



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**EIGHTH MEETING OF THE
EU-MOROCCO ASSOCIATION COUNCIL**

**(Brussels, 7 December 2009) - Statement by the European
Union**

1. The European Union (EU) warmly welcomes this eighth meeting of the Association Council, which marks a new stage in the development of relations between Morocco and the European Union. The partnership with Morocco is of fundamental value for the EU, on account of the part it plays not just in the Maghreb and in Africa but also throughout the Mediterranean. Morocco continues to distinguish itself by its vision and its commitment within the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean. The EU considers that the deepening of bilateral relations with Morocco is a concrete expression of the principle of differentiation which is one of the bases of the European Neighbourhood Policy.
2. The Association Council of 13 October 2008 marked a new stage in the strengthening of relations between Morocco and the EU, thanks to the adoption of the **joint document on establishing Morocco's advanced status** in its relationship with the EU. The joint document forms an ambitious roadmap for the progressive and sustained development of bilateral relations in many fields. This stronger partnership between the EU and Morocco is evidence of the EU's readiness to respond positively to Morocco's expectations and specific needs, in order to support its courageous process of modernisation and democratisation, and deepens the existing framework constituted by the Association Agreement.

3. The joint document provides, in particular, for the strengthening of political cooperation, greater integration into the Internal Market based on progressive regulatory approximation with the *acquis communautaire* and the negotiation of a deep and comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, as well as enhanced sectoral cooperation. Another innovative feature of the document is the recommendations aimed at involving other actors in the partnership between the EU and Morocco (European Parliament, Council of Europe, European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions, business associations, trade unions, representatives of civil society and others).
4. As provided for by the joint document, the ad hoc Working Party set up in accordance with a decision taken at the sixth meeting of the Association Council has carried out a **general assessment of the implementation of the joint document**. The EU considers that the efforts which have been made in order to implement the joint document, particularly in terms of political, strategic and economic dialogue, and in financial and social matters, deserve to be emphasised. The enhanced cooperation with the Council of Europe is also promising. In this context, the EU congratulates Morocco on being the first non-European country to become a member of the Council of Europe's North-South Centre.
5. The European Parliament has given positive consideration to the joint document's recommendations as regards parliamentary cooperation, and the EU-Morocco **Joint Parliamentary Committee** is in the process of being set up. The Committee has established contacts with the **European Economic and Social Committee** and with the **Committee of the Regions**, and the EU wishes cooperation between these two Community institutions and the equivalent Moroccan bodies to be initiated in the near future.
6. The EU considers it important to intensify joint work in the areas of **security and judicial cooperation and the human dimension**. The EU also attaches great importance to finalising trade negotiations in order to move on to the next stage: starting negotiations on the **deep and comprehensive Free Trade Agreement**. As regards the **approximation of the legislative framework**, the EU also considers it of fundamental importance to establish a Moroccan body responsible for the interministerial coordination of regulatory convergence, and to draw up a national regulatory convergence programme, which are key elements for the implementation of the joint document on advanced status. The EU considers that the **First Morocco-EU Summit**, to be held in the first half of 2010, will certainly testify to the political importance which both parties attach to their bilateral relations and will help to strengthen them.
7. The EU welcomes the regular holding of **meetings of the various subcommittees** provided for in the Agreement. It also welcomes the **new format agreed on for certain sectoral subcommittees**, which will allow more operational follow-up as soon as advanced status is in place and the direction of work has been set. This new format has begun to be used and may be retained or altered in the light of the results obtained.

