

## **Royal Speech to Nation on 44<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Green March**

"Dear Citizens,

The Green March has always been the best illustration of the effective cohesion between the Throne and the people.

It is testimony to the ability of Moroccans - the King and the people - to rise to the challenges facing the nation.

This is a never-ending march. Indeed, the spirit which enabled us to recover the Sahara in 1975 is the same one which urges us today to achieve development in all the regions of the Kingdom.

This naturally includes our southern provinces, which constitute a link between Morocco and the rest of Africa from the geographical, human and economic perspectives.

Dear Citizens,

Morocco has always been clear in its position concerning the Moroccanness of the Sahara as much as in its firm belief in the justness of its cause and the legitimacy of its rights.

It will continue to work honestly and in good faith to achieve a political, realistic, practical and consensual solution based exclusively on the political approach adopted by the United Nations Organization and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Autonomy Initiative provides for that solution, given that it is not only serious and credible, but also rooted in sound principles. It is the only way forward towards a settlement guaranteeing full respect for the Kingdom's national unity and territorial integrity.

This tendency has been reinforced by the growing number of States - now more than 163 - which do not recognize the fictitious entity.

It is also confirmed by the partnerships and agreements which have been signed by Morocco with the influential powers as well as with many countries and sister nations, and which concern all the Kingdom's regions, including the Saharan provinces.

Dear Citizens,

The Green March enabled Morocco to recover its southern provinces.

As a result, the map of the Kingdom has changed. It is perhaps hard to believe that Rabat is, in fact, located in the country's far north, and that Agadir is the center of the country.

Indeed, the distance between Agadir and Tangier is roughly the same as that between Agadir and the Saharan provinces.

With that in mind, it is not reasonable that some basic infrastructure should end at Marrakech, whereas the Souss-Massa region is actually the center of Morocco and has enormous potential.

For this reason, I invite the authorities concerned to give serious thought to the development of a rail link between Marrakech and Agadir, as a first step before extending it to the rest of the southern regions. We should also expand the road network, which I am seeking to further develop through the construction of the Agadir-Dakhla highway.

The railway line will contribute to opening up the regions concerned, in addition to stimulating development and economic prosperity, especially with regard to the transport of people and goods and the promotion of exports, tourism and other economic activities.

It will also create many job opportunities, not just in Souss-Massa, but in all surrounding regions, too.

The Souss-Massa region must become an economic hub linking Morocco's north to its south - from Tangier, in the north, to Oujda, in the east, to our southern provinces, in the south.

This should be achieved within the framework of advanced regionalization and the equitable distribution of wealth between all regions.

The country I would like to see should comprise harmonious, integrated regions that benefit, on an equal footing, from infrastructure and major projects that should be profitable to all.

Regional development should be based on cooperation and complementarity between regions. Each region should have a major economic hub developed around its potential and specificities.

Moreover, sectoral policies should be implemented at the regional level.

It should be emphasized, in this regard, that the new momentum which has been created with respect to state institutions, the government and the civil service, should be extended to regions as well.

Dear Citizens,

My keenness to achieve fair, balanced development in all the Kingdom's regions is just as strong as my commitment to establishing sound, solid relations with sister Maghreb countries.

The current situation in the region and in the Mediterranean basin makes demands on us all. It requires positive action, given the opportunities and the challenges involved.

- Young people in the Maghreb want us to provide an open space conducive to communication and exchange;
- The corporate sector expects us to bring about conditions to boost development;
- Our partners, especially in Europe, need an effective partner;
- Our fellow brothers and sisters in sub-Saharan Africa await our countries' contribution to major programs on the continent and to tackling Africa's main challenges;
- And our Arab brothers look forward to seeing the Great Maghreb contribute to forging a new Arab order.

Hopes, just like expectations, are running high; and the challenges are many and complex. Regrettably, some are not taking the situation seriously.

As a matter of fact, we have one and the same enemy, namely inaction and limited development, which are having an adverse impact on the peoples of our five countries.

Dear Citizens,

The Moroccan Sahara is our country's gateway to sub-Saharan Africa.

Ever since I ascended the throne, I have put Africa at the heart of Morocco's foreign policy. Therefore, I have paid visits to numerous African countries, and close to 1,000 agreements have been signed, covering all areas of cooperation.

This has had a tangible impact on Morocco's economic, political, cultural and religious standing on the continent.

I firmly intend to make Morocco a key player in shaping the Africa of the future.

Moreover, our ambition is to increase the volume of trade with other African countries, to boost Morocco's investments in the continent and to launch a new phase based on mutual benefit.

The achievement of these goals hinges on the fulfilment of Morocco's commitments as well as on expanding our presence in Africa.

Dear Citizens,

Ours is a collective responsibility to safeguard our national unity and territorial integrity, and to promote comprehensive development throughout Morocco.

At the same time, it is our responsibility to strengthen the humanitarian, economic and political relations binding Morocco to other African countries.

We would thus reiterate our commitment to the Oath of the Green March, honor the memory of its architect, my revered father, His Majesty King Hassan II - may he rest in peace - and pay tribute to all the worthy Moroccans who made sacrifices so that Morocco may enjoy freedom and progress, in an environment where unity, security and stability prevail.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh."