

## Speech to the nation on the occasion of the eighteenth anniversary of Throne Day

" Praise be to God,

May peace and blessings be upon the Prophet, His Kith and Kin

Dear Citizens,

Today, we are celebrating the eighteenth anniversary of my accession to the throne, in a national environment characterized by achievements as well as challenges.

This yearly celebration is an opportunity to renew the mutual bonds of the Bei'a uniting us and to take stock, together, of the state of the nation.

The development projects and the political and institutional reforms carried out target a single goal: to serve citizens, wherever they may be. There is no difference between north and south, east and west, urban and rural areas.

It is true that Morocco's resources are limited. It is also a fact that many regions need more basic social services.

However, Morocco has been constantly developing, by the grace of the Almighty. Progress is clear and real; it is recognized across the board and in all sectors.

Today, however, we are witnessing glaring paradoxes that are hard to understand or accept.

On the one hand, Morocco enjoys indisputable credibility at continental and international levels, the esteem and consideration of our partners and the confidence of major investors, such as the Boeing, Renault and Peugeot groups. But on the other hand, we are shocked by the end results, the facts on the ground and the modest achievements made in certain social sectors, so much so that it is shameful to admit we are actually talking about present-day Morocco.

While it is true that our action, through a number of sectoral plans - like those relating to agriculture, industry and renewable energy - has been successful, human and local development programs, which have a positive impact on citizens' living conditions, do us no credit, nor do they match our ambitions.

In many sectors, this is mostly due to the inadequacy of joint action, the lack of a national, strategic dimension, inconsistency instead of harmony, disparagement and procrastination instead of entrepreneurship and concrete action.

These paradoxes are even more acute when we compare the private sector - which is efficient and competitive, and which is built on a governance model that has incentives, as well as follow-up and monitoring mechanisms - to the public sector, particularly our civil service, which is suffering from poor governance and weak performance.

The private sector is attracting the best human resources that are trained in our country. They are involved in the management of major international groups in Morocco as well as small and medium-sized Moroccan enterprises.

As for civil servants, many of them do not have the skills, qualifications or ambition required; moreover, they are not always guided by a sense of responsibility.

Some of them report to work for only short periods of time, preferring to settle for modest - but guaranteed - pay, instead of working hard to improve their social conditions.

One of the problems which impede Morocco's progress is the weakness of the civil service, be it in terms of governance, efficiency or the quality of the services provided to citizens.

For instance, the regional investment centers - with the exception of one or two - are a problem. They impede the act of investing instead of serving as a mechanism that provides incentives and resolves the problems of investors at the regional level, without their having to go to central government departments.

This has an adverse impact on regions that are suffering from insufficient - sometimes inexistent - private investment and from the public sector's weak performance. This, in turn, affects citizens' living conditions.

The challenge is even more daunting in regions with the biggest shortage of health, education and cultural services, not to mention the lack of jobs. Greater cooperative efforts are required to close gaps and help these regions catch up with the others.

Conversely, regions with a vibrant private sector, like Casablanca, Rabat, Marrakech and Tangier, are enjoying strong economic dynamism which creates wealth as well as jobs.

To put an end to this situation, governors, caids, directors, staff members, local officials, etc. should work hard, just like staff in the private sector - or even harder. They should show a sense of responsibility that does credit to the civil service and yields concrete results since these officials are entrusted with serving citizens' interests.

Dear Citizens,

All in all, our development policy choices remain sound. The problem lies with mentalities that have not evolved as well as with the inability to implement projects and to innovate.

The evolution witnessed in Morocco in the political domain and in the area of development has not led to the kind of positive reaction you would expect from political parties, leaders and government officials when dealing with the real aspirations and concerns of Moroccans.

When results are positive, political parties, politicians and officials vie for the spotlight to derive benefits from the achievements made, both politically and in terms of media exposure.

However, when matters do not turn out the way they should, they hide behind the Royal Palace and ascribe everything to it.

As a result, citizens complain to the King about government services or officials that take too long to respond to their queries or process their cases, asking him to intercede on their behalf.

Citizens are entitled to convincing answers - within reasonable timeframes - to their queries and complaints, including the explanation or justification of negative decisions. Requests and queries should not be turned down without a valid legal reason; they should be rejected only when they are inconsistent with the law, or when the citizen concerned has not completed the relevant procedures or met the requirements.

