



المملكة المغربية

Kingdom of Morocco

**Opening Statement by the Minister of Employment and Social Affairs
to the 56th session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
at the review of the Fourth National Report**

30 September 2015

Geneva, Switzerland

[As prepared for delivery]

Mr. Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco to participate in this interactive and constructive dialogue with the Members of the Committee, on the occasion of the review of the Kingdom of Morocco's Fourth Periodic Report on implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The presentation of this Report before the Committee is an opportunity to present the progress our country has made in fulfilling its relevant international obligations, and to consider developments and achievements that the Kingdom has undertaken since the review of its third Report in 2006.

The progress the international community has made regarding the implementation of the provisions of the ICESCR is no doubt an occasion to commend your honorable Committee for its efforts to promote and evaluate achievements, challenges and shortfalls in this area.

The Kingdom of Morocco's ratification in 1979 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) has been reinforced in 2013 by ratifying the hard core of human rights instruments, namely the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, the withdrawal of reservations and starting adherence to and ratification of a number of Optional Protocols.

The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its commitment to maintain cooperation with the United Nations human rights system, and considers its contribution in promoting and improving the performance of the system as one of its strategic priorities that aim at further strengthening international human rights law and ensuring enjoyment of the rights and freedoms it protects.

In this context, it is worth noting that the Kingdom has contributed to the process on the strengthening of the treaty body system by proposing a number of initiatives to improve the roles of the Human Rights Council and enhance enjoyment of certain rights. In addition, the Kingdom has been positively interacting with special procedures, nine of which have visited the country to date, and five since 2011, including procedures on economic, social and cultural rights, such as the Independent Expert on Cultural Rights, as well as the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food who will visit our country next week.

To strengthen this interaction, the Kingdom of Morocco has developed and implemented an urgent action plan to redress the backlog in submitting some reports to treaty bodies, and has paid special attention to following up on the implementation of recommendations of UN human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, special procedures and treaty bodies. For that purpose, the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights, with the participation of all stakeholders, has prepared a holistic national action plan to follow up on implementation of these recommendations. This plan of action enjoyed the support of the United Nations Development Program in Morocco and United Nations specialized agencies, and was commended by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as a best practice.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Fully aware of the need for a comprehensive treatment of human rights issues, with regard to their universality, interdependence and indivisibility, the Kingdom of Morocco has adopted a strategic and multidimensional approach in protecting and promoting human rights, through the development of a set of structural plans, programs and projects, namely the Citizen Platform for the Promotion of the Human Rights Culture, the National Plan of Action on Democracy and Human Rights, the National Charter for Reform of the Justice System, the National Plan for Equality and Equity, the National Initiative for Human Development, the Development Model for Southern Provinces, the National Strategy to Support Creativity and Culture, the National Strategy on Heritage, and the National Charter for Environment and Sustainable Development.

The Kingdom of Morocco has also adopted sectorial public policies, especially the Integrated National Strategy for Youth, the Integrated Public Policy for the Protection of Children, the National Strategy for the Promotion of Creativity and Culture, the Strategic Vision for Reforming the Education System, the National Strategy for Employment, the National Strategy for the Elderly, the Public Policy for the Promotion of the Rights of People with Disabilities, the National Program Against Substandard Housing, the Compulsory Basic Health Coverage System, the System of Medical Assistance for Vulnerable People, the National Program for General Access to Drinking water and Electricity, and the National Strategy on Energy.

Several other plans have been adopted to foster dynamics that shall produce wealth and provide means of drawing collective and fair benefits therefrom, namely the National Plan for the Development of Agriculture, the National Plan for the Development of Tourism, the National Plan to Accelerate Industrial Development, and integrated development plans for major cities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Report on 50 Years of Human Development, which was prepared by a group of experts from various backgrounds, according to a participatory approach that involved all stakeholders, has enabled the Kingdom of Morocco to assess its progress in fulfilling economic, social and cultural rights, to identify deficiencies and develop future scenarios in relevant areas. This was followed by institutional and legislative reforms which allowed for the development of an institutional and legal framework that is compatible with national needs and international standards. Indeed, nearly 11 national institutions on human rights, sustainable development and governance have been created, and implementation of the National Initiative for Human Development, whose main objective is to fight poverty, social exclusion and vulnerability, has continued.

