countries including France, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Kuwait. For instance, the French group Accor invested a sum exceeding 3.5 billion dirhams in the hotel sector between 2002 and 2012, with plans to invest a further 1.2 billion dirhams between 2012 and 2015. Additionally, Morocco offers investors a range of attractive tax incentives.



Plan Azur

Since the signing of the Open Skies Agreement with the EU in 2006, there has been a notable increase in air traffic, driven by the introduction of low-cost flights. In order to stimulate growth in this sector, the Moroccan government has implemented two strategic plans, "Vision 2010" and "Vision 2020." The objective of Vision 2020 is to double the number of visitors to Morocco, with the goal of reaching 20 million tourists annually and establishing the country as a leading global destination. Nevertheless, despite the ambitious goals set forth in Plan Azur, only three of the six planned coastal resorts have been inaugurated.

King Mohammed VI has consistently regarded tourism as a significant economic sector and a conduit for cultural exchange. "In our view, tourism represents not only a significant economic activity but also a cultural and communicative art form. From this perspective, the development of the tourism sector requires a prudent and sustainable exploitation of the country's rich and varied natural resources and its ancient civilizational and cultural



heritage, which is renowned for its traditions of hospitality. This was stated by the King in 2001.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, international tourism showed signs of rapid recovery. In 2023, international tourism had reached 88% of pre-pandemic levels, with about 1.3 billion international arrivals. Morocco continues to position itself as a top tourist destination, thanks to a strategic vision and sustained investments.

Promotion and Diversification of the Tourism Offer

Additionally, the Kingdom has benefited from a robust and unified international promotional initiative. Morocco's tourism offices have intensified their efforts to present the country in a new light, with a particular focus on emphasizing the diversity of its offerings. Targeted promotional initiatives were implemented in pivotal markets across Europe, North America, and Asia with the objective of attracting a diverse array of visitors. The campaign did not merely focus on the country's traditional attractions, such as imperial cities, vibrant souks, and picturesque kasbahs. Instead, it also targeted niche segments, including adventure tourism, eco-tourism, and medical tourism.

The outcomes of the initiatives undertaken under the Vision 2010 framework were noteworthy. The number of tourist arrivals increased markedly, rendering Morocco one of the most prominent destinations in Africa. Furthermore, the tourism sector has witnessed a notable expansion in revenue, thereby contributing to the national GDP and fostering job creation. As a consequence of this initiative, cities such as Marrakesh and Agadir have become internationally renowned destinations, attracting millions of visitors each year.

Sustainable Tourism and Environmental Respect

One of the principal objectives of Vision 2020 is the promotion of sustainable tourism and environmental respect. Morocco is dedicated to the dual objective of safeguarding its natural and cultural heritage while simultaneously fostering the growth of its tourism industry. In order to encourage eco-responsible practices, a number of initiatives have been implemented. These include the efficient management of water and energy, the reduction of waste, and the protection of natural spaces. Additionally, the country endeavors to foster tourism that is respectful of and beneficial to local communities and their heritage.

In order to diversify its tourism offer, Morocco has concentrated its efforts on the development of rural and mountain tourism. The Atlas, Rif, and Saharan desert regions offer spectacular landscapes and a diverse array of flora and fauna, attracting those with an affinity for nature and adventure. In order to meet the growing demand, adapted infrastructures such as lodges, ecolodges, and trekking circuits have been developed. These initiatives have facilitated the growth of local economies by creating employment opportunities and generating additional income for residents of rural areas.

2023-2026 Roadmap: A New Era

In 2023, Morocco unveiled a new roadmap for the 2023-2026 period. The objective of this strategy is to position the country among the top 15 global destinations by 2026. In order to attain this objective, a number of priority areas have been identified. The enhancement of the customer experience is a fundamental aspect of this approach, with a specific focus on the quality of services provided to visitors.

Another fundamental aspect of this roadmap is the diversification of the tourism offer. The objective is to provide a diverse range of authentic experiences, encompassing everything from sunny beaches to majestic mountains, imperial cities to mystical deserts. This diversity aligns with the evolving expectations of an increasingly discerning international audience seeking novel experiences.

It is anticipated that tourist arrivals in Morocco will continue to increase throughout the forecast period, extending from 2024 to 2028. Fitch Solutions projects that the number of arrivals in Morocco will reach 17.0 million in 2026, which is slightly below the government's target of 17.5 million arrivals by 2026. Nevertheless, the aforementioned estimates

Tourist arrivals are expected to reach
17.5 million by 2026



Mohammed VI, the King of Major Infrastructure

From Tangier to Dakhla, with intermediate stops in Casablanca, Marrakesh, Fez, and Oujda, the major cities of the kingdom have undergone significant urban transformations. These changes, initiated by Mohammed VI, have significantly modernized the urban infrastructure of the Kingdom, thereby enhancing the country's overall developmental capacity.



The CRIs, Pillars of the Development Strategy

In order to modernize and invigorate the Moroccan economy, King Mohammed VI initiated a series of reforms. Among the aforementioned reforms is the restructuring of the Regional Investment Centers (CRIs). These institutions serve to facilitate investment and regional economic development. The CRIs were established with the objective of streamlining and expediting the administrative procedures associated with investment. In response to the directives of King Mohammed VI, these centers have undergone a comprehensive restructuring, evolving into a centralized hub of support for investors, offering a seamless continuum of assistance from the initial conceptualization of a project to its ultimate realization. This transformation is intended to enhance the efficacy and transparency of public services while reinforcing Morocco's appeal as an investment destination for domestic and international investors.

In fulfilling their mission, the CRIs are responsible for overseeing the entirety of the investment process. They provide project holders with the requisite support and guidance services, thereby facilitating the realization of their projects. This integrated approach allows for a more responsive approach to investors' needs and ensures that each project is monitored on an individual basis.

The structural reforms initiated under the guidance of King Mohammed VI have markedly enhanced the business environment in Morocco. As a consequence of these reforms, Morocco has become more competitive and attractive, thereby establishing itself as a favoured destination for investment.

"Under the impetus of the King, the CRIs have undergone reform to become one-stop shops, offering comprehensive support to investors."



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It is a ritualistic practice. Since his enthronement in July 1999, Mohammed VI has made it his practice to travel throughout the kingdom to inaugurate major projects on an annual basis. The construction of new transportation infrastructures, business districts, public spaces, and leisure facilities has resulted in a significant transformation of the urban landscape in Morocco. Moroccan cities have been provided with new residential neighborhoods, contemporary business districts, commercial centers, and economic activity zones. In addition, public spaces have been renovated, gardens and recreational areas have been developed, and new marinas as well as leisure ports have emerged.

The Bouregreg Valley development plan represents one of the most emblematic projects of this urban renewal, having transformed Rabat in significant ways. The program has transformed the riverbank separating Rabat from its twin city of Salé into a modern and attractive urban space, symbolizing the new era of development that Morocco is experiencing.

