

Kingdom of Morocco Throne Day Special

Domestic growth strengthens international prosperity

RACHAD BOUHLAL
AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO



On the 19th Anniversary of the enthronement of His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, it is my utmost privilege to convey my respectful greetings to Their Imperial

Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, His Excellency Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the government and friendly people of Japan.

This auspicious occasion lends the opportunity to revisit Morocco-Japan relations and acknowledge the steady growth they have been witnessing for the past few years. It is also a suitable time to give credit to our many Japanese partners, public officials and business leaders whose precious contributions are instrumental in bringing the bilateral relations to the level where they stand today.

Road map for the future

Since his accession to the throne, His Majesty King Mohammed VI initiated a wide range of political and economic reforms that build on the human potential and natural resources Morocco boasts to create the transformation momentum that Morocco has witnessed for the last 19 years.

Democratic reforms to promote better governance

Politically, Morocco has embarked on large and comprehensive democratic reforms — the mainstay of which was the adoption of a new constitution in 2011, providing for larger prerogatives of the government.

Parallel to this, advanced regionalization commenced a few years ago to strengthen decentralization and local democracy, as

well as ensure better integrated economic, social, cultural and environmental strategies. It equally seeks to empower the regions through enabling human resources and local competences to manage public affairs and promote development-oriented policies.

Consequently, the Parliament's policy-making role was strengthened in its role, as equal rights for women were reinforced, enabling them to contribute fully to society, which has emerged as an important contributor to the political and social government agenda.

Economic and political stability

With a strong commitment to creating a business-friendly environment and further expanding the economy, Morocco has taken a number of steps to boost economic growth and attract more foreign investment.

To promote the international activities of Moroccan economic institutions and corporations, Casablanca Finance City (CFC) was established as a financial gateway for investors looking to access the fast-growing markets, especially in Africa, to serve as an interface between Africa and other parts of the world. Several international financial institutions have already settled in the CFC with the hope that more Japanese financial institutions will follow suit.

Furthermore, with a target production of 1 million cars in 2020, Morocco is becoming Africa's first automotive industry hub, with a PSA Peugeot Citroen S.A. plant in Kenitra, a Renault-Nissan plant in Tangier, as well as Chinese automaker BYD Co. in Tangier.

By showcasing automobile success stories, Morocco will also increase its attractiveness for foreign investors in other industries, particularly aeronautics and renewable energy. In this regard, Morocco prides itself on establishing the world's largest concentrated solar plant, Noor 1, in Ouarzazate, central Morocco.



H.M. King Mohammed VI

Morocco's principled commitments with its partners in the African Union, the Maghreb, the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, highlight a strong will to play an active role in all these important groupings on regional and inter-continental levels.

Morocco's policy of diversification has allowed it to acquire more market share in the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe and North America. Such diversification is achieved through free trade agreements with the European Union, the United States, Arab countries, Turkey and others, in addition to preferential agreements with the Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Morocco has recently signed the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

Within Asia, Japan's relations with Morocco are both intense and diverse, making it an important economic partner. Our countries continue to work together in order to enhance cooperation and fulfill roles in regional areas as well as at international forums.

Bilateral relations

This year has been fruitful for our bilateral relations. Many high-ranking officials made visits to Japan and Morocco respectively to further enhance bilateral ties in various areas such as parliamentary cooperation, local government, investment, fisheries, agriculture, infrastructure, environment and banking. These visits resulted into the signing of many memorandums of understanding and agreements.

The meeting of the Japan-Morocco Joint Committee held on April 26 in Tokyo was a landmark as Morocco and Japan expressed their determination to further promote their multilayered bilateral cooperation and pursue their common objective to take the Japan-Morocco partnership to a higher level.

Both sides expressed, with great satisfaction, the successful closing of negotiations on an agreement for the promotion and protection of investment. This agreement will intensify our dynamic cooperation by opening new, promising horizons for the Japan-Morocco economic partnership.

In this regard, during the various business seminars and meetings organized by the embassy this year in Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagasaki and Gifu, we are encouraged by the strong interest in Morocco within the Japanese business community.

Today, 60 Japanese companies are operating in a very stable and encouraging business environment in Morocco, mak-

ing them the first foreign employers in the kingdom.

The regular fishing consultations were conducted in Tokyo last month, marking 32 years of successful, continuous consultations crowned by the signature of an agreement in which further areas of cooperation in the fisheries field have been identified for the future.

Japan is a strategic partner for Morocco in the development of capacity building in areas such as education and scientific research. This growing cooperation is marked by exchanges of regular students and academics between Moroccan and Japanese universities in different disciplines.

Japan, Morocco and the TICAD process

Moroccan-Japanese cooperation had a positive and direct impact on the development of infrastructure and human development in our country.

Triangular cooperation represents the cornerstone of Morocco's policy in its partnership within Africa. From this perspective, the conclusion of a memorandum between the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Moroccan Agency for International Cooperation, during the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) in 2013 held in Yokohama, and the memorandum signed in Nairobi in 2016, have further consolidated their partnership for promoting both bilateral and

triangular cooperation for the benefit of other African countries.