This reforming process was marked in July 2011 by the adoption, after a popular referendum, of a new Constitution that has entrenched universally recognized fundamental rights and freedoms, including economic, social and cultural rights.

This Constitution has provided for the creation of a number of institutions for the promotion and protection of these rights, the emphasis on cultural and linguistic diversity through the recognition of Tamazight as an official language, the emphasis on the preservation of Hassaniya and the protection of dialects and cultural expressions, the obligation to provide conditions for widening the effectivity of rights and freedoms and guarantees for participation in the political, economic, social and cultural

life. In addition to ensuring trade union rights and the creation of bodies for consultation with social and economic actors, the 2011 Constitution endorses a system of advanced regionalization based on a territorial division that invests regions with extensive powers in the areas of economic and social development, while promoting participatory democracy mechanisms at the regional level.

The Constitution also includes provisions that relate to the protection of property, free initiative and entrepreneurship, free competition, the right to strike, the right to cultural and artistic creativity and scientific and technical research. It consecrates the right to access to medical treatment and health care, social protection, modern education, vocational training, physical and artistic education, adequate housing, employment, and access to water, a healthy environment and sustainable development. It also ensures participation of young people and women in economic and social development, establishment and implementation of policies that are oriented to persons and groups with special needs, achievement of sustainable human development, and making economic, social and territorial solidarity a core value of the Moroccan society.

At the same time, the Kingdom has enacted a number of legislative initiatives related to economic, social and cultural rights, such as in the field of the penal system, the expansion of mechanisms for involvement and consultation, the consecration of the protection of women, support for the rights of people with disabilities, refugees, the elderly and children, as well as other particular fields such as rights related to trade unions, health and safety in the job, consumer protection, protection of freedom of competition, improvement of the business climate, health coverage, promotion of regionalization, etc.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The reform and development of the human rights legal and institutional system in our country has been complemented by parallel actions and measures that promote enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, particularly in order to support purchasing power and job creation, universal access to basic services and facilities, especially water, electricity and roads, to encourage solidarity and social economy, facilitate access to health services, ensuring health coverage for needy groups, provide adequate housing, generalize primary education, fight against poverty, marginalization and social exclusion, raise national efforts in supporting vulnerable social groups and developing rural areas, and improve the performance of national economy.

Concerning women's rights, the Kingdom of Morocco has taken several measures to fight violence against women, to promote the gender approach in the public budget, to guarantee access to public services and facilities, and to support participation in the management of public affairs.

It is worth noting that these reforms have received international recognition, which contributed to strengthening of cooperation between the Kingdom and several countries, mainly South - South cooperation and partnership, which is a pioneering initiative at the international and regional levels in various fields, strengthening partnerships, and the exchange of expertise in security, economic, social and cultural fields.

The Kingdom of Morocco hosted the Second Global Forum for Human Rights in Marrakech from 27 to 30 November 2014, which came as an international recognition of its efforts in the field of human rights and an opportunity to discuss various relevant topics, including those related to economic, social and cultural rights, examined in more than 14 thematic fora, and the organization of the Global Forum of Trade Unions as a special event. The Global Forum for Human Rights was marked by a Royal Message addressed to participants which underscored : *'the global human rights agenda has gone through profound transformations; indeed, while first- and second-generation of human rights still have the lead, new issues have emerged, such as protecting the rights of elderly people, human rights in the digital age, business and human rights, legal empowerment of the poor, and the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights'*.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Fulfilling its international obligations, especially those related to the implementation of the recommendations issued by your respectful Committee, complying with relevant constitutional provisions and the aforementioned strategic plans, and taking into consideration the MDGs, we can say that the Kingdom of Morocco, despite challenges and difficulties faced by the national economy due to the global crisis and slow economic growth worldwide, has scored many achievements in the field of economic, social and cultural rights, as can be seen from the following indicators:

- **Regard the budget**
 - 52.2% of the national public budget was allocated to social sector impacting positively economic, social and cultural rights
- **Regarding poverty reduction:**
 - Reduction of poverty rate from 15.3% in 2001 to 6.2% in 2011
 - Reduction of vulnerability rate from 22.8% in 2001 to 13.3% in 2011

As such, Morocco has achieved one of the most important MDGs, namely poverty reduction, as it managed to reduce the rate of poverty by more than a half before the 2015 deadline set by the international community.