The transformation of Rabat, the Kingdom's capital, was made possible by the adoption of regional development plans (PDR), which were initiated by King Mohammed VI. The introduction of advanced regionalization legislation has resulted in the requirement for each commune, province, and region to develop cross-cutting programs to be deployed over several years. Although this experience in territorial governance is still recent, having commenced following the municipal and local elections of 2015, it represents a shift towards a culture of planning and performance.

The objective of the PDRs is to make an effective contribution to the development of infrastructure and social facilities, to enhance regional resources, and to strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of regions. This legislative and administrative framework is designed to facilitate economic growth and address social deficits, particularly the lack of basic services in peripheral neighborhoods of major cities and rural areas.

Under the impetus of the King, the Regional Investment Centers (CRIs) have been reformed to become one-stop shops, providing comprehensive support to investors.

The Infrastructures of the Future

During the tenure of Mohammed VI, Morocco has witnessed significant advancements in the realm of infrastructure. In November 2018, the inauguration of the Casablanca-Tangier high-speed rail line (LGV) in the presence of French President Emmanuel Macron signified a pivotal moment in the Kingdom's infrastructure modernization policy.

Since the early 2000s, Morocco has dedicated an average of 40 billion dirhams (equivalent to approximately 3.7 billion euros) per year to the upgrading of its infrastructure, representing a significant increase from the approximately ten billion per year invested between 1980 and 1990. This substantial investment has resulted in the construction of new ports, including the Dakhla Atlantique port, the modernization of railways, stations, and airports, and the redevelopment of activity zones and highways. These developments have attracted investors, economic operators, and foreign tourists.

In recognition of these achievements, the World Economic Forum has commended Morocco for its exemplary efforts, ranking the country first in North Africa, third in Africa, and sixth in the Arab world for the quality and network of its infrastructure.

The Transportation Revolution

The transport sector has been one of the primary beneficiaries of this dynamic. The construction of new highways has facilitated travel across the country, resulting in a notable reduction in travel times between major cities. The high-speed rail line connecting Casablanca and Tangier has transformed rail transportation, offering a swift and efficient alternative to lengthy automobile or bus journeys.

Additionally, Moroccan airports have undergone a notable transformation. The airports in Casablanca, Marrakesh, and Agadir have undergone modernization and expansion in order to accommodate the increased passenger traffic. These

developments have not only enhanced the capacity and quality of airport services but have also reinforced Morocco's position as a regional hub for air travel.

In the port sector, the Port of Tanger Med, which ranks among the largest in Africa, serves as a testament to this transformation. Inaugurated in 2007, the port has rapidly ascended to become a pivotal transit hub for trade between Europe, Africa, and Asia. The port of Dakhla Atlantique, which is still under development, is expected to further reinforce Morocco's position in international maritime trade.

Since the year 2000, Morocco has dedicated, on average, 40 billion dirhams (equivalent to approximately 3.7 billion euros) per year to the upgrading of its infrastructure. This represents a notable increase from the approximately ten billion dirhams per year that were allocated to infrastructure upgrades between the years 1980 and 1990.



Since 2000, Morocco has dedicated an average of 40 billion MAD (more than 3.7 billion euros) per year to upgrading its infrastructure, compared to about 10 billion per year between 1980 and 1990.



Environment: Morocco as an African Pioneer

Morocco has become a leading nation in the field of sustainable development, both within the African continent and on the global stage.



This is evidenced by the country's hosting of the Conference of the Parties (COP22) in 2016, an event that brought together leaders from around the world to address climate change. Over the past decade, Morocco has established itself as one of the most proactive countries in Africa with regard to sustainable development and environmental protection. In his opening remarks at the inaugural national energy conference in 2009, King Mohammed VI stated: "The security of supply, the availability of energy, and the preservation of the environment are of paramount concern." This declaration initiated a series of forward-thinking initiatives with the objective of transforming the country's energy landscape.

In 2010, the King established the Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Energy (Masen), a key institution tasked with developing and implementing an energy policy focused on renewable energy, with a particular emphasis on solar power. Masen initiated the Noor program, which aspires to install 3,000 MW of solar electricity generation capacity by 2020 and 6,000 MW by 2030. In February 2016, the inaugural ceremony of Phase I of the Noor solar thermodynamic complex in Ouarzazate was held, marking a pivotal point in this undertaking.

Furthermore, the Kingdom has made investments in other forms of renewable energy, including wind and hydroelectric power, thereby diversifying its energy mix and reducing its dependence on fossil fuels. These initiatives constitute a comprehensive strategy with the objective of achieving renewable energy production covering 52% of the country's energy needs by 2030.

Notwithstanding these considerable advancements, Morocco continues to confront a number of challenges in order to achieve its ambitious objectives. The energy transition necessitates sustained investment and close collaboration with international partners. Furthermore, it is of paramount importance to cultivate public awareness and encourage the adoption of sustainable practices at all levels of society.

COP22 in Marrakech: An International Showcase

In November 2016, Marrakesh hosted COP22, which was designated as the "Action COP." The event convened 195 countries with the objective of ratifying the Paris Agreement (COP21) and intensifying global efforts to address climate change.

During the tenure of Salaheddine Mezouar, then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Morocco, the country presented a number of innovative initiatives, including the Blue Belt, which was designed to preserve coastal communities and promote sustainable fishing practices. Additionally, the Kingdom introduced a protocol designed to assist African farmers in the restoration of degraded lands.



In addition, 2016 saw the introduction of the "Zero Mika" initiative, which aimed to eliminate the 25 billion plastic bags used annually in Morocco. Despite initial resistance from traders and smugglers, the initiative has been successful in reducing the use of plastic bags in the country.

Morocco persists in its dedication to sustainable development. The endeavors undertaken under the guidance of King Mohammed VI have facilitated Morocco's ascension to a position of prominence in the domain of renewable energy. The Noor solar complex has become a globally recognized model, garnering attention and admiration from numerous countries.





Sahara: King Mohammed VI's Winning Plan

The issue of the Sahara has been a prominent concern in contemporary Morocco since its inception. Following the conclusion of the French protectorate in 1956, King Mohammed V proclaimed the immediate annexation of the expansive desert region in the south of the country, which was still under Spanish colonial rule. Ultimately, the territory was recovered by the late Hassan II following a lengthy conflict with Madrid and then with neighboring Algeria through the Polisario Front. The issue of the Sahara remains a significant national cause under the reign of Mohammed VI.

Since ascending the throne in 1999, the grandson of Mohammed V has implemented a multifaceted strategy to reinforce Moroccan sovereignty over the territory in question. This strategy encompasses a range of elements, including political integration, local development, security, and diplomacy.

One of the most significant contributions of King Mohammed VI to the resolution of this issue is his proposal for an autonomy plan for Western Sahara. In 2007, the plan was presented, proposing the granting of extended autonomy to the region under Moroccan sovereignty. The objective of this initiative is to propose a compromise solution to the decades-old conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front, which is supported by Algeria and seeks the independence of the territory.