8. As provided for by the joint document the EU and Morocco have initiated a process of reflection on the **new instrument that will follow on from the Morocco Action Plan** which comes to an end in 2010. In this context the ad hoc Working Party has considered the aims, the proposed methodology, the main principles and the structure of the document which will replace the Morocco Action Plan. The EU confirms its commitment to work on this document with Morocco so that both Parties can adopt it in 2010 and implement it without delay.
9. In accordance with the aim and principles of the ENP, the EU-Morocco Neighbourhood Action Plan and the Association Council's conclusions of July 2007, the ad hoc Working Party has agreed to continue the process of reflection on the nature and form of the instrument which will follow on from the Action Plan and, if appropriate, of the contractual relationship which will replace the Association Agreement.
10. The EU welcomes the progress made by Morocco in implementing the **EU-Morocco Neighbourhood Action Plan**, as evidenced by the monitoring reports prepared by the European Commission, which made it possible to grant Morocco additional finance under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Governance Facility both in 2007 and in 2008 and 2009.
11. The EU remains fully committed to the successful development of the **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)**. The UfM gives a new impetus to EU cooperation with its Mediterranean partners, particularly by enhancing political dialogue, strengthening the joint decision-making mechanisms and increasing the partnership's visibility by launching large regional and subregional projects. The EU welcomes the resumption of meetings of the UfM and the efforts to finalise the Statutes of its Secretariat. In this context, it thanks Morocco for hosting the second ministerial conference on the role of women in society held on 11 and 12 November in Marrakesh and for all the efforts made to ensure the success of the conference. It is now essential that the UfM, established on the basis of the Barcelona Process acquis, be able to yield results as quickly as possible. The EU considers it of key importance to make progress to achieve the common objectives agreed on in Paris and Marseille, above all by putting in place the UfM's institutional structure and in particular its Secretariat. Tangible progress and joint efforts are also required with regard to projects to strengthen regional integration in the Mediterranean. In this respect, the EU commends Morocco's positive and constructive attitude and its commitment to developing this joint initiative.
12. In the context of enhancing Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the European Union attaches particular importance to subregional cooperation. It commends the acceleration of technical cooperation between the countries of the Maghreb and the proliferation of initiatives by company managers and civil society organisations. It welcomes the resumption of the dialogue between the EU and the **Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)** and urges the AMU to continue its subregional integration endeavours.

13. The EU welcomes the interest shown by Morocco in the **Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)** and the **European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)**. It appreciates Morocco's desire to strengthen ties in these areas, and in particular its active participation in cooperation with the EU's Mediterranean partners. The reinforced political dialogue – the meetings for which are held at regular intervals – is an excellent framework for the achievement of progress in cooperation and mutual understanding. The EU welcomes the meeting between Morocco and representatives of the Political and Security Committee (PSC) held in 2009. It believes that further such meetings should be held in the future on an ad hoc basis.
14. Morocco's participation in the EU's operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina was an important signal of Morocco's practical support for the development of the ESDP. The EU is grateful to the Moroccan authorities for their valuable contribution to that operation and hopes it will set a precedent for Morocco's involvement in other EU operations now and in the future. It would be useful to build on this first experience of cooperation between the EU and Morocco on crisis management in order to explore the possibility of discussing how to organise our ESDP relations in a more structured way, in particular by envisaging the conclusion of a framework agreement for Morocco's participation in both civilian and military crisis-management operations with the EU and a permanent agreement on the security of classified information.
15. The EU also welcomes the participation by Moroccan representatives in training activities organised by the European Security and Defence College and in briefings organised during EU crisis-management exercises.
16. The EU welcomes the progress made by Morocco on large-scale projects, in particular in the fields of education, of the creation of a new social safety net for the least well-off and of agriculture, and would encourage Morocco to continue them. The EU is glad that its sectoral support programmes have made it possible to combine structuring reforms in the social and governance fields, and also in key sectors for the socio-economic development of Morocco. Certain major reforms, however, remain to be carried out. Even if the incidence of poverty is being reduced, there are still social challenges to be faced and they will require sustained and consistent social redistribution in the long term. In addition, an independent and transparent judicial system is essential for both observance of human rights and the business environment, key conditions for close relations with the EU, and there is a pressing need to pursue vigorously the reform of the justice system in order to provide a durable foundation for the rule of law. In that context, the EU would repeat its readiness to support Morocco in the course on which it has already embarked.

