

Kingdom of Morocco 2009 throne celebration

Building a platform for growth, prosperity

Dr. Samir Arrou
AMBASSADOR OF H.M. THE KING OF
MOROCCO

Today marks the 10th anniversary of the enthronement of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco. On this auspicious occasion and as ambassador of Morocco to Japan, I would like to convey my respectful greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, members of the Imperial family, the government and the friendly people of Japan.

I would like to thank The Japan Times for giving me the opportunity to inform its distinguished readers of some events and provide an overview of some of the achievements of Morocco. It is also an occasion to reflect on the excellent relations of friendship and cooperation between Morocco and Japan.

Japan always shows great interest in the stability, security, environment, and socioeconomic development of Africa and the Middle East. I would like to praise the Japanese initiatives for our region as well as for the Kingdom of Morocco. I am confident that our relationship will be further developed and expanded since the two nations share so many similar ideals and goals.

Morocco's renowned stability, as well as the wise and enlightened leadership of King Mohammed have endowed Morocco with acclaim and distinction. Since the king's accession to the throne in 1999, Morocco has undergone some profound changes through homegrown reforms aiming to consolidate democracy and the rule of law, to promote human rights and to

provide a better share of national prosperity, giving the political and socioeconomic development of Morocco a human dimension.

Providing infrastructure to meet the basic needs of the Moroccan people — health care, education as well as job creation — is of paramount importance. The government strategy consists first in supporting growth, mainly through the acceleration of major construction projects, the development of the rural community and the promotion of an economy of proximity. In addition, the government will monitor the consolidation of transport infrastructure, and the implementation of regional logistics and industrial platforms.

Significant progress has been achieved in recent years in stabilizing the macroeconomic environment, bolstering economic capacity to withstand shocks and strengthening the fiscal position. These achievements place the country in a favorable position to absorb, in the short term, shocks linked to the deterioration of the global environment, and to adopt the appropriate economic policy responses to the sustained financial and economic crisis.

Economic performance
The Moroccan economy is much more robust than just a few years ago, with steady annual growth of 5 percent to 6 percent from 2000 to 2008. Economic growth is far more diversified, with new service and industrial poles developing, and the agriculture sector being rehabilitated.

Economic growth was largely spurred by domestic demand. Household consumption, which contributed 5.5 points to GDP growth, increased in volume by 9.4 percent against 3.8 percent in 2007.

Infrastructure
Morocco plans to invest more than \$15 billion to upgrade its basic infrastructure, includ-



King Mohammed VI

ing roads, ports and airports for the 2002-2015 period to bolster economic competitiveness amid efforts to turn the country into a platform for investment, and exports to the European Union and United States. I will mention only two such projects now.

First, the "Tangier-Mediterranean" project is a strategic priority for the economic and social development of the northern region. It is part of the economic policy orienting Morocco toward exports, based on eight clearly identified export sectors, with particular emphasis on the free-trade agreement with the EU to be implemented between 2000 and 2012. Completion of the project will have important economic effects in terms of jobs, creation of added value and foreign investment.

Its position on the Straits of Gibraltar, at the crossing of two major maritime routes, and just 14 km from the EU will enable it to serve a market of hundreds of millions of consumers through the industrial and commercial free zones run by well-known private operators. It will also win part of the strong growth market of container transshipment and become the leading hub for cereals transshipment.

In addition to the economic effects of the operation of the port, there will be important effects resulting from its construction, particularly through foreign investment, and others

from the operation of the free zones (direct and indirect added value, direct gains, jobs and foreign investment).

The Tangier-Med II project was launched this year. Once finished and starting from 2012, it will have the capacity to handle some 5 million containers, in addition to the 3 million container capacity transiting via Tangier-Med I. A total of 8 million containers will make Tangier Africa's first merchandise port.

Second, Morocco plans to invest 20 billion dirhams (\$2.61 billion) to build a high-speed "TGV" rail line linking the northern city of Tangier to the country's commercial capital Casablanca. The project will cut the journey between the two cities to two hours, 10 minutes instead of five hours, 45 minutes. Starting in 2013, it is estimated that the high-speed line will carry 8 million passengers a year. Morocco is mulling a second high-speed rail link between Casablanca and Marrakech, the country's main tourist destination, by 2015.