The royal plan provides for the establishment of elected local institutions, which are to assume responsibility for the management of regional affairs, including the economy, infrastructure, and social services. In contrast, the plan leaves the sovereign competencies of defense, foreign affairs, and currency to the central government.

This proposal has garnered the endorsement of numerous countries and international organizations. A significant majority of countries in Africa have expressed explicit support for this plan. In Europe, Spain and Germany adhere to it, considering it a viable foundation for discourse on a long-lasting the Sahara issue. In the United States, the has been more radical. On December 10, 2020, Trump announced that the United States government now recognizes Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.

Morocco has been a recognized nation since 1777. In light of these developments, it seems fitting to acknowledge the Moroccan claim to sovereignty over Western Sahara. This was stated by Donald Trump on X (formerly Twitter). "Today, I have signed a proclamation recognizing Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. "The only basis for a just and lasting solution for peace and enduring prosperity is Morocco's serious, credible, and realistic autonomy proposal." Additionally, Trump stated.

Similar to his father, the late Hassan II, Mohammed VI did not await external actions before asserting the Moroccan identity of the Sahara. This issue, as he stated in his August 20, 2022, speech, is now "the lens through which Morocco

perceives its global context." This occurred during the commemoration of the "Revolution of the King and the People," which celebrates a pivotal moment in the anti-colonial struggle and symbolizes the enduring bond between the Cherifian monarchy and Moroccans.

In this speech, Mohammed VI also exhorted Morocco's partner countries to "elucidate" their stance on the Sahara issue and to offer their support "without any ambiguity."

In his radio-televised speech, the King emphasized that he wished to send a clear message to all parties: "The Sahara issue is the prism through which Morocco considers its international environment."

"Furthermore, it is evident that this indicator serves to assess the sincerity of interpersonal relationships and the efficacy of the alliances it fosters," he posited. In regard to certain countries among our partners, both traditional and new, whose stances on the Sahara issue are ambiguous, we anticipate that they will clarify and review the substance of their positions in a manner that leaves no room for doubt. This warning was issued by Mohammed VI, though he did not specify which countries he was addressing more particularly.

In the same speech, the King commended the "decisive" stance of the United States, which had previously recognized the "Moroccanity" of Western Sahara under Donald Trump and subsequently reaffirmed this position following the election of his successor, Joe Biden. Additionally, Mohammed VI expressed appreciation for Spain and Germany's alignment with Rabat's proposal for "internal autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty" as a means of resolving the Western Sahara issue.

Additionally, Mohammed VI has not delayed in addressing the Saharan provinces. Since assuming the throne, the reigning monarch of Morocco has initiated numerous developmental projects with the objective of profoundly transforming this previously arid region into one of the most advanced in the Kingdom. These initiatives include the construction of modern infrastructure, the reinforcement of health and education services, and the promotion of the local economy through investments in agriculture, fishing, and tourism. One of Mohammed VI's most notable projects in the Sahara is the Dakhla Atlantic port, which is designed to transform the city of Dakhla into a regional hub for trade and maritime transportation.

Under King Mohammed VI's drive, no less than 77 billion dirhams, just over 7 billion euros, have been mobilized in the past seven years for the region.



Spain

resolution to approach Donald

Sport: Morocco at the Top of the World

The sports sector in Morocco has undergone a remarkable resurgence, marked by numerous esteemed achievements under the reign of King Mohammed VI. Consequently, Morocco, which reached the semi-finals of the Qatar World Cup, has been selected to co-host the 2030 FIFA World Cup with Spain and will host the Africa Cup of Nations in 2025.



The absence of a defined sports policy has resulted in a dearth of tangible outcomes on the field. Since his ascension to the throne in July 1999, King Mohammed VI has demonstrated a clear affinity for the phrase, which is held in high regard by those engaged in sports. Under his leadership, a comprehensive national sports development strategy has resulted in the construction of cutting-edge sports facilities and the implementation of initiatives aimed at fostering local talent. Morocco's national sport, football, has been particularly advantaged by these sustained efforts.

The Mohammed VI Football Academy in Rabat-Salé serves as an illustrative exemplar of this vision. Inaugurated in 2009, the institution has since become a notable incubator for Moroccan football talent. Notable alumni include Youssef En-Nesyri and Azzedine Ounahi, who have represented Morocco at the international level with distinction and currently enjoy considerable success on the global stage.

This royal policy in favor of sports is evidenced by the impressive performance of Moroccan footballers in the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, where they reached the semi-finals—a first for an African or Arab team.

The achievements extend beyond the domain of men's football. For the first time in its history, the national women's team participated in the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand in 2023. The Atlas Lionesses advanced to the Round of 16, thereby exemplifying the ascendance of women's football in Morocco.

Economic and Diplomatic Impacts

The resurgence of Moroccan football has notable economic ramifications. The fervor of supporters and the enhanced appeal of Moroccan football have prompted a surge in investments within this sector. The growing viewership and revenue generated by sporting events are indicative of this enthusiasm.

The OCP Group, a significant contributor to the Moroccan economy, has pledged its support for the advancement of sports, with a particular emphasis on football. This commitment entails investments in initiatives that aim to reinforce infrastructure and local competitions.

Morocco's success in sports and its continued efforts to develop infrastructure have served to reinforce its position on the global geopolitical stage. The Kingdom has been selected to co-host the 2030 FIFA World Cup with Spain and Portugal, a testament to the international community's confidence in its organizational capabilities. Moreover, Morocco will also host the Africa Cup of Nations in 2025, thereby further solidifying its status as a prominent sports hub in Africa.

Professionalization of Moroccan Football

The Omega Center for Economic and Geopolitical Research has published a comprehensive study examining the evolution and future prospects of the football industry in Morocco. It emphasizes the following points:



The developments have allowed **Morocco** to become an influential **African and Arab destination** in terms of football.



The initiated reforms promote the establishment of professional sports organizations and the management of football clubs at a high level.



The African Policy of King Mohammed VI, as Seen by an Expert

Cherkaoui Roudani, a former parliamentarian and expert in geostrategy and security, describes for Apa News the renewal of Morocco's African policy under King Mohammed VI.

What are the keys to the renewal of Morocco's African policy implemented since the accession of King Mohammed VI in July 1999?

Since the accession of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Morocco has implemented various strategies to position itself as a model of success in Africa and the Mediterranean and Atlantic geopolitical spaces. To achieve this goal, the King has promoted an African ideal based on mutual cooperation. Since then, His Majesty has strongly demonstrated the Kingdom's determination and commitment to the continent's development.

In a world facing climate change, which has particularly severe repercussions for Africa, His Majesty has not hesitated to call on the international community about the dangers of this crisis by defending Africa's food security. To address this major challenge, Morocco has launched the "Triple A Initiative" to adapt African agriculture to climate change. This program represents a proactive and appropriate response to the challenges Africa faces.