Given this situation, citizens are entitled to ask themselves: What is the use of having institutions, holding elections, forming governments and appointing ministers, walis, governors, ambassadors and consuls if they live on one planet, and the people and their concerns are on another one?

The practices of some elected officials induce a number of citizens, especially young people, to shun political life and take no part in elections.

Put simply, they do not trust politicians; indeed, some stakeholders have perverted politics, diverting it away from its lofty objectives.

If the King of Morocco is not convinced of the way political activity is conducted and if he does not trust a number of politicians, what are the citizens left with?

To all those concerned I say: 'Enough is enough!' Fear God in what you are perpetrating against your homeland. Either discharge your obligations fully or withdraw from public life. There are plenty of honest men and women in Morocco.

This situation can no longer be tolerated because the homeland's interests and those of the citizens are at stake. I am choosing my words carefully here, and I know what I am saying because it comes after deep reflection.

Dear Citizens,

The responsibility and the privilege of serving citizens call for action that goes from responding to their basic demands to implementing projects - big and small.

As I always point out, there is no difference between small and large projects. All projects are meant to meet people's needs.

Whether a project concerns a district, a hamlet, a city, a region or the entire country, it still has the same objective, which is to serve citizens. In the eyes of citizens, digging a well or building a dam, for instance, are equally important.

What is the meaning of responsibility if the official concerned loses sight of one of the most basic requirements of that responsibility, which is to listen to citizens' concerns?

I fail to understand how officials who do not fulfill their duties can leave home, drive their cars, stop at traffic lights and brazenly and shamelessly look people in the face, knowing that they are aware of their unscrupulous conduct.

Are these people who took the oath before God, the homeland and the King, and who fail to perform their duties, not ashamed of themselves? Should not any official who is guilty of dereliction of duty be held to account and dismissed?

I must insist, in this respect, on the need to apply rigorously the provisions of the second paragraph of Article 1 of the Constitution, which links public office with accountability.

It is high time this principle were implemented in full. Just as the law applies equally to all citizens, it must be applied, first and foremost, to all officials, without distinction or discrimination, and in all of the Kingdom's regions.

This is the dawn of a new era in which there is no difference between officials and citizens as far as civic rights and obligations are concerned; nor is there room for shirking responsibility or avoiding sanctions.

Dear Citizens,

I insist on the need to implement the provisions of the Constitution fully and rigorously. This is a collective responsibility which lies with all stakeholders, each in their respective area of competence - the government, parliament, political parties and all the institutions concerned.

When an official obstructs or delays the implementation of a development project or a social program, this is not simply a case of dereliction of duty; it amounts to treason because that official is harming the interests of citizens and preventing them from enjoying their legitimate rights.

Strangely enough, there are some officials who fail in their duty and still consider that they deserve a higher position.

It is attitudes and inconsistencies such as these that give substance to the widely-held belief among most Moroccans that the reason behind vying for positions is to benefit from rent-seeking and to wield power and influence to serve one's own interests.

And since examples of such practices exist in everyday life, people unfortunately tend to give credence to this belief.

But, thank God, not all politicians and senior civil servants are like that. There are trustworthy people who genuinely love their homeland and who are known for their integrity, uprightness and commitment to serving the public good.

Dear Citizens,

The events taking place in some parts of the country have regrettably revealed an unprecedented lack of the sense of responsibility.

Instead of each party fulfilling its national and professional obligations; instead of resorting to cooperation and collaborative efforts to resolve citizens' problems, the parties concerned have been laying the blame at one another's door, and narrow politicking has been allowed to take precedence over the homeland. As a result, citizens' interests have been ignored.

Some political parties believe that all they have to do is hold their general meetings, those of their political and executive committees and get involved in election campaigns.

But when it comes to engaging the citizens and solving their problems, they do nothing and are non-existent. This is unacceptable on the part of institutions whose role is to guide and represent the citizens and to serve their interests.

I never expected partisan bickering and political score-settling to go as far as to jeopardize the interests of citizens.

Running public affairs should have nothing to do with personal or partisan interests, populist discourse, or the use of strange expressions that undermine political action.

I have noted that most stakeholders have opted for a win-lose rationale to preserve or expand their political capital at the expense of the homeland, even if that means making the situation worse.

The fact that political parties and their representatives refrain from performing their mission - sometimes deliberately, and sometimes out of a lack of credibility or patriotism - has further compounded the situation.