Industry

The Moroccan industrial sector looks set to continue the strong growth it has enjoyed in recent years. Overall, the contribution of industrial activity to GDP fluctuates between about 25 percent and 35 percent every year, depending on the performance of the agriculture sector. The industrial sector accounted for about 21.1 percent of employment in 2007 and it is a key component of the government's effort to curb unemployment. The sector also attracts high levels of FDI, and particular attention is paid to off-shoring activities, automotive, aeronautics, electronics, food processing, sea products processing and textiles. Other important industrial sectors include mining, chemicals, construction materials and pharmaceuticals.

Foreign direct investment
Around 250 enterprises have invested in Morocco during the 2007-2008 period. Whereas the major investors come from France, Spain, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, other investors from Brazil, Singapore, New Zealand, etc., have started to invest alongside the traditional ones.

Important multinational companies like the U.S. agri-food industry giant Kraft, injected \$22 million in its Moroccan branch; the Danish maritime company Maersk opened a customer service center in Casablanca; Procter & Gamble unveiled a 600 million dirham extension for the Mohammedia plant; Dell created 500 jobs at an offshore services center. Also present are Readers Digest, Boeing, AT&T, Fruit of the Loom and Gazprom, whose real estate branch created a subsidiary to manage three projects in the north of Morocco.

Industrial potential
With its modern infrastructure, Morocco is becoming one of the new preferred locations for manufacturing low-cost automobile parts for export. For-

eign manufacturers are reaping the benefits of manufacturing in Morocco:

- * Free-trade agreement with the U.S.
- * Morocco-EU Association Agreement
- * Close proximity to the European market
- * Low-cost manufacturing
- * Excellent tax incentives
- * Infrastructure that facilitates exports.

Tangier's free zone particularly affords foreign auto parts manufacturers an investment framework meeting international standards and reinforces Morocco's appeal as a zone of relocation. The zone is systematically favored when manufacturers want to supply Central and Western European countries. That motivated Yazaki, Makita and Fujikura to establish bases there. And more and more Japanese companies are interested in Morocco as a production and export platform toward the European, African, Arab and North American markets.

Morocco is in a position to afford its principal manufacturers with a competitive platform to supply Europe. Morocco is looking forward to becoming for Europe what Mexico is to North America.

Japan-Morocco relations

I would like to praise the warm and cordial relations that exist between the Imperial family of Japan and the royal family of Morocco. Japan and



Rapid development: As part of plans to transform Tangier into a dynamic gateway to the European market, Morocco is to invest \$2.61 billion to build a high-speed "TGV" rail line linking the northern city to the country's commercial capital Casablanca.

Morocco continue to enjoy a very warm and cordial friendship that has prevailed over many decades. Both countries share the same ideas and the common values of democracy, human rights, peace, security and stability. In the international arena, we have similar approaches; solidarity and mutual support are the common practice between the governments and institutions of the two countries.

Official visits are very numerous between the two countries. First of all, we should underline that the successful state visit of King Mohammed to Japan in November 2005 has consolidated the friendship that binds our two countries and opened new perspectives for the development of both countries. In May 2008, during TICAD IV, Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi, accompanied by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Latifa Akherbach, visited Japan, and

had very fruitful meetings with high officials of the Japanese government and business community. In October 2008, Minister of Industry, Trade and New Technologies Ahmed Chami visited Japan to attend an investment seminar in Tokyo.

Secretary of State for Education Latifa Abida took part in the science and technology ministerial meeting between Japan and African countries organized last October within the framework of TICAD IV to enhance knowledge and know-how transfer.

Secretary of State Akherbach also took part in the TICAD IV Ministerial Level Follow-up Meeting on March 21 and 22 this year in Gaborone, Botswana.

A business mission organized by Maroc Export (a counterpart of JETRO) and composed of many private companies visited Japan from March 25 to April 4. They had very fruitful meetings with con-

cerned organizations and companies, including Sogo Shoshas.

Another important bilateral event this year is the holding in October of the first joint meeting between MOFA and METI officials and their Moroccan counterparts. On a regional level, Morocco welcomes the hosting by Japan of the first Japan-Arab Forum, from Dec. 7 to 9, in Tokyo, to boost trade and investment exchanges.

This year marks the 53rd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Morocco and Japan. A strong partnership and fruitful cooperation have characterized our bilateral relations in the fields of economy, trade, science and technology, culture and education. During the past few years, we have witnessed further development and expansion of the excellent relations between the two countries as more and more Japanese companies have their eyes on the Moroccan market.

