

(Anniversary special)

Kingdom of Morocco Throne Day

Decentralization key for country's empowerment

MOHAMMED RACHAD BOUHLAL
AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO



On the occasion of the 18th Anniversary of the Enthronement of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco, I convey my respectful greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and the friendly people of Japan.

More than 60 years have passed since diplomatic relations between Morocco and Japan were established. Since then our friendship has been continuously enhanced by the privileged ties that bind our two countries.

Road map for the future

Since his enthronement in 1999, the king has promoted and led an ambitious road map in line with the values and principles of Morocco, taking into consideration the regional and international environment marked by the emergence of new challenges and new opportunities.

This ambitious road map underlines an open diplomacy of cooperation and solidarity that reinforces the role that our country plays in the Arab and Islamic arena, besides the African and Euro-Mediterranean levels, as well as the excellent traditional relations with Asian countries, Europe and the Americas.

The regular regional official visits of the king to a number of African countries reflect the kingdom's drive to expand its economic, trade and political ties across sub-Saharan Africa in the framework of south-south cooperation.

His majesty launched many concrete major projects on African soil such as the African Atlantic Gas Pipeline with Nigeria and the fertilizer production plants that have been set up with both Ethiopia and Nigeria, to name just a few.

Morocco's commitment to a policy of diversification has allowed it to experience new markets in the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe and North America. Such diver-



H.M. King Mohammed VI

sification has been achieved through Free Trade Agreements, in addition to preferential agreements (with the Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf Cooperation Council).

Economic and political stability

Morocco has embarked on a large and comprehensive democratic process of reforms, taking into account the Moroccan specificities related to a long-standing historical and sociocultural heritage and its values based on the principles of solidarity, peace and tolerance.

Advanced regionalization is one of the largest areas of reforms in contemporary Morocco designed to strengthen decentralization and local democracy and empower its 12 regions by enabling human resources in managing public affairs and promoting development-oriented policies.

With a strong commitment to provide favorable incentives for doing business, Morocco maintains a policy of improving the business climate and encouraging private investment. A new industrial strategy (for 2014-2020) was launched to drive structural changes and strengthen the country's position in global value chains.

To promote the international activities of the Moroccan economic institutions and

corporations, Casablanca Finance City (CFC) has been established by the Moroccan government as a financial gateway for investors looking to access the fast-growing markets and serves as an interface between the African continent and other parts of the world to reinforce the positioning of Morocco in the international economic arena. Several international institutions have already settled in CFC with the hope that more Japanese financial institutions will follow suit.

By showcasing automotive success stories, Morocco will also increase its attractiveness for foreign investors in other industries, particularly in aeronautics and renewable energy.

Morocco prides itself on establishing the world's largest concentrated solar plant Noor 1, located in Ouarzazate. February 2016 saw Morocco inaugurate the Noor 1 CSP plant. A number of international companies have already shown interest in the Noor-Ouarzazate project, the largest solar energy farm in the world.

Excellent bilateral relations

Within Asia, Japan is a privileged partner for Morocco with whom relations have been intense, touching upon diverse sectors of activities. Our two countries continue to work together to enhance their

cooperation and fulfill their role in regional areas, as well as international forums. Japan and Morocco continue to develop harmoniously and diversify to cover large spheres of activities and cooperation.

From this perspective, the significant Japanese investments made in our country helped in marking Morocco a favorite destination for Japanese businesses. More than 50 Japanese companies are investing and conducting business in a very stable and encouraging environment in Morocco, employing more than 40,000 Moroccan citizens.

Among these companies are Mitsui & Co., Mitsubishi Corp., Marubeni Corp., Yazaki Corp., Sumitomo Electric Industries, Ltd., Fujitsu Ltd., Takata Corp., Denso Corp., YKK Corp., Hino Motors, Ltd., Kansai Paint Co. and others.

As testimony to the trust in Morocco by Japanese corporations, Furukawa Electric Co. has decided to open a fiber-optic cable factory in the city of Tangier seeking to tap growing demand for communications infrastructure in Africa and the Mediterranean region.

The Japanese manufacturer and world's largest supplier of power-assisted steering systems, JTEKT Corp., announced in June the launch of its first Middle East and North Africa region production site in Tangier Med. This plant will produce components and assemble power systems to allow the direct supply of the two automakers installed in Morocco in parallel with other

manufacturers and export markets.

It should be noted that Moroccan-Japanese cooperation, particularly with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is recognized as a success story that has had a positive and direct impact especially for the development of infrastructure and equipment of our country, as well as the implementation of the National Initiative for Human Development.

Regular fishing consultations were conducted in Tokyo in June, marking 31 years of successful cooperation.

Japan is a strategic partner for Morocco in the development of capacity building in areas such as education and scientific research. Regular student and academic exchanges between Moroccan and Japanese universities in different disciplines mark this growing and fruitful cooperation.