To accelerate the implementation of this initiative, Morocco has established several fertilizer production units in Ethiopia and Nigeria, aimed at improving agricultural productivity. Moreover, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals at the African level, Morocco has not hesitated to deploy various bilateral and multilateral strategies to ensure Africa fully benefits from its wealth, as His Majesty emphasized: "It is time for Africa's wealth to benefit Africa."

This royal commitment reflects the unwavering determination of the sovereign, who spares no effort to ensure sustainable development for the continent and its people. Indeed, the African Action Summit, organized and chaired by His Majesty alongside COP22, served as the foundation for several cross-cutting strategies in the Sahel region, island states, and the Congo basin.

This approach demonstrates respect for Morocco's historical anchoring on the continent and aims to build a shared future and destiny. His multidimensional policy is based on active solidarity, coherence of interests, and strategic convergence, thus transcending national interests to promote South-South cooperation based on authentic solidarity with its African partners. To support this vision, Morocco has launched several development initiatives, including debt cancellation for least developed countries and customs exemptions for all products from LDCs.

Thus, Morocco has implemented a multidimensional and integrated vision, both national and international, with the primary goal of building a solidary and secure future by Africans and for Africans. Additionally, it is worth noting that Morocco, as an African country, has its strategic depth located at the southern flank of the continent. In this regard, West Africa is a strategic influence zone for the Kingdom. Everything happening in the region and sub-region impacts Morocco directly or indirectly. Geopolitically speaking, West Africa is of major interest for Moroccan national security. Facing security and economic development challenges in several African regions, Morocco has consistently worked towards

a nexus of development, prosperity, and stability. By calling on Afro-Atlantic countries to adopt a common geostrategy for the Atlantic, Morocco seeks to create a unified front to merge synergies to address global transformations and counter transnational threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. This collective approach strengthens the resilience of Sahelian and Afro-Atlantic countries, thus contributing to the emergence of a new Africa capable of managing its geopolitics and destiny.

The pinnacle of these strategic initiatives for the African continent was marked by His Majesty the King's launch of an action aimed at integrating Sahelian countries into the Atlantic geo-economy through the southern provinces. This royal initiative, which facilitates their access to the Atlantic space, represents a major turning point for their integration into Atlantic geopolitics. Furthermore, this strategy reflects the Kingdom's desire to enhance stability, security, and development for its Sahelian partners.

In the face of accelerating global strategic dynamics, Morocco, through its various strategies, seeks to position Africa as a proactive rather than passive actor in this global transformation.

What have been Morocco's main security initiatives in Africa and how have they contributed to regional stability?

It is imperative to underscore that security is the indispensable foundation for development. As a consequence of the prevalence of terrorism and instability on the continent, Africa is estimated to lose hundreds of billions of dollars each year. In

order to address the rise of extremism, Morocco has implemented a series of security strategies. From a religious standpoint, the establishment of the Mohammed VI Foundation for African Ulemas represents an integral component of this initiative to shape religious conduct and challenge misguided interpretations.

In order to draw international attention to the security issues facing the continent of Africa, Morocco has hosted a number of summits with the objective of countering the threat posed by terrorist groups operating within the region.

In this context, Morocco serves as the host country for the United Nations Office for Counter-Terrorism in Africa. Furthermore, it serves as a co-chair, along with Niger, Italy, and the United States, for the Focus Africa group, which is dedicated to combating the activities of Daesh. Morocco is also serving for the third consecutive time as co-chair of the International Forum on Counter-Terrorism.

In another area, Morocco established the Marrakech Platform, which convenes the directors of African intelligence agencies with the objective of fostering consultation and joint reflection on the security threats facing the continent. Morocco offers unwavering determination and pioneering expertise to its African counterparts in the fight against terrorism. This approach is further reinforced by the exchange of intelligence and information with countries with which Morocco has friendly and brotherly relations. Consequently, as a result of Moroccan expertise in intelligence, numerous terrorist cells have been dismantled in various countries. One such instance occurred in Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire. This collaboration has contributed to the prevention of numerous terrorist attacks, thereby enhancing regional security and stability.

In terms of military defense, Moroccan military institutions, which are renowned for their excellence in academic and scientific training, host officers from a number of African countries on an annual basis, with notable participation at the Royal College of Advanced Military Studies.

In order to enhance interoperability among African armies, Morocco, in collaboration with the United States, organises the African Lion exercises. This initiative serves to enhance the capabilities of African armies in order to enable them to meet global security challenges and issues.

How have King Mohammed VI's diplomatic initiatives altered Morocco's perception on the African and international stage?

The core tenets of the Royal action in Africa are encapsulated in the address delivered by His Majesty the King at the

28th African Union Summit on January 31, 2017. In his remarks, His Majesty stated: Some have postulated that Morocco's dedication to this endeavor is driven by a desire to assume a leadership role within the African continent. In response, it can be stated that the Kingdom's objective is to provide leadership to the continent of Africa. These words are of particular significance, reflecting the Sovereign's vision for an Africa that is both fair and just and capable of facing contemporary challenges.

As a result of His Majesty King Mohammed VI's diplomatic initiatives, Morocco has not only consolidated its position as a leader in Africa but has also strengthened its role as a reliable strategic partner on both the African and international stages. These endeavors have made a substantial contribution to the advancement of security, stability, and sustainable development in Africa, while simultaneously enhancing Morocco's influence and credibility in global affairs. Morocco's elevated status as a leading African nation is substantiated by its active involvement in the African Union and other continental forums, where it champions the advancement of regional integration and the promotion of South-South collaboration. Morocco has demonstrated itself to be a reliable and committed partner in Africa, having cancelled the debts of the poorest countries on the continent, facilitated trade exchanges, and promoted socio-economic development projects across the continent.

Furthermore, a survey report published in 2015 by the financial consulting firm Ernst & Young indicated that Moroccan investors had established a significant presence on the African continent, initiating 13 intra-African investments, representing the highest level of investment in the continent in over a decade. In the case of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Moroccan investments constituted 85% of the total foreign direct investment (FDI) stock.

This approach has also served to enhance Morocco's global influence, particularly in areas such as counter-terrorism, peace promotion, and regional security.

The restoration of strategic partnerships with key countries such as Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria reflects a growing confidence in Morocco as a preferred partner for bilateral and multilateral alliances. The gas pipeline project, which will link Nigeria to Morocco via several West African countries, has the potential to serve as a catalyst for shared economic development, fostering integration and inclusion of regional and sub-regional economies.

Morocco is currently regarded as a key player on the African continent, both politically and economically, under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI. This recognition is

evidenced by the praise bestowed upon Morocco by numerous global leaders, including Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary-General. Guterres has repeatedly commended Morocco for its exemplary leadership in peace and development efforts in Africa, emphasizing an inclusive and collaborative approach.

Similarly, Emmanuel Macron, the President of France, characterizes Morocco as a "driving force in Africa," thereby emphasizing its pivotal role in maintaining regional stability and fostering economic growth across the continent. Similarly, Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, has commended Morocco for its "remarkable leadership" in facilitating South-South cooperation and promoting sustainable development across the continent.

