



**EURO-AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**OPENING STATEMENT BY H.E.M MOHAMED BENAÏSSA
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION
KINGDOM OF MOROCCO.**

RABAT, 10 JULY 2006.

*Ministers,
Excellencies,
Dear Friends.*

Allow me, first and foremost, to welcome you to Morocco, African land of hospitality and privileged meeting point for two continents: Africa and Europe. I would also like to commend all partner countries for their level and quality of participation that demonstrates, beyond any doubt, their interest in the migration issue that brings us together today.

Moreover, our being here also expresses the fraternity and solidarity, which exists between our countries. In this spirit of regional and international acting solidarity it has thus become vital to bring a sound, pragmatic, lasting and above all, humane, response to the central question of migration flows management, whilst insisting on the urgency and the shared responsibility of such an action.

Within this perspective, it is essential to reflect, together, on the different aspects and various phases of the migratory process as a whole, in the framework of an approach that involves countries of origin, transit and destination. It consequently falls on us to go beyond goodwill declarations and to lay the foundations of a renewed cooperation between Africa and Europe.

In a context marked increasingly by humanitarian crisis caused by the massive inflow of irregular migrants, it is imperative to act directly on the root causes that create and sustain this migratory phenomenon that has unfortunately reached alarming proportions.

On various occasions, His Majesty King Mohammed VI **thus** called for the adoption of a comprehensive approach that is marked with solidarity within our region. The objective of this approach is to allow parties involved to address the different facets of this problematic, by paying special attention to the root causes of a phenomenon, which His Majesty characterises as "structural".

This is the spirit that Morocco and Spain's initiative – with the support of France – of bringing together, with the active support of the European Commission, European and African countries affected by migratory routes across Central and West Africa. The objective being to address

this issue in the framework of a political solidarity and shared responsibility.

Today's meeting marks the beginning of an innovative and evolutionary process which, over a period of time, aims to reach a real treatment of the migratory issue. In this respect, we must join our efforts so as to mobilise the material and logistical means necessary to the preservation of the migrant's rights and dignity. No country can carry alone the regional and international responsibility that this implies.

I further take this opportunity to commend the remarkable work accomplished by the civil society, which represents a precious ally in the fulfilment of a complex task.

The problem of irregular migration, which translates the gap between Europe and Africa, may not be limited to security considerations.

Purely regulatory measures may not be relied upon by societies of well-being in order to permanently push aside spheres of poverty and ill development. The migratory phenomenon fundamentally expresses the economic and demographic disparities between Europe and Africa.

Moreover, only concrete and pragmatic measures, based on programmes that favour personal and collective blooming, will be able to give hope to our brother African peoples for a better life and to progressively contribute to their local development so as to allow them to live in a stable environment and to secure a dignified life back home, in a climate of shared prosperity and global security.

Our youth, as an engine of development and a source of potential for Africa's present and future, must consequently be placed at the heart of our strategy and action. We must invest more in the human African capital in the context of our management of the migratory phenomenon.

The Kingdom of Morocco is resolutely committed to turning its cooperation with its African brothers into a genuine model of South-South partnership. The exchange of experience and know-how, particularly through the development of its cooperation, has allowed Morocco to bring its contribution by focusing on priority sectors of sustainable development such as agriculture, education, health and training.

Morocco is ready to commit even more in this cooperative approach with its African brothers. It falls on us to untie the knots of our cooperation and to overcome our difficulties in a solidary way and in a spirit of vibrant and acting fraternity.

We, as Africans, must define the priorities and the parameters of our social and economic construction and perform in the framework of a shared vision that will enable us to work more coherently with our European friends.

Africa and Europe must redouble their efforts to face the major challenges of human and socio-economic development on the African continent. Morocco thus calls for a stronger commitment of the European Union and the international Community, for an effective and swift implementation of the commitments taken in support of the African continent, in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals.

By linking the migratory problematic to the development imperative, the Rabat Conference aims to bring a comprehensive, ambitious and lasting response to the management of migratory flows.

As such, it is necessary to make better use of the migration potential as a factor for the development, modernisation and innovation of host societies and societies of origin.

We are all well aware that migrants are major actors of social transformation in their countries of origin. At the macro-economic level, financial flows coming from migrants are often superior to the Public Aid earmarked for development. The projects maintained by migrants correspond to a local demand and to proximity needs.

In this context, the challenge is to finally find a way to better drain and use this potential in terms of finance and know-how in favour of countries of origin.

Regarding the contribution of migrants to the wealth of host societies, history is a witness to their decisive contribution in the evolution of these societies, to their demographic and social balance, to their diversity and to their cultural enrichment. International migrations represent the base for

a dialogue of cultures and civilisations and consequently the future of humanity.

This is why Morocco favours the adoption, by our Conference, of a positive and more dynamic approach to migration, namely through an optimisation of the potential of long-term, circular and temporary migration. This is an approach marked with openness and consultation, aimed at a better concordance of African and European needs in terms of employment.

Moreover, my country calls for the preservation of the dignity and rights of African migrants and to the guarantee of their civilisationnal, cultural and religious diversity. For we all know that a successful and beneficial migration for the host country and the country of origin implies a good social, economic and cultural integration of migrants.

Moreover, the brain drain phenomenon which weakens, year after year, an important part of the African continent's vitality is central to the development of a franc and sincere partnership between Africa and Europe.

Also, in order for African countries to take full advantage of the resources it greatly needs, we must act urgently and strive for the determined implementation of concrete and innovative initiatives, especially in the fields of education, research and development.

Today, the international Community has to elaborate a common strategy to combat these unscrupulous dream merchants, who act in total disregard for the rights and dignity of the migrant and exploit our youth's despair and poverty as a profitable commerce.

In this respect, I would also like to bring to your attention that given its geographic situation, Morocco has lately been subject to a massive and never seen before inflow of migrants originating from the South and heading towards a more and more hermetic Europe.

Despite the various constraints generating from this inflow, Morocco has spared no effort in treating this phenomenon to the extent of its own means.

Conscious of the necessity to manage the migratory phenomenon in a rational way and in accordance with the Sovereign's orientations, Morocco has taken many regulatory steps in order to strengthen the legal arsenal destined to combat these human trafficking networks and to strong apply the dispositions planned in this context.

The converging views existing today between countries of origin, transit and destination make up the base of our partnership in a framework where faith has asked us to share responsibilities because of our adherence to a common geographic space.

We possess all the assets necessary to carry out the task at hand and to ensure that our hopes and aspirations evolve into a positive and beneficial progress on our societies.

Dear colleagues, these are the challenges we must face together in a resolute and appropriate way. The Ministerial Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development comes as a first important step for an action inscribed in a new dynamic, a pragmatic vision and a shared responsibility.

The time has therefore come for a consensual, balanced, pragmatic and daring action plan to be adopted in accordance with our countries' greatest worries and ambitions, in a spirit of active solidarity and shared responsibility.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI underlined, last year, in His speech on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Green March that:

"whatever the transient difficulties, they will not undermine Morocco's firm determination to rise to this challenge and respect the rights and dignity of migrants, Moroccans and foreigners alike. Morocco thus confirms its belief in the requisites of openness, interaction, solidarity and brotherhood dictated by its geographical location, democratic system and cultural heritage". (end of quote).

Thank you.