Given this regrettable and dangerous vacuum, law enforcement services have found themselves face to face with the citizens. They have bravely and patiently fulfilled their duty, showing restraint and commitment to the rule of law as they maintained security and stability.

I am referring to Al Hoceima, but what happened there could actually occur in any other region.

This refutes what some have referred to as the 'security approach', as if Morocco were sitting on top of a volcano, or as if each household and each citizen were being watched over by a policeman.

Some even say there is a radical wing and a moderate one, adding that they disagree on how to tackle these events. Nothing could be further from the truth!

In reality, there is only one policy and a single, unwavering commitment, which is to enforce the law, respect the institutions, ensure the security of citizens and safeguard their property.

Moroccans know that the people behind the afore-mentioned anachronous theory are using it as a business undertaking; they also realize that what these people say is not credible.

They act as if law-enforcement services are the ones who run the country and control the government and senior officials. It is probably these services that set prices, etc.

By contrast, law enforcement officers are making major sacrifices, working day and night in difficult conditions to fulfil their duty, maintain the internal and external security and stability of the homeland, and safeguard the security, serenity and tranquility of citizens.

Moroccans have every right and ought, in fact, to be proud of their law-enforcement authorities. I say this loud and clear, without any inferiority complex: if certain nihilists do not want to admit this, or refuse to tell the truth, it is their problem – and theirs alone.

Dear Citizens,

The Moroccan institutional model is an advanced political system.

Nevertheless, for the most part, it is not properly applied. The problem concerns actual implementation on the ground. Having said that, I am particularly keen to respect the prerogatives of institutions as well as the separation of powers.

However, if officials fail to discharge their duties, and the interests of the homeland and of citizens are jeopardized, it is incumbent upon me, as per the Constitution, to ensure the country's security and stability and to safeguard people's interests as well as their rights and freedoms.

At the same time, I will not accept any backtracking on democratic achievements, nor will I tolerate any obstruction as far as the work of institutions is concerned. Both the Constitution and the law are quite clear, and powers need no explanation.

Officials must exercise their prerogatives without waiting for someone's permission. And instead of repeating the same excuse - namely 'I am being prevented from doing my job' - it is better for them to offer their resignation, which nobody would reject.

Morocco must come first: before political parties, before elections and before senior positions.

Dear Citizens,

Until my very last breath, I will always take pride in serving you, for I was brought up to love our motherland and to serve its sons and daughters.

I solemnly promise, before God, to keep up my earnest endeavors and seek to meet your expectations so that your aspirations may be fulfilled.

Allow me, Dear citizens, to speak my mind and tell you exactly how I feel, eighteen years after assuming the sacred mission of leading the nation.

I cannot hide certain matters from you. You know them quite well. It is my duty to tell you the truth. Otherwise, I will let you down.

You will notice, Dear Citizens, that I have not talked about our territorial integrity, Africa, or any other foreign policy issue.

Needless to say, the question of the Moroccan Sahara is not open for discussion, and, of course, it remains a top priority.

What I am seeking to achieve today, in all regions of the Kingdom, is a new *massîra*, or march - a march for the achievement of human and social development; a march for equality and social justice for all Moroccans, because such a major endeavor cannot be carried out in one region and not in the others.

One may come up with the most efficient development model and the best plans and strategies but:

- without a change in mentality;
- without having the best civil servants;
- without the political parties choosing the best elites that are qualified to run public affairs;
- without a sense of responsibility and national commitment; one would not be able to offer all Moroccans the free, dignified life one wants them to have.

I do not want you, Dear Citizens, to think, after listening to this address, that I am being pessimistic.

Far from it! You know that I am a realist. I tell the truth, painful though it may be.

Pessimism is the lack of will, the absence of a forward-looking vision and the inability to see things as they are.

Thank God, our resolve is both firm and sincere, and we also have a clear, long-term vision. We know who we are and where we are heading.

Throughout the centuries, and by the Grace of the Almighty, Morocco has managed to survive countless hardships, thanks to the close, symbiotic relationship between the Throne and the people.



And here we are today, forging ahead and making progress, together, in various sectors. We confidently and resolutely look forward to making more achievements.

Almighty God says :

'Allah does command you to render back your Trusts to those to whom they are due; and when you judge between man and man, that you judge with justice'.

True is the Word of God.

Wassalmu alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. "