- **Regarding access to education and training:**
 - Increasing schooling rate at primary education level from 91.4% in 2008 to 99.5% in 2014
 - Decreasing school dropout rate from 4.6% in 2008 to 2.3% in 2014
 - Decreasing illiteracy rate from 43% in 2004 to 30% in 2012
- **Regarding access to health care:**
 - Access to health insurance reached 62% in 2015, with a view to securing universal access by 2020.
- **Regarding maternal and infant mortality:**
 - Reducing the mortality rate of infants under 5 by 64%, down from 84‰ in 1992 to 30‰ in 2011
 - Reducing the mortality rate of infants under 1 from 40‰ in 2003 to 28.8‰ in 2011
 - Reducing maternal mortality by 66%, down from 332 deaths per 100.000 live birth in 1992 to 112 deaths per 100.000 live births in 2011

- **Regarding access to housing:**
 - Decreasing the deficit recorded in social housing by 30% between 2012 and 2014
- **Regarding the national program “Cities Without Slums”:**
 - Eradicating slums in 54 out of 85 concerned cities
 - 248.659 families benefitted from the national plan “Cities Without Slums” out of 375.715 concerned families between 2004 and 2014
- **Regarding job creation:**
 - Unemployment rate stagnating at 9% between 2010 and 2014
- **Regarding social security**
 - Increase in the rate of employees declared to the national social security fund from 1.58 million in 2005 to 3 million in 2014
- **Regarding the promotion of gender equality**
 - Increase in the gender parity index in access to education from 0.89% in 2009 to 0.95% in 2013
 - Increase in the rate of women’s access to civil service from 36% in 2006 to 39.4% in 2013
 - Increase in women’s access to high-ranking positions in civil service to 17% in 2014
- **Regarding universal access to water and electricity**
 - Increase in the rate of access to potable water in rural areas from 85% in 2007 to 93% in 2012
 - Increase in the number of rural populations with access to electricity from 18% in 1995 to 97% in 2012

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These indicators bear witness to the achievements of the Kingdom of Morocco in ensuring the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, which has been confirmed by the reports and testimonies of several international organizations, such as:

- The United Nations Development Report on Morocco for the year 2014, which commended the valuable efforts deployed by the Kingdom of Morocco
- Awarding the Kingdom the UN Habitat’s Scroll of Honor in 2010 for its national program to combat inappropriate housing
- The Kingdom was granted the FAO’s award in 2015 for achieving the 1st MDG relating to reduction of extreme poverty and hunger two years ahead of the deadline
- The Kingdom’s receipt of the Honourable Mention of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy in 2012 in recognition of its achievements in terms of literacy programs
- Ranking 3rd among countries with the best human development programs in the World Bank’s Report on social security coverage in the world for the year 2015
- The Kingdom’s award of the 1st place in the category of Promoting Gender Responsive Delivery of Public Services of the UN Public Service Award for the year 2014

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The elaboration of this Report has been done according to consultative approach adopted by the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights in the field of interaction with the UN human rights instruments, notably treaty bodies. All stakeholders, including government sectors, national institutions, and civil society associations have been invited to participate in its elaboration, in keeping with the United Nations' guidelines in this field and the best practices developed by our country.

Because of the importance that our country is giving to this review, all necessary means have been provided to ensure a high level of interaction with your respectful Committee, which enabled Moroccan authorities to provide answers to the list of issues within the deadlines. A high-level delegation representing a selection of concerned departments and institutions has been appointed to discuss the content of this Report with you. We hope that this interactive dialogue would contribute, through its concluding observations and recommendations, to encouraging the Kingdom of Morocco to follow through with the reforms currently underway and supporting the efforts it is making in promoting the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

Thank you for your attention.

