

May 25: Africa Day

“...so good to be back home...”

from King Mohammed VI's speech at the 28th African Union Summit, Addis Ababa, January 31, 2017

“It is so good to be back home, after having been away for too long! It is a good day when you can show your affection for your beloved home! Africa is my continent, and my home.

I am home at last and happily reunited with you. It is time to return home; at a time when the Kingdom is among the most developed African nations and when a majority of Member States looks forward to our return, we have decided to join our family again. A family we had not really left! In fact, despite having been absent from the AU institutions for so many years, our links, which have never been severed, have remained strong and African sister nations have always been able to rely on us.

Strong bilateral relations have thus been significantly developed. Since 2000, Morocco has signed nearly a thousand agreements with African countries, in various fields of cooperation. By way of comparison, do you know that between 1956 and 1999, 515 agreements were signed, whereas 949 agreements have been signed since 2000 — in other words, almost twice as many! During this period I, personally, was keen to give fresh impetus to this action, by making more visits to various African sub-regions.

On each of the 46 visits I paid to 25 African countries, numerous agreements were signed involving the public as well as the private sector. My action has been particularly geared towards the field of training, which is at the heart of my country's cooperation with sister nations. This has enabled a number of African students to continue



King with Guinean President Alpha Conde, AU Chairman

their higher education in Morocco, thanks to the thousands of scholarships given to them.

Furthermore, major strategic projects were set up during my visits to these countries:

Firstly, I had the pleasure of launching the Africa Atlantic Gas Pipeline project with my brother, His Excellency Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This project will of course allow natural gas to be transported from gas-producing countries to Europe. But more than that, it will benefit the whole of West Africa.

It will, indeed, contribute to creating a regional electricity market and be a substantial source of energy which will help develop industry, improve economic competitiveness and speed up social development. The project will thus create wealth for neighboring countries and populations, generating crucial momentum that will stimulate the emergence and the development of parallel projects. Moreover, it will help build more peaceful bilateral and multilateral relations and thus create an environment conducive to development and growth.

Secondly, as part of projects aimed at improving agricultural productivity and promoting food security and rural development, fertilizer production plants have been set up with both Ethiopia and Nigeria. These projects will benefit the continent as a whole. As we know, basic food needs cannot be met with gas or oil. But is not food security the major challenge facing Africa?

Finally, our ties have also remained strong as far as security and peace are concerned. Do we need to point out that we have always been present when the stability of the Continent is at stake? Since its independence, Morocco has contributed to six UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, engaging thousands of troops in various theaters of operation.

All this confirms that Morocco is right to choose Africa. By doing so, my country has opted to share and transfer its know-how; in concrete terms, it is offering to build a safe, solidarity-based future. We are proud to see history has proved us right. Morocco is not returning to the African Union through the back door, but by the main gate.

This is shown by the warm welcome extended to us today by our African brothers. We enthusiastically invite African nations to join our country's dynamism and to give new impetus to the whole of our continent.”

“The return of Morocco to the pan-African fold has been long overdue... Morocco is concentrating its efforts on building economic links with English-speaking African countries — not just Francophone ones.”

—Desmond Davies, former editor of West Africa magazine

The Royal Vision for African Policy

Morocco's Four-Part Road Map for Action

1) Capitalizing on goodwill with African nations enables Morocco to develop cross-border development project along continental strategic confines. The breakthrough Nigeria-Morocco gas line project exemplifies this.

2) Morocco's opening up of relations with pan-African and regional authorities such as the African Union and the ECOWAS vitalizes dynamic African economic opportunities along both the public-private and private-private spheres. Opening branches of Moroccan banks across the continent has enabled these institutions to better respond to local economic needs. This has also enabled Morocco to benefit from mutually beneficial joint venture projects which have modernized new technologies and improved economic competitiveness.

3) Valorizing the human capital of African talent by accentuating education and professional training of African youth has been central to the Royal Vision.

Morocco is both increasing Africa's capacity while reinforcing its own institutions of higher learning

and increasing Africa's ability to match competencies with the needs of the marketplace. This has improved the inward investments in sectors with value-added propositions. Lastly, Africa's rich cultural talent in the creative arts is gaining international recognition and promotion and Morocco has greatly contributed to the artistic, cinematographic, and musical output of the continent.

4) Improving the quality of daily life for millions of Africans is central to the Royal Vision, and to this end Morocco has employed its indigenous savoir-faire especially in the fields of urbanism, municipal planning, and infrastructure in contemporary tourism. Three large projects have been launched which illustrate the size and impact of the vision: the improvement of the Bay of Cocody

in Cote d'Ivoire, piloted by the Marchica-Med Agency, the re-make of urban Conakry, the capital of Guinea, and the reconstruction of Ramciel, the new capital of South Sudan.

The Royal Vision, with its four central tenets, captures the heart and soul of Morocco's large contribution to the continent it has always supported as well as to its own territory and citizens, who continue to develop, prosper, and, especially today, Africa Day, celebrate.



Morocco hosts Africa Action Summit in Marrakesh, November 2016

“King Mohammed VI's strategy for Africa is a godsend for Morocco and its continental partners. Thanks to hundreds of signed contracts fostered by our official policy a new model of shared value has emerged. Our companies are now present in numerous countries across both English and French-speaking Africa, with no end in sight.”

—Meriem Bensaleh is the président of the Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc

“Morocco is not only a beautiful country, it's a model African nation with a clear strategy for development with Africa at its epicenter. It is a plus for the African Union which must accelerate the pace its central mission: create a unified Africa.”

—Abedi Pelé from Ghana is one of Africa's greatest professional football players of all time.

“As a young African man born on Africa Day in 1994, I have profound hope in my continent of origin. Africa, I believe, can and will achieve the best that this century can produce. In this light, Morocco's return to the African Union is a timely development when the world is monitoring Africa's evolution and prospect for growth.”

—Karim Louis Gaye is a West African studying at Columbia University in New York City

Prepared by Adama Gaye, (Newforce Africa, Dakar)
adamagaye@hotmail.com