Former President Macky Sall has described Morocco as an "essential partner," particularly engaged in addressing the security and economic challenges facing the African continent. Similarly, Uhuru Kenyatta, former President of Kenya, asserted that Morocco's contributions to Africa's economic development and peace promotion are "exemplary" and beneficial for all countries on the continent. This convergence of appreciation serves to underscore not only Morocco's positive influence in Africa but also its role as a facilitator in regional and continental cooperation. By fostering strategic partnerships, encouraging South-South solidarity, and investing in key sectors such as infrastructure, renewable energy, and healthcare, Morocco has positioned itself as a model of success and a key player in the continent's economic and social transformation.

Consequently, the international perception of Morocco is that of a committed and visionary country, determined to play a central role in Africa's development. The accolades bestowed upon Morocco by global leaders serve to illustrate the acknowledgment of its role as a leader on the continent and its considerable influence on the regional stage. This has positioned Morocco at the center of initiatives aimed at fostering a shared and prosperous future for all of Africa. This commitment was underscored by Joseph R. Biden Jr., the then-Vice President of the United States under President Barack Obama, at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit held in Marrakesh

How did Morocco's return to the African Union in 2017 influence the country's relations with other member states, and what have been the benefits and challenges of this return?

Morocco's return to the African Union (AU) in 2017 was an institutional return. Despite its absence from the AU's Addis Ababa institutions, Morocco never ceased to

develop bilateral relations with African countries. A legal error had been made in a specific context, and the AU was called upon to rectify this situation. The triumphant return of Morocco and the extraordinary reception given to His Majesty by his African brothers testify to the strategic acknowledgment of this error.

The opening of several consulates in Morocco's southern provinces by African countries confirms the intent to correct this error by excluding separatism from pan-African institutions. With an unwavering belief in giving a strong impetus to African action, Morocco chose not to leave the seat empty, thus responding to the requests of brother countries to reintegrate AU institutions. In this sense, Morocco received the support of 28 African countries in its request to rejoin the African Union (AU), a number far exceeding the 27 votes needed for admission. These countries in favor of Morocco's admission had sent a letter to the AU requesting the suspension of the Polisario's membership until issues concerning the legality of its existence were resolved by the United Nations Security Council. Senegal, one of the signatories of the letter, highlighted through President Macky Sall that the request to exclude this fictitious entity is based on international law.

Since then, Morocco has participated in several bodies as an elected member or president, notably the Peace and Security Commission. In agriculture, the Kingdom has launched numerous initiatives to address food security challenges, thus consolidating its role as a leader and strategic partner in Africa. This return has allowed the Kingdom to make its voice heard within the AU. However, the exploitation by some AU member states has been intelligible without reflection. Unfortunately, some states have hindered the functioning of AU institutions, rendering them ineffective and limiting their contribution to continental development. Strategically, this return has also allowed Morocco to align with new trends in international cooperation with the continent. However, despite the numerous opportunities presented by this return, it is not without obstacles. Some African countries, whose position is hostile to Morocco's territorial integrity, will continue to deploy all possible means to obstruct Morocco's determination to establish a fair African order free from twisted political agendas.

How does King Mohammed VI use soft power and cultural diplomacy to strengthen Morocco's ties with African countries?

Geographically, Morocco is situated at the crossroads of Mediterranean and Western civilizations. It is a centuries-old crossroads endowed with numerous geocultural assets. As a meeting point of diverse cultures, Morocco benefits from a historical richness shaped by Berber, Arab, Andalusian, and African influences, which have contributed to creating a unique cultural heritage. This richness is reflected in Moroccan architecture, arts, music, and culinary traditions.

In a global context marked by endogenous and exogenous upheavals—such as the digital revolution, mass media, and ecological transition—His Majesty King Mohammed VI has repeatedly called on Africa to adapt to

these new realities. The Sovereign emphasizes the need to evolve policies for the well-being of populations and the future of younger generations, while highlighting that "nothing is possible in Africa if women are sidelined." To this end, Morocco sets an example in promoting the foundations of any society's wealth, namely its human, material, and intangible capital.

Thus, it seems that His Majesty is actually calling for a transformation in Africa for a future and social cohesion through the promotion and reinforcement of African identity. Indeed, culture, as a powerful lever, plays a fundamental role in the sustainable development of a nation. It is much more than a mere artistic or traditional expression; it is a driver of personal and collective enrichment. This shared African destiny animates His Majesty, the culture, and the soul of its development and realization.

Moreover, His Majesty believes that culture is a catalyst for social cohesion. By bringing communities together around shared values and traditions, it creates a sense of belonging and strengthens social bonds, thus facilitating cooperation and solidarity. This cohesion is essential for building resilient and harmonious societies.

The economic impact of culture, such as tourism, is clear; it significantly contributes to economic growth. It stimulates innovation, generates jobs, and attracts investments through the cultural and creative sector. Festivals in Morocco, such as Mawazine, which annually gather leading international singers, museums, and cultural products, become economic drivers, enriching local and national economies. Besides the Alaouite Foundation for Development, the Moroccan associative fabric is very active across the continent. Religiously, several aforementioned foundations play a leading role in promoting moderate Islam. The national football team's achievement in reaching the World Cup semi-finals has sparked African enthusiasm. In this regard, Morocco will host the World Cup in 2030 and the Africa Cup of Nations in 2025, showcasing Moroccan soft power on a continental and international scale.

What strategic sectors should Morocco focus on to further strengthen its position in Africa in the coming decades?

To continue strengthening its position, Morocco needs to better grasp the challenges of the new era of globalization. It is essential for Morocco to develop its cultural diplomacy across the continent by establishing "Cultural Houses" in African capitals. Economically, to enhance its competitiveness in Africa, Rabat should consider creating maritime connectivity with African ports. This port strategy will enable Moroccan companies to benefit from favorable conditions for exporting their products, particularly to West Africa.

In its efforts to contribute to poverty eradication on the continent and enhance development opportunities, Morocco has long called on the UN to establish a permanent mechanism to implement international economic decisions in favor of Africa. Rabat is convinced that the contribution of all European, Asian, and South American actors and partners in Africa is necessary and should

be part of a global strategy. This action could be supported through a tripartite cooperation framework, which Morocco could prioritize, especially for social sectors such as rural development, health, education, and upgrading human resources. In this regard, the continent faces multiple challenges, including transformations caused by demographic growth, urbanization, and new technologies, combined with the effects of climate change, geopolitical crises, and new strategic rivalries. In this complex context, Morocco plays a crucial role in promoting peace and security, actively working towards regional stabilization and facilitating dialogue among different stakeholders. In this framework, His Majesty's two initiatives—opening the Atlantic space to Sahel countries and establishing an African policy capable of genuinely projecting Afro-Atlantic countries into the geoeconomy—constitute a political and developmental project that could effectively contribute to the inclusion and integration of the continent. To address climate change, Morocco has made significant progress in developing renewable energy.

