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Royal Message To 2nd World Forum on Human Rights

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HIS MAJESTY KING MOHAMMED VI
MAY GOD ASSIST HIM



Royal Message To 2nd World Forum on Human Rights

HM King Mohammed VI addressed, this Thursday, a message to the participants in the 2nd World Forum on Human Rights, held in Marrakech on November 27-30.

Here follows the full text of the Royal message read out by Justice and Liberties Minister, Mustapha Ramid:

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

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to send this message to the World Human Rights Forum, which has assembled thousands of human rights advocates from all continents. Their lofty struggle to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms has earned them my greatest respect.

I should like to say how proud we are in the Kingdom of Morocco to host this Second World Human Rights Forum in Marrakesh, the city of dialogue, diversity and fruitful interaction between cultures and civilizations. I see in this a tribute not only to Morocco, but to our African continent as well.



I commend the Republic of Brazil for deciding, in December 2013, to launch this new dynamic which supplements regional and global social forums. I also thank the Republic of Argentina, which was initially going to host this Second Forum, but which – together with Brazil – supported Morocco's candidature instead.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This gathering of human rights advocates is all the more significant as it is being held at a time when major changes and global challenges underscore the need for holistic, well thought-out and concerted responses.

Profound changes are affecting the international human rights order. By embracing universal human rights values, the countries of the South, civil society and national human rights institutions play an active role in the process of setting up regional and international instruments for the protection and promotion of human rights.

Domestic legal systems have been progressively enriched through the adoption of constitutional texts that reinforce guarantees regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

At the same time, new challenges which call for an urgent response on our part have emerged. In this regard, your forum provides a unique opportunity for debate and exchange of views on new human rights issues.

This clearly attests to the relevance of the topics you have chosen for



the Forum; they highlight the evolution of international human rights law since the adoption of the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

The international human rights agenda has also witnessed far-reaching changes. Whereas 'first and second' generation human rights still enjoy a prominent position, it must be acknowledged that new areas of interest have emerged, such as the protection of the rights of the elderly, human rights in the digital age, human rights and the corporate sector, the legal empowerment of the poor and the enforceability of economic and social rights.

As you know, since the Vienna Conference, human rights have gained in importance, becoming a key variable not only in the life of nations but also in international relations. However, there have been some deviations in connection with this growing universality, which must also rise to unprecedented challenges.

In many parts of the world, reclusiveness, intolerance, rejection of others -because of ethnic considerations or a distorted understanding of the lofty message of religion - are leading to blatant violations of fundamental rights, including the sacred right to life. I wish to express my solidarity with and compassion for the victims of these pathologies and would like to call on the international community to be more actively supportive of victims.

The universal character of human rights must not be questioned. Rather than being the product of a single school of thought or doctrine, universality should, in its very essence, be the result of a progressive, dynamic process whereby values are embraced at individual and collective levels.

In this process, national and cultural traditions should be allowed to find their rightful place around a set of immutable values, not in



opposition to it or next to it. Indeed, universal values acquire greater legitimacy when they represent and protect human diversity, and when all peoples and cultures contribute to shaping them, ultimately considering them as their own.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Countries in the developing world - particularly in Africa - want to play a part in determining human rights standards. They no longer want to remain a subject for debate and assessment, or to be a field of experimentation.

It is a historical fact that international human rights instruments were developed in the absence of Africa. When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, there were only four independent African countries. When the 1966 International Covenants were adopted, there were only about 30 African countries which had freed themselves from the colonial yoke.

Since it did not have the opportunity to contribute to developing the international human rights law, Africa should be given the opportunity to enrich it with its own culture, history and genius, thus increasing the continent's chances to fully embrace it.

Africa cannot remain a mere 'consumer' of international standards devised in its absence.

Africa can no longer be the invariable object of international reports and external evaluations. Our continent has become mature enough



to claim its rightful place in the global human rights architecture and to fully play its role in it.

Universal values are common to us all, but the pathways we take are not. This is the motto of a responsible Africa which is fully committed to human rights; a continent that can no longer remain the eternal subject for human rights debates. Africa wants to be heard; it wants to make a contribution to devising standards that are truly universal. Our continent does not want to be kept on the sidelines when it comes to human rights, which concern Africa too.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Forum is being held on the eve of important international events in which a comprehensive, non-selective approach to human rights can be a significant contribution.

There are many important meetings and events in the pipeline. I would like to share a few ideas on three issues with the human rights advocates who are attending this Forum.

The first one concerns gender equality issues, which have been enshrined in our Basic Law since the constitutional reform of July 2011.

Twenty years ago, in 1995, the 189 Member States of the United Nations adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for mainstreaming gender perspectives in the policies, strategies and programs of all countries. The Declaration called on Member States to



advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women. It reaffirmed that the human rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights.

Twenty years later, the data available and the daily lives of women and girls in many parts of the world attest to the magnitude of the reluctance to achieve the goals set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Despite the progress made, results still fall well short of the afore-mentioned ambitious goals.

As you know, a participatory process to assess accomplishments since the Beijing Conference and the challenges lying ahead is under way at national, regional and international levels, in preparation for the Summit of Heads of State, to be organized by the United Nations in September 2015.

We are pleased, in this respect, that the Marrakesh Forum has chosen the issue of gender equality as one of the main topics on the agenda. I am sure your debate at the Forum will be a significant contribution to the international process under way.