Based on the needs of development, Morocco, the Japan Science and Technology Agency and JICA cooperate to promote joint research targeting regional issues through the Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development with an objective of future utilization of research outcomes.

Triangular cooperation represents the cornerstone of Morocco's policy in its partnership within Africa. In this perspective, the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding between JICA and the Moroccan Agency for International Cooperation, during the fifth Tokyo Interna-

tional Conference on African Development (TICAD V) in 2015 in Yokohama, and the memorandum of understanding signed at TICAD VI in Nairobi in 2016 have further consolidated the partnership for promoting both bilateral and triangular cooperation as an efficient means for promoting business and capacity-building in areas of common interest for both Morocco and Japan.

The successful TICAD VI, for which we congratulate the government of Japan, confirms the uniqueness and inclusiveness of a process that positively evolved over the last 23 years. In this regard, Morocco is looking forward to the success of the 2019 TICAD VII in Yokohama, which will be a milestone in the excellent relations between Japan and Africa.

Committed to approaching international challenges within multilateral frameworks, Morocco hosted the 22nd Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Framework on Climate Change (COP 22) in the city of Marrakech in November and continues its presidency throughout this year.

I would like to conclude my message by reiterating the keen interest 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.

High-level visits, economic ties boost bonds

HIROFUMI NAKASONE
PRESIDENT OF THE JAPAN-MOROCCO PARLIAMENTARY LEAGUE

On behalf of all members of the Japan-Morocco Parliamentary League, I would like to extend my sincere and heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty King Mohammed VI, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Moulay Al Hassan, Her Royal Highness Lalla Khadija, Her Royal Highness Lalla Salma, the Royal Family, the people and the government of Morocco on the auspicious occasion of the 18th Anniversary of the king's coronation.

On this occasion, I also express my warmest congratulations to Morocco on its return to the African Union in January. I am thoroughly convinced that Morocco's return to the African institution will contribute to the prosperity and stability of all African countries. This event offers me the opportunity to express my deep commitment to the further development of



Japanese-Moroccan cooperation in the context of Africa.

Last year marked the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Morocco. Since 1956, both countries have built a strong bilateral relationship. Above all, in recent years we have witnessed great momentum in relations between our two countries, demonstrated by the frequency of reciprocal high-level visits and enhanced economic ties.

At the beginning of the year, the President of the House of Councilors His Excellency Chuichi Date, paid an official visit to Rabat. In May, he invited the President of the Moroccan House of Councilors His Excellency Abdelhakim Benchamach to make an official visit to Japan. On the occasion of this visit, I had the honor of meeting

with him and his colleagues, discussing ways in which parliamentary relations could be reinforced between our two countries.

Morocco, historically called "Maghreb El-Aqca," the land of the sunset, and Japan, historically called the land of the rising sun, have seen great advances in the economic field. For example, the number of Japanese companies in Morocco has quadrupled over the past 10 years. These Japanese companies provide 40,000 jobs for Moroccans.

I would like to express profound gratitude to those in our two countries who have strived to achieve these mutually beneficial interactions.

As a man who loves Morocco and as president of the Japan-Morocco Parliamentary League, I sincerely hope that the relations between our two countries will be further strengthened in all fields and that the Japan-Morocco Parliamentary League will continue to contribute to achieving many of these objectives.

Nation plays key role in African development

HARUKO HIROSE
PRESIDENT, JAPAN MOROCCO ASSOCIATION



On the occasion of Morocco's Throne Day, I would like to extend my sincere and heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty King Mohammed VI on behalf of all members of the Japan Morocco Association.

On this auspicious occasion, I would also like to express my sincere greetings to Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Salma, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Moulay Al Hassan, Her Royal Highness Princesses Lalla Khadija and other members of the Royal Family, as well as to the people and government of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Under the leadership of the king, Morocco continues to maintain its steady economic growth and security, and also warmly welcomes foreign visitors, not only as tourists, but also as investors.

In January, Morocco has rejoined the African Union after a 33-year absence. This return is a great opportunity for trade and investment in the region and Morocco now has a very important role to play in achieving development and economic cooperation across the continent. I'm expecting to see Morocco strengthen African unity and play a leading role in the improvement of peace and stability in the region.

The relationship between Japan and Morocco has always been excellent and last year marked the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Morocco with the active exchange of senior officials from both countries. Additionally,

I am very happy to note that Morocco continues to be a very popular destination for Japanese tourists. A variety of Moroccan products such as argan oil, olive oil, salted lemon, tajine cooking and babouche slippers have become familiar in our Japanese life.

To promote friendship and better mutual understanding, the Japan Morocco Association will continue to organize various events with the cooperation of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in Japan, including monthly lectures related to Morocco, investment seminars targeting Japanese companies, as well as other cultural and economic events. The Annual Moroccan Evening will take place this year on Nov. 8 at the Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo. We welcome new participants to join these popular events. Please visit our website for details.

Congratulations
on the 18th Anniversary
of the Accession to the Throne of
His Majesty King Mohammed VI

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