The reality is that Africa's energy needs are substantial, with two-thirds of households still lacking access to electricity. Without an appropriate response, it seems difficult to foresee certain regions of the continent emerging from underdevelopment and poverty anytime soon. Thus, it appears that Morocco, with its strategic partners, could advocate for a global strategy to develop sustainable energy infrastructure on the continent.

By focusing on renewable energies such as photovoltaic, thermal, wind, hydroelectric, and geothermal, Rabat can leverage its multilateral assets to attract the necessary investments for electricity, heat, and hydrogen production. This energy sovereignty is a crucial step towards ensuring the continent's development.



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- Former Member of Moroccan Parliament
- Former Member of the Political Commission of the Assembly of the Francophonie
- Member of the Regional Assembly of the African Parliamentary Network
- Awarded the "Future Leader" prize by the American Aspen Organization

Abdelghani Youmni, a public policy specialist and director of the Global Pan-African MBA at Honoris Universities in Morocco, explains to Apa News how Morocco has developed under King Mohammed VI's reign.



Strategic Economic Choices of King Mohammed VI, as Seen by an Expert

What are the main areas where Morocco has made the most significant progress since King Mohammed VI's accession in July 1999?

On December 11, 2003, Mohammed VI addressed an international investment conference: "Any development project, taken in the broad sense of this notion, is dependent on the value system within which it is embedded. When this system is open to the future and carries a mobilizing ideal, it stimulates available energies and leverages all the potential that a nation can harbor." This royal economic vision has placed infrastructure at the heart of Morocco's development, and 25 years later, the kingdom has experienced a true renaissance.

Since his accession to the throne in 1999, King Mohammed VI has implemented an audacious governance system and deep reforms. He has notably reformed the family code, reinforced the rule of law with a policy of equity and reconciliation, and recently established universal social protection for the entire Moroccan population, supported by a solid budgetary framework.

Economically, Morocco completed its public finance and financial liberalization reforms between 1999 and 2005, with a focus on banking concentration and strengthening the capital market to serve the real economy, not speculation. The protection of the dirham has become a sovereignty tool, and Public-Private Partnership mechanisms have been used to enhance the attractiveness of global value chains and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

In recent years, Morocco has attracted many international companies and equipment manufacturers in the aerospace and automotive industries to Casablanca, Tangier, and Kenitra. With over 460,000 cars produced annually and an aerospace integration rate exceeding 42%, the country has created a vast pool of foreign exchange for employment and foreign trade.

Morocco is also distinguished by its extensive renewable solar energy projects and the 14 desalination plants under construction across the country. Today, it has 1,800 km of highways and, located 14 km from Europe, has built Africa's first container port, ranked 55th worldwide. The Dakhla Atlantic Port embodies Morocco's commitment to Africa, aiming to open up Sahel countries and create a maritime interface for economic integration, making Morocco a continental and international hub.

It should be noted that His Majesty the King has made over 46 tours to various African countries, canceled debts, and supported food sovereignty by backing initiatives from the Office Cherifien des Phosphates. He has unlocked more than 4 million tons of fertilizers for African farmers and promoted knowledge transfer for the rehabilitation of arable land and improvement of productivity.

How do the Tanger Med port complex and the future Dakhla port enhance Morocco's geostrategic positioning?

Tanger Med is not just a port but a world-class industrial-port complex, connected to over 70 countries and 196 ports worldwide. It has the capacity to handle 9 million containers per year and

welcome 7 million passengers, covering an area of at least 15 km. This port giant handles about 90 million tons of goods each year and generates thousands of jobs. Its 2,000-hectare industrial platform hosts 1,100 companies in the automotive, agri-food, aerospace, and textile sectors.

Tanger Med has surpassed renowned international ports such as Guangzhou in China, Yokohama in Japan, Port Said in Egypt, as well as American ports in Virginia and Miami. Although Africa's main suppliers are China, the European Union, Turkey, and Vietnam, developing new maritime routes and interconnections between ports and African industrial ecosystems is crucial for the continent's economic growth and balancing international trade.

Regarding the European Union and the United States, strict regulations make trade in goods and services with Africa complex due to numerous constraints and regulatory barriers. Beyond Tanger Med's remarkable performance and expectations for the Dakhla Atlantic Port, their geostrategic positioning will foster South-South cooperation. They will contribute to boosting intra-African trade, which currently represents only 14% of continental trade and just 3% of global trade.

If countries like Morocco, Egypt, or South Africa manage to process raw materials to produce and export manufactured goods, the existence of these two giant ports, one facing Europe and the other at the gates of the Sahel and ECOWAS, will create significant comparative advantages for the continent. This will lead to inevitable spillovers of skills and wealth, thereby reducing the gap with wealthy countries and newly industrialized Asian nations.

What will be the added value of the Atlantic Initiative in Morocco's relations with its Southern partners?

Morocco has always been a key player in consolidating trade and diplomatic cooperation, as well as promoting peace in the Atlantic space. In 1776, when the Declaration of Independence of the thirteen American colonies deprived American ships of British flag protection, Moroccan King Mohammed III (Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah) allowed ships bearing the flag of the new state to enter his ports. Thus, in 1777, Morocco became the first country in the world to recognize the United States of America.

In the current context, Africa accounts for only 2% of international trade. Increasing maritime connections, essential for breaking the isolation of the four Sahelian countries (Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Mali) which currently have 70 million inhabitants and will have over 120 million by 2050, is crucial for their integration into maritime globalization. This initiative revitalizes Morocco's maritime tradition, inherited from Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah, who had oriented the Moroccan economy towards the coast and maritime trade.

Morocco has decided to provide these landlocked Sahelian states with its rail, road, and port infrastructures on its Atlantic facade, including the future Dakhla Atlantic Port. This offer aims to transform Sahelian economies to make them productive and transformative, improve the lives of populations, and enhance security. Morocco is committed to building a win-win partnership and becoming a hub between Africa, Europe, America, the South, and the East of the Mediterranean.

Beyond economic aspects, Africa is at the heart of Morocco's foreign policy. In his August 2016 speech, the King emphasized: "For Morocco, Africa is much more than a geographical belonging and historical ties. It truly evokes sincere feelings of affection and consideration, deep human and spiritual connections, and fruitful and concrete cooperation and solidarity."

Moroccans are "maritime owners" who do not realize it. With more than one million square kilometers over which Morocco exercises sovereign rights and a population of about 38 million, the country is part of the select group of nations producing over one million tons of fish.

Political geography has always highlighted the handicap that Sahelian countries face due to the lack of direct sea access. The Moroccan initiative has the triple advantage of opening up the Sahel, integrating it into globalization, securing territories, and addressing fractures. Additionally, it advocates for a reform of ECOWAS, aiming to create and share prosperity in the interest of peoples and development.

What have been the impacts of plans such as the Green Morocco Plan and the Industrial Acceleration Plan on Moroccan agriculture and industry?