Longtime partners on the road to development

Kenji Kosaka
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-MOROCCO
PARLIAMENTARY LEAGUE

Today we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the accession to the throne of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, and I would like to extend on behalf of all members of the Japan-Morocco Parliamentary League, my sincere and heartfelt congratulations to King Mohammed, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Moulay Al Hassan, Her Royal Highness Lalla Khadija, Her Royal Highness Lalla Salma, the royal family, the people and government of Morocco. On a national level, I am very happy to witness that the king — since his enthronement in 1999 — has launched a wide range of programs aiming to fulfill the expectations of his people.



On a bilateral level, we appreciate very much the progressive development of the relations between Morocco and Japan in all fields, especially on cooperative and political levels. The state visit of King Mohammed to Japan in November 2005 exemplifies the maturity of the relations between our two countries and indicates their close political partnership. Furthermore, in 2006, the two nations had their first bilateral political exchanges in Tokyo attended by their heads of diplomacy, and in October 2009, will have the first joint meeting between MOFA and METI officials and their Moroccan counterparts.

On a cooperative level, exemplary relations ranging from the fishing sector to the development of infrastructure need to be further consolidated in view of the different large projects taking place in Morocco.

The visit of Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi, who was

accompanied by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Latifa Akherbach, during TICAD IV meetings in May 2008, was also a good sign of Morocco's support for Japanese initiatives, and so was the active participation of Secretary of State Akherbach in the TICAD IV Ministerial-Level Follow-Up Meeting on March 21 and 22 this year in Gaborone, Botswana.

On a commercial level, we are glad to note that Japanese business people are showing more and more interest in the Moroccan market, realizing they can profit from its openness and proximity to Europe, North America and the Arab world as evidenced by the prospective trade and investment missions in both directions.

We are very proud of this evolution and the Japan-Morocco Parliamentary League continues to work in tandem with Morocco in this development process.

Japan's cooperation plays a

significant role in the socioeconomic development of the country, and the inking in 2003 of the "trilateral agreement" offers a good example of this North-South cooperation. It is important to note that Japan is among Morocco's first Asian economic partners.

During these last five decades, Morocco has made enormous efforts to develop and bring prosperity to its people. We highlight the fact that Japan, from the very beginning, accompanied Morocco in this process.

I would also like to congratulate Morocco for the successful local elections held in June, which witnessed a large participation of voters and in which 12 percent of seats were won by women.

In conclusion, I heartily wish a long life for Japanese-Moroccan relations, and further progress and happiness for the people of Morocco.

Wide-ranging, complementary relations

Hiromi Sato
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-MOROCCO
ASSOCIATION

On the auspicious occasion of the 10th anniversary of his enthronement, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco, on behalf of all members of the Japan-Morocco Association. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere greetings to Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Salma, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Moulay Al Hassan, Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Khadija and all other members of the royal family, as well as to the people and government of the Kingdom of Morocco.

It is quite agreeable to



recognize that bilateral relations between Japan and Morocco have developed remarkably in recent years, namely, in various fields such as economic and technical cooperation through ODA, private-sector investment, tourism and others.

We have learned with great pleasure that the first Joint Commission will be held in Tokyo in October as one of the positive results of the visit to Japan last October by Minister of Industry, Trade and New Technology Ahmed Reda Chami.

The Gibraltar tunnel project to connect the African continent with Europe is being developed with the participation of Japanese enterprises. When this is completed and with the establishment of a free-trade zone with the European Union by 2010, there is little doubt that Morocco will become one of the most promising nations

in the Mediterranean region.

The Japan-Morocco Association has recently welcomed His Excellency Dr. Samir Arrou, the new ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to Japan, as its honorary president. Last November, the association organized "La Soiree du Maroc" with great success in close cooperation with the Embassy of Morocco in Tokyo. We plan to organize the annual event again this November.

In addition, the association is preparing to dispatch the fifth Friendship Mission to Morocco soon, a move expected to contribute to an increase in the number of Japanese tourists to the enchanting country.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate my sincere wish to enhance the excellent relationship between the people of Japan and the people of Morocco.

Congratulations
on the 10th Anniversary
of the Accession
to the Throne of
His Majesty
King Mohammed VI

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