My country has made this question one of the pillars of its public policies, promoting, to this end, gender budgeting, which is recognized by the United Nations as a pioneering approach. We realize, however, that there is still much to do. A law on domestic workers, which mainly concerns girls, is currently under discussion in Parliament.

The Government is also working on legislation to fight violence against women. Similarly, an Authority for parity and the fight against all forms of discrimination - which is provided for in the Constitution - is expected to be set up soon.



The second major issue concerns the post-2015 development goals.

At the end of the Millennium Summit held in New York in September 2000, the 189 Member States of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration, which set out the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These MDGs reflected the desire of the international community to commit to reducing poverty by half, ensuring primary education for all, promoting gender equality and empowering women by 2015.

Since then, and thanks to the various Summits held on development, numerous measures have been advocated to build on the progress made and carry the Millennium Development Goals beyond 2015. Some reference documents, such as "Realizing the Future We Want for All" and "A Life of Dignity for All" have been prepared and consultation mechanisms for defining the post-2015 agenda have also been set up.

The international community has decided in this respect that the September 2015 Session of the General Assembly will give concrete substance to this process through the adoption of a new agenda that includes Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

I am pleased to note that several thematic conferences, being held as part of this Forum, reflect the concerns expressed by civil society, UN agencies and the experts involved in the evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals and the preparation of new Sustainable Development Goals.

The Kingdom of Morocco supports efforts aimed at putting human rights at the heart of those new objectives. This calls for greater



involvement in the various regional and international meetings and events scheduled from now until September 2015.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The third issue concerns international migration and asylum seekers.

With 240 million international migrants in 2012, migration is a constant concern which is being debated around the world today and which involves governments, civil society and the international community.

Controversial approaches persist and are even gaining in scope at a time when the 2009 United Nations Development Programme Report stressed the key role being played by human mobility in promoting human development.

Not only have South-South migration flows increased, but there has also been a feminization of these flows. Moreover, sophisticated networks specialized in human trafficking have emerged; the profile of migrants and refugees has become more diverse, their socio-cultural conditions have improved and, finally, there are now minors among the migrants.

Civil wars force millions of people into exile, and most of the time - as is the case with our Syrian brothers - they have been taken in by neighboring countries. These new refugees have joined Palestinian refugees, whose ordeal has lasted for decades.



In many countries, migrants and their descendants are increasingly being rejected due to the influence of radical political groups. In all societies across the world, there are serious 'living together' issues.

Keeping in mind those developments, it should be pointed out that the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families - which is the main human rights instrument in this area - has, until this day, been signed and ratified only by countries of the South.

In this respect, my country has decided to implement a new migration policy, based on a humane approach which is consistent with our Constitution and our international commitments. An exceptional regularization program was started in January 2014 and should be completed by the end of December. It aims to regularize the situation of all those who meet the necessary conditions.

I call on the international community to resume negotiations more actively with a view to achieving regional and international governance of migration issues, in accordance with the High-Level Dialogue initiated by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The African Alliance for Migration and Development I launched in September 2013 is a contribution to that endeavor.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,



The Kingdom of Morocco is proud to host this global event and to contribute to fulfilling an ambition which is shared not only by our continent but also by all developing countries, namely to become full-fledged players in the development of human rights standards and assessments.

My country freely chose to initiate in-depth, proactive reforms which fulfil the aspirations and expectations of Moroccans. This innovative, inclusive process, which culminated in the adoption of a new Constitution in 2011, has helped consolidate the rule of law and democracy as an irreversible choice.

Morocco, which has been proceeding confidently and serenely along the never-ending road of human rights, can, after 15 years, present quite a decent record covering such vital areas as transitional justice, women's rights, human development, the rehabilitation of the Amazigh culture as a key component of the Moroccan identity, the consolidation of national human rights institutions and the governance of the religious domain on the basis of the tolerant principles and teachings of Islam.

There are other ongoing projects with a significant impact on the protection of human rights in such areas as justice, the press, civil society, local governance and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Honoring the commitments enshrined in its founding Charter, the Kingdom of Morocco is working untiringly to strengthen the conventional practice it has opted for. Thus, after its accession to the main human rights instruments, my country has gradually lifted reservations it had when it ratified those instruments.

Today, the Kingdom is consolidating this irreversible decision to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights. In this respect, earlier this week, the Kingdom of Morocco deposited its instruments of



ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as a prelude to setting up, in the coming months, a National Preventive Mechanism. Morocco will thus become one of thirty countries to have such a mechanism.

I commend the debate on the death penalty, which is being led by civil society organizations, a large number of parliamentarians and legal experts. I am sure it will help deepen the debate on this question.

The protection of children's rights against all sorts of abuse and violation is a constant concern for me, as evidenced by the support I have been giving to the action of the National Observatory on children's rights.

The Kingdom has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

The constitutional protection of children has also been a watershed event in the process of consolidating national legislation on child protection.

In keeping with this trend, we intend to ratify the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which establishes a communications procedure.

Your Excellencies,



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, once again, to welcome you to Morocco. I am convinced your discussions, your debates and your daily work for the promotion of human rights - all human rights, for everyone, everywhere - will contribute significantly to the emergence of a safer world for humanity - a world which treats the most vulnerable and poorest segments of society more fairly and equitably, and which is committed to promoting brotherly relations between all human beings.

Thank you.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarkatuh.

(MAP-27 November 2014)