Regarding the Green Morocco Plan, we underestimated the value of farmers and the impact of agricultural product exports on local consumption. Food sovereignty involves not only national production but also preserving citizens' purchasing power, fighting speculation, and managing the competition between local food needs and exports.

Regarding water and energy resources, although seawater desalination and renewable energy pumping projects have been anticipated, progress is awaited to reduce the cost of desalinated water and renewable kilowatt-hours. Agricultural production, being local and a source of employment, is a major sovereignty issue.

Despite its imperfections, the Green Morocco Plan remains a success. The 147 billion dirhams invested have reduced our food dependence, made our agricultural productions competitive, varied, and accessible to all social strata, and reduced our trade deficit.

The analysis of figures confirms the strong positive externalities of the Emergence Plan of the 2000s and the Industrial Acceleration Plan 2014-2025. In 2013, global professions reached an export level of 46.8 billion dirhams, increasing to 90.6 billion dirhams in 2021, a 93.5% increase in just nine years.

The automotive industry, in particular, has generated over 240,000 direct and indirect jobs, with visible impacts in Tangier and the large industrial city of Kenitra, thanks to the Peugeot PSA mega-project, the Atlantic Free Zone platform, and the Kenitra Atlantic port. In 2019, the sector had over 250 national suppliers and a turnover of 80 billion dirhams. According to a recent Fitch Ratings report, Morocco achieved the highest score in terms of automotive production growth, with 83.9 points out of 100.

Although Morocco is not yet among the advanced countries and its industrialization is still in its infancy, its learning curve could follow that of South Korea, Malaysia, and Vietnam, provided it changes its development model. The contribution of transformation industries has decreased from 21% in 1980 to 18% in 2019. There is an urgent need to radically transform the education and vocational training model, focusing on acquiring scientific, linguistic, and digital skills.

The reform of vocational training and the development of mid-sized enterprises must focus on manufacturing and innovation rather than the distribution of imported products.

What progress has Morocco made in the field of sustainable energy?

Morocco has been committed for several years to combating climate change, being particularly vulnerable to the accelerating

drought, desertification, and rising temperatures. The impact of human activities and demographics on the climate is well-established, and Morocco is no exception.

The Kingdom has developed a long-term strategy, the "Low Carbon Development Strategy 2050," which focuses on several axes: carbon sobriety, economic competitiveness, promotion of green jobs, decentralized energy transition, as well as reducing energy poverty and spatial inequalities.

Countries in the "Global South," like Morocco, have potential comparative advantages due to their abundant sunshine. Although transporting renewable energy from Africa to Europe is currently complex, local production of steel, heat pumps, or electric cars from large photovoltaic farms could transform sunlight into a significant asset for fairer international trade.

Resizing is essential for the future, involving not only innovations in financing and profitability but not necessarily privatizations. MASEN (Moroccan Agency for Sustainable Energy) plays a key role in this energy transition, aiming to increase the share of renewable energy and green hydrogen from the current 9-10% to 52% by 2030.

Morocco also needs to reduce its energy bill, which represents nearly 10% of its GDP, primarily consisting of oil and coal for electricity production. It is also crucial to address the debt of the historic operator ONEE, which amounts to 7 billion dirhams.

Currently, Morocco's energy mix consists of 56.7% oil, 30% coal, and 3.9% gas, with renewable energy representing 9.7% (biomass: 5.9%, wind and solar: 3.4%). The country aims to decarbonize its electricity by 80% by 2050, compared to 11% today, and 48% by 2030.



The axes of cooperation between Morocco and African countries as analyzed by the founder of the AfricaMedbusiness Forum

Morocco's efforts will contribute to building a prosperous and sustainable future for the entire continent.

Since King Mohammed VI's accession to the throne, over a thousand agreements have been signed between Morocco and African countries. What are the main sectors benefiting from these agreements, and what has been their impact in these countries?

The areas that have most benefited from the cooperation agreements signed between Morocco and African countries are finance, agriculture, infrastructure, and telecommunications. The latter sector has seen the rapid expansion of Moroccan operators such as Maroc Telecom, which has invested heavily in several African countries, improving access to communication services and promoting digital inclusion. These investments have modernized telecommunications infrastructure, stimulating innovation and economic growth. Financial services have also benefited from these cooperation agreements. Moroccan banks, such as Attijariwafa Bank and Banque Centrale Populaire, have expanded their networks across the continent, offering banking services tailored to local needs. This has facilitated access to credit for SMEs and entrepreneurs, thus supporting private sector development and job creation. In agriculture, cooperation projects have often focused on technology and know-how transfer, improving agricultural yields and food security. Morocco has shared its expertise in irrigation and modern agricultural techniques, contributing to the agricultural transformation of several African countries. Infrastructure has also benefited from these agreements, with Moroccan companies carrying out projects such as road construction, bridges, and power plants. These projects have improved connectivity and access to energy, which are essential for economic development. In conclusion, the cooperation

agreements between Morocco and African countries have had a profound and positive impact on various sectors, fostering economic development and strengthening bilateral ties.

What are the main challenges Morocco has faced in strengthening its economic presence in Africa?

Strengthening Morocco's economic presence in Africa has not been without challenges. Key obstacles include regulatory differences, international competition, and political and security risks in some countries. Regulatory and administrative differences have often made entry into African markets complex for Moroccan companies. To overcome this challenge, Morocco has established bilateral agreements and strategic partnerships aimed at harmonizing regulatory frameworks and facilitating trade. These agreements have created a more favorable business environment and reduced entry barriers for Moroccan investors. International competition, particularly from countries like China, Turkey, and the United States, has also been a major challenge. To stand out, Morocco has focused on the quality of its products and services, as well as a south-south cooperation approach based on mutual respect and benefit-sharing. This strategy has allowed Morocco to position itself as a preferred partner in Africa. Political and security risks in some African countries have also posed challenges. To mitigate these risks, Morocco has adopted a cautious and proactive approach, working closely with local governments to ensure the safety of investments and projects. This cooperation has often included capacity-building and stabilization initiatives, helping to create a more stable and predictable environment for Moroccan businesses. In summary, despite the challenges encountered, Morocco has succeeded in strengthening its economic presence in Africa through a well-defined strategy, solid

partnerships, and a flexible approach adapted to local realities.

How have Moroccan companies succeeded in establishing and thriving in Africa?