Morocco salutes the TICAD process as it provides a platform for public and private sectors both in Japan and Africa to engage collectively in shaping a better future for Africa. Hence, Morocco looks forward to contributing to the success of the upcoming TICAD VII that will take place in Yokohama in 2019.

Tourism for public diplomacy

As an international tourist destination, Morocco is a country that enjoys a strong sense of culture and hospitality, as well as a rich and ancient history. I would like to seize this opportunity to express my thanks to the thousands of Japanese tourists who choose Morocco as their vacation destination with the hope that more will set sail to discover the Kingdom of Morocco and its renowned cuisine and legendary hospitality.

I would like to conclude my message by reiterating the keen interest of the government of the Kingdom of Morocco to further develop and consolidate the existing excellent relations with Japan within the framework of a win-win spirit that accommodates the interests of each of our two countries and fully responds to the needs and aspirations of our peoples.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

Thriving relations bring promising outlooks

HIROFUMI NAKASONE
PRESIDENT OF THE JAPAN-MOROCCO PARLIAMENTARY LEAGUE



On behalf of the Japan-Morocco Parliamentary League, I would like to extend my sincere and heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty King Mohammed VI on the auspicious occasion of the 19th Anniversary of his Coronation. I also extend my congratulations to Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Salma, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Moulay Al Hassan, Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Khadija, the Royal family and the people of Morocco.

This year marks the 62nd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations

between Japan and Morocco in 1956. We have built a strong bilateral relationship and, in recent years, we have expanded political and economic ties, as well as private sector business exchanges. For example, the number of Japanese companies in Morocco has quadrupled in 10 years, and these have created 40,000 jobs in Morocco.

Morocco is a fusion of ethnic African cultures, French spirit and Islamic cultures. This can be attributed to Morocco's historical and geographical conditions — different regions have different cultural characteristics and there are a number of UNESCO World Heritage sites. People from all over the world, including Japan, have traveled to Morocco and annually, over 30,000 Japanese tourists have visited.

Last August, I visited Morocco as the president of the Japan-Morocco Parliamentary League, courtesy of the warm invitation from President of the Moroccan House of Councillors Abdelhakim Benchamach. I

had the honor of meeting and exchanging views with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Nasser Bourita, other major cabinet ministers and members of the parliamentary friendship association. Through these meetings, I was able to hear various visions on Morocco's development. I was greatly impressed by the remarkable economic growth in the capital of Rabat, as well as when I visited historical cities such as Casablanca and Marrakech. I am firmly convinced that there is huge potential for more new development in Morocco through further strengthening the relationship between our countries.

We, the members of the parliamentary league, will continue putting our fullest efforts into the expansions of cooperation and exchanges in all areas.

Finally, I would like to extend my best wishes for the prosperity and well-being of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and the Kingdom of Morocco.

Cultural exchange boosts growing economy

HARUKO HIROSE
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-MOROCCO ASSOCIATION



On the occasion of Morocco's Throne Day, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to His Majesty King Mohammed VI on behalf of all members of the Japan-Morocco

Association.

I would also like to express my sincere greetings to all members of the Royal family, as well as to the people and government of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Morocco continues to maintain its steady economic growth and security and ardently welcomes foreigners, both tourists and investors.

Last summer, Foreign Minister Taro Kono held a Japan-Morocco foreign min-

isters' meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco Nasser Bourita on the sidelines of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. Morocco and Japan have been building an excellent relationship in various fields starting with the long and amicable relationship between the Royal family of Morocco and the Imperial family of Japan.

Exchanges of people is becoming more and more frequent, with more than 40,000 Japanese tourists visiting Morocco last year, while we have seen more Moroccans coming to Japan. It was our pleasure to welcome the Moroccan tourist party of 80 visitors who are serving in the front lines of Moroccan business. The Japan-Morocco Association arranged the excursion and accompanied the party to Kamakura to visit the Great Buddha and see a *yabusame* (Japanese traditional horseback archery) performance.

In the field of economics, the number of Japanese companies operating in

Morocco over the past 10 years increased approximately fourfold, creating close to 40,000 jobs in hopes to further strengthen the economic relationship and deepen cooperation in other fields. We have just hosted the Japan-Morocco Investment Symposium together with the Moroccan embassy. Around 150 guests attended the event and the keynote was given by El Mahdi Arrifi, general director of the Agency for Agricultural Development Agency of Morocco.

To promote friendship and better mutual understanding, the Japan-Morocco Association will continue to organize various events with the cooperation of the Moroccan embassy, including monthly lectures related to Morocco, investment seminars targeting Japanese companies, as well as with other cultural and economic events. The annual Moroccan Evening will take place this year on Nov. 20 at the Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo. We welcome new participants to join these popular events. Please visit our website for details at <http://www.nichimo-kyokai.org>.

CONGRATULATIONS

on the 19th Anniversary of the Accession to the Throne of His Majesty Mohammed VI

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His Majesty King Mohammed VI

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