

Praise be to God

Peace and blessings be upon
the Prophet, His Kith and Kin

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the participants in this first meeting of Moroccan women from all over the world.

I commend the Council for the Moroccan Community Abroad for the initiative it has taken to convene this gathering - in their homeland - of a select group of prominent expatriate women.

This is an opportunity for me to reaffirm my strong resolve to make the promotion of women's rights the cornerstone of our efforts to build a modern, democratic society and enable all Moroccan citizens to enjoy full-fledged citizenship.

Thus, the Family Law introduced reforms aimed at achieving gender equality as well as family balance and mutual assistance.

Those reforms were not meant to produce results only in Morocco, but also to give Moroccan women a legal status matching that enjoyed by women in the legislation of developed countries and through relevant international agreements and conventions.

The review of the Citizenship Act, which now makes it possible for a Moroccan mother to pass on her nationality to her offspring, regardless of her husband's nationality, falls within the framework of the same endeavours to promote women's rights.

In addition to strengthening these children's bonds with Morocco, the reform gives them legal guarantees - as young members of the expatriate community - to maintain ties with their homeland. It also provides them with strong incentives to remain committed to the cultural values of their country of origin.

Morocco has embarked on bold reforms, enacting advanced laws and bringing our national legislation in line with the provisions of the international conventions and charters to which the Kingdom has subscribed.

Our aim is to enhance the social, institutional and human rights conditions of women in general, and of Moroccan expatriate women in particular.

Through these measures, we are renewing our commitment to universal human rights, which are consistent with our religious and cultural identity.

We have been seeking to achieve Moroccan women's institutional and democratic empowerment by encouraging their participation in national life and employment in the civil service without discrimination, and by ensuring fair, increased representation in government, parliament, local government and all decision-making positions.

Considering Moroccan women's characteristic efficiency, seriousness, patriotism and keen sense of social responsibility, I am indeed determined to see to it they contribute effectively, just like men, to building a democratic, development-oriented society.

This is why gender mainstreaming, coupled with special interest in the affairs of Moroccan women overseas, have featured prominently in the action of the Council for the Moroccan Community Abroad.

In order to effectively implement this policy, the Government has been applying the gender approach in all public policies.

Although there have been significant achievements, the consolidation of women's human rights hinges on improving women's economic, social and cultural rights.

This is the reason why the top priorities in the National Initiative for Human Development include women's empowerment, especially in

rural areas, in view of the fact that women in rural communities constitute one of the most vulnerable segments of our population.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This general approach is backed by a special policy for expatriate Moroccan women, which seeks to preserve their rights and interests in the host countries and to protect them against all forms of discrimination. It also aims to ensure their participation in the development of their home country, in democratic life and in good governance, at local, regional and national levels.

I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to say how much I value the active, efficient part played, at various levels of responsibility, by Moroccan expatriate women in host countries. Thanks to their competence and skills, they have succeeded in all sectors, in institutional, political, parliamentary and government life, as well as in economic, social, cultural, artistic and scientific areas. They are also present in international forums and organizations, both governmental and non-governmental.

This is, indeed, a commendable track record which deserves to be supported by all means available, including the exchange of experiences, expanded communication networks, joint action and effective, constraint-free organization methods. I should like this first meeting of Moroccan women from all over the world to contribute to doing just that.

Moroccan women's civic participation in all sectors will continue to depend on the building of bridges between civil society actors involved in women's empowerment, both in the home country and abroad.

I also urge you to establish and develop exchange and partnership relations between Moroccan expatriate women's organizations and similar foreign associations in order to increase our country's influence and defend its just causes.

In this regard, I call on our dear citizens, Moroccan expatriate women, to strive doubly hard to underscore the justness of the cause of our territorial integrity. I urge them, in particular, to condemn, as vigorously as they can and in all relevant international forums, the inhuman conditions inflicted upon Moroccans who are detained in the Tindouf camps.

I especially ask you to show your solidarity with your fellow women citizens and their children, through effective action geared towards the international community, in order to put an end to the violation of these people's dignity, to the aggressions they suffer and to the denial of their right to family reunion in their united, democratic homeland – all blatant infringements of international human rights covenants.

Before concluding, I should like to wish your conference every success, hoping that Moroccan expatriate women will play a pivotal role in achieving their country's development, progress, modernization and increased regional and international influence.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh.

Mohammed VI

King of Morocco

The Royal Palace, Tangiers,
18 December 2008.