Moroccan companies have achieved notable success in Africa, largely due to a confluence of strategic factors, including geographic proximity, cultural understanding, and government support. Notably, the finance, telecommunications, and agriculture sectors have demonstrated remarkable success. In the financial sector, institutions such as Attijariwafa Bank and Banque Centrale Populaire have expanded their operations to numerous countries in Africa. These companies have adopted business models that are tailored to the specific circumstances and needs of the local market, offering innovative financial products that are accessible to a broad customer base. Additionally, their success is contingent upon the establishment of strategic partnerships with local banking institutions, which facilitate the transfer of knowledge and enhance market integration. The telecommunications sector has seen Moroccan players like Maroc Telecom establish themselves in several African countries. Through significant investments in infrastructure and competitive service offerings, these companies have managed to capture a significant market share. Their ability to offer reliable and affordable services has been a key factor in their success. In agriculture, Moroccan companies have introduced modern technologies and advanced agricultural techniques, contributing to improved yields and food security. Cooperation initiatives have facilitated the transfer of skills and knowledge, helping to modernize agricultural practices in partner countries. Government support has also been crucial. Through initiatives like the Plan Maroc Vert and export promotion programs, Moroccan companies have benefited from favorable conditions for their expansion in Africa.

Furthermore, economic missions and business forums organized under royal auspices have facilitated networking and the establishment of strategic partnerships. In conclusion, Moroccan companies have been successful in establishing and maintaining a presence in Africa as a result of well-designed strategies, effective partnerships, and government support, which has positioned Morocco as a pivotal player in the continent's economic development.

What role does the Moroccan private sector play in Morocco's overall strategy in Africa, and how have public-private partnerships (PPPs) been used to stimulate investment?

The Moroccan private sector plays a pivotal role in the country's comprehensive strategy with regard to Africa. It serves as a catalyst for economic expansion and a conduit for socio-economic advancement. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have been demonstrated to be an effective means of stimulating investments and facilitating the implementation of major projects. The Moroccan private sector has effectively leveraged the opportunities presented by King Mohammed VI's African policy, engaging in pivotal sectors such as infrastructure, energy, and financial services. Moroccan companies, especially those in finance, telecommunications, and agriculture, have developed bold and innovative expansion strategies to enter African markets. Their success relies on a combination of strategic vision, solid partnerships, and government support. Moroccan banks, such as Attijariwafa Bank and Banque Centrale Populaire, have adopted flexible business models tailored to local realities. They have formed partnerships with local financial institutions to facilitate access to credit and offer diverse and innovative financial products. This approach has supported the development of SMEs and microenterprises, thus contributing to the economic growth of host countries. In the telecommunications sector, Maroc Telecom and other Moroccan operators have invested heavily in infrastructure, improving access to the Internet and mobile services. These investments have not only expanded their customer base but also played a crucial role in reducing the digital divide in Africa. Reliable and affordable telecommunications services have stimulated innovation and created new economic opportunities. In agriculture, Moroccan companies have introduced modern agricultural techniques and cutting-edge technologies, contributing to increased crop yields and food security. Training and skills transfer programs have enabled local farmers to benefit from Moroccan best practices, thus strengthening the resilience of the agricultural sector in Africa. The support of the Moroccan government has been crucial for the success of these businesses. Through initiatives such as the Green Morocco Plan and export promotion programs, Moroccan companies have benefited from a favorable environment for their expansion. Economic missions and business forums, often organized under royal auspices, have facilitated networking and the establishment of strategic partnerships. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have also played a key role in the development of infrastructure and public services in Africa. These partnerships have facilitated the mobilization of substantial financial and technical resources, thereby ensuring the realization of large-scale projects in the energy, transportation, and water sectors. To illustrate, the construction of power

plants, roads, and bridges, made possible through the implementation of PPPs, has enhanced connectivity and access to energy in numerous African countries. Moroccan companies have been able to establish themselves and flourish in Africa thanks to the support of effective public-private partnerships and a clear strategic vision. This has contributed to the economic and social development of the continent. The Moroccan private sector occupies a prominent position in this dynamic, acting as a principal agent in South-South cooperation and the reinforcement of economic ties between Morocco and Africa.

What sectors and opportunities could Morocco and its partners benefit from in the future?

A number of development areas have been identified that could benefit both parties in the coming years. Primarily, there is a need to place greater emphasis on sustainable development and renewable energy. Morocco, with its considerable advancements in solar and wind energy, is well-positioned to continue sharing its expertise and technologies with African countries, especially given the continent's energy deficit, which represents a significant obstacle to development. Joint projects in renewable energy could not only address the continent's growing energy needs but also contribute to combating climate change. Secondly, the sector of artificial intelligence and digital technology presents considerable potential for growth and opportunity. Morocco has the potential to become a pivotal player in the advancement of technological innovation in Africa, particularly through the provision of support for training initiatives and skill development in this domain. The establishment of technological hubs and business incubators has the potential to stimulate the entrepreneurial ecosystem and facilitate the digital transformation of African economies. Thirdly, the improvement of infrastructure remains a priority. It seems probable that Morocco will persist in investing in infrastructure projects, particularly in the areas of transportation and logistics, with the objective of enhancing regional connectivity. These initiatives are designed to facilitate intra-African trade and reinforce economic ties between countries on the continent. Furthermore, the field of sports represents a significant area of potential growth and development, particularly in light of Morocco's role as the host country for the 2030 FIFA World Cup. This event presents a singular opportunity for Morocco and the entire African continent to reap economic benefits and facilitate the growth of the sports industry. Morocco will endeavor to ensure that this World Cup benefits the continent by investing in sports infrastructure, fostering exchanges and cooperation in sports, and stimulating the sports industry in partner African countries. In the creative industries sector, the development of intra-African value chains will be a priority, with the objective of supporting African creators and products that are "Made in Africa." Morocco could encourage initiatives that highlight local expertise, thus promoting a creative and sustainable economy for the continent. It is of paramount importance to prioritize the development of human capital. Morocco could enhance its contribution to the advancement of education and vocational training in Africa by forging collaborative partnerships with academic institutions and training centers. Such initiatives will

facilitate the acquisition of the requisite skills by young Africans, enabling their active participation in the global economy and the socio-economic development of their countries. Ultimately, the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will be of paramount importance. By facilitating intra-African trade, the AfCFTA has the potential to stimulate local economies, promote inclusive development, and strengthen economic cooperation on the continent. In conclusion, the prospective trajectory of Morocco's African policy under King Mohammed VI is auspicious, offering a multitude of avenues for the enhancement of collaboration and partnership with African countries. These endeavors will contribute to the establishment of a prosperous and sustainable future for the entire continent.



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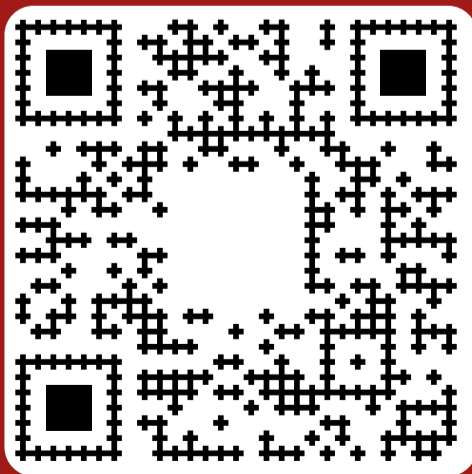
Loubna Karroum reflects on the major milestones and the future of economic relations between Morocco and the rest of the continent since the advent of King Mohammed VI.



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