17. In the light of those positive results, the EU would encourage Morocco to maintain and step up its investments in the social sectors, particularly education, health, vocational training and medical cover, in order to ensure harmonious social development and to reduce poverty. Continued growth in flourishing sectors requires an educated workforce adapted to the needs of the labour market. In that connection, the EU calls for new social and economic reforms in order to ensure a higher rate of job creation and more effective social inclusion. The EU is pleased that Morocco has made educational reform one of the main reforms to be undertaken over the next few years. The EU urges Morocco to redouble its efforts to eradicate child labour, which is still widespread in some sectors.
18. The EU welcomes Morocco's intention of initiating a **process of regionalisation** and promoting **regional development**. The EU attaches great importance to balanced regional development in the interests of social cohesion. It calls on the Moroccan authorities to upgrade the resources and prerogatives available to the regions so that they can prepare development strategies which reflect their needs.
19. Since the last meeting of the Association Council, cooperation between Morocco and the European Union on **human rights and fundamental freedoms** has been enhanced. The EU appreciates the regular holding of meetings of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, Democratisation and Governance, which has so far met four times. That continuous dialogue and the sustained exchange of information are evidence of the growth of mutual trust.
20. The EU recognises that the reforms undertaken in recent years have made it possible to consolidate human rights and extend the scope of individual freedoms. The EU recognises Morocco's important role in the United Nations Human Rights Council, particularly as a mediator between the various regional groups, and would encourage it to continue its efforts in this matter. The EU also welcomes its closer cooperation with Morocco in that body. In the context of Morocco's universal periodic review, the EU considers that ratification by Morocco of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, the deposit with the United Nations Secretariat promised many years ago of declarations regarding the withdrawal of certain reservations **on international conventions** and accession to a number of optional Protocols, thereby reinforcing the application of several international human rights instruments, would represent significant advances.

21. The EU considers that implementation of **all the recommendations made by the Justice and Reconciliation Commission ("Instance Équité et Réconciliation") (IER)** will enable Morocco to consolidate the work accomplished and make progress in the introduction of a new culture of respect for and promotion of human rights. The EU is pleased to be able to assist in implementing some of the IER recommendations. In addition, the EU would repeat that it attaches importance to consolidation of the freedom of speech and the protection of sources. The EU would also insist on the importance it attaches to guaranteeing the freedom of the press in national legislation and its inclusion in the general framework of the protection of the freedom of speech, a fundamental right enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In that connection, the EU would encourage the adoption of a new press code in accordance with international standards in that field that provides for no custodial penalties for journalists. It also invites Morocco to safeguard freedom of association and freedom of assembly and to ensure the protection of defenders of human rights, particularly in Western Sahara. It calls upon government forces to show restraint in resorting to force. The EU welcomes the continued moratorium on the death penalty and would encourage Morocco abolish capital punishment.
22. The EU congratulates Morocco on the improved transparency arrangements and the sound organisation of the **communal elections** held on 12 June 2009. Those elections were a marker of further progress in the democratisation process. The EU also welcomes the remarkable increase in the number of women elected in those elections, thanks, *inter alia*, to a change in legislation, compared with the communal elections in 2003.
23. The EU reiterates its strong and unequivocal condemnation of **terrorism** in all its forms and manifestations, whatever the origin, cause or motives. The EU stresses the importance of implementing Security Council Resolutions 1267 (1999), 1373 (2001) and 1822 (2008) and the other relevant United Nations Resolutions and international instruments on combating terrorism, in particular the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which plays a key role in international mobilisation in the fight against terrorism. The EU would also repeat its hope that the negotiations on the draft Comprehensive Convention against Terrorism will be concluded at an early date.
24. The EU reiterates its attachment to respect for international law in the fight against terrorism, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and humanitarian law. The fight against terrorism and respect for human rights are not contradictory; on the contrary, they complement and reinforce each other.
25. The EU sets great store by its cooperation with Morocco on the fight against terrorism, and is prepared to develop and increase it. It appreciates the dialogue initiated with Morocco, in particular that in the context of the EU Troika meetings, which has provided an opportunity of discussing ways of enhancing cooperation in international fora.

26. The EU considers that North Africa is a priority zone for action to counter terrorism and radicalisation. The EU welcomes Morocco's efforts to combat radicalisation. It believes that cooperation with Morocco can be developed to prevent and to combat radicalisation in North Africa and in Europe. It considers that cooperation must be developed between the EU, Morocco and the Sahel Saharan region to combat terrorist networks more effectively.
27. The EU also welcomes the efforts made by Morocco in the fight against drugs trafficking and organised crime and the positive results achieved. The EU congratulates Morocco on its association with the MAOC-N (Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre – Narcotics) as an observer.
28. The EU welcomes Morocco's playing an active part in implementing the EU-Africa common strategy, in particular in the area of the climate-change partnership. With a view to the Africa-EU summit in 2010, the EU feels that strengthening of its dialogue with the African Union and dynamic development of the Arab Maghreb Union can play a key role in implementing that strategy.
29. The EU continues to be concerned about the conflict in **Western Sahara** and its regional consequences and implications. It fully supports the efforts being made by the UN Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to find a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that will allow self-determination for the people of Western Sahara as provided for in the UN resolutions. It encourages the parties involved to continue working with the Personal Envoy to secure progress in the search for a political solution by the parties under the auspices of the United Nations. The EU fully supports the current negotiations and welcomes the informal talks that took place at Dürnstein on 10 and 11 August 2009 to prepare for the fifth negotiating session. The EU welcomes the parties' commitment to continuing to demonstrate their political will and to work in an atmosphere conducive to dialogue so as to embark upon a more intensive phase of genuine negotiations without preconditions, taking note of the efforts and developments since 2006, which will make it possible to implement Security Council Resolutions 1754 (2007), 1783 (2007), 1813 (2008) and 1871 (2009) and ensure the success of the negotiations. The EU also welcomes the visit made to the region by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr António Guterres. It urges the parties to continue collaborating with the UNHCR in the implementation of confidence-building measures. It welcomes Morocco's readiness to develop these confidence-building measures, in particular by promoting overland exchanges, in the context of family visits. The EU is committed to improving the human-rights situation in Western Sahara, and draws attention to the obligations on each.
30. On the subject of migration, the EU welcomes Morocco's efforts to deal with illegal **immigration**, which have led to a substantial reduction in the flows from that country. The EU reaffirms the importance it attaches to the conclusion of a **readmission agreement**, which will make it possible to begin a dialogue on migration and on visa facilitation.

31. The EU also encourages Morocco to improve the legislative and regulatory framework in the areas of asylum so that a national system can be set up as soon as possible for receiving asylum applicants and people requiring international protection.
32. **On the economic level**, the Moroccan economy is continuing to perform well, with a consolidation of price stability, a strengthening of its external position and a programme of structural reforms that has been necessitated by the opening-up of the economy and privatisations.
33. As a result of Morocco's solid indebtedness structure, considerable reserves and non-internationalised financial system, the country has essentially been sheltered from the world financial crisis. But it has not escaped the consequences, in recent months, of the economic slow-down affecting its main European partners, either as regards exports or the severe drop in remittances from Moroccans abroad or in tourism.
34. **On trade**, the EU welcomes the continuation of the bilateral negotiations on the liberalisation of trade in agricultural products, processed agriculture products and fishery products, which have reached their final stage, and hopes it will be possible to conclude an agreement as soon as possible. As regards the negotiations on the liberalisation of trade in services and the right of establishment, the EU considers that an impetus should be given to ensure that an agreement is reached as soon as possible in this key sector for the development of a modern economy. The EU also believes that a mutually advantageous agreement can be found in the very near future as regards the negotiations on the dispute-settlement mechanism. The EU welcomes Morocco's efforts to modernise its national undertakings so as to increase the sectoral and geographical diversification of exports. In this connection, preparations are going ahead for the negotiation of an agreement on the conformity evaluation and acceptance of industrial products. The EU urges Morocco to speed up its process of aligning its technical regulations with the Community system in the priority sectors that have been identified.
35. **On industrial cooperation**, the EU welcomes the leading role played by Morocco in the business policy review and benchmarking being conducted by nine Mediterranean partners with reference to the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise, and in the continuation of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on the future of the textiles/clothing sector.
36. The implementation of the **air transport liberalisation agreement** has demonstrated the benefits that both sides expected from this agreement. The agreement makes it possible to bring people closer together and to provide opportunities for growth in Morocco's tourist industry. The EU encourages Morocco to continue the legislative harmonisation envisaged in the air transport agreement and supports the twinning projects that have been devised to that end. More generally, it welcomes the major reforms that have begun in the transport sector. It notes with interest the dossier put forward by Morocco and Spain concerning a fixed link under the Strait of Gibraltar.

37. The EU welcomes the satisfactory implementation of the **partnership agreement in the fisheries sector**, which is producing positive results for the fishing industry on both sides and is helping to deepen the relations and the sectoral dialogue between the relevant Moroccan and European authorities, especially in the context of the regular meetings of the Joint Committee. The EU also welcomes the launch of the new strategy for modernising Morocco's fishing industry, which will now have to be implemented in consultation with the industry and with the financial support of the EU. In this connection, the EU is paying particular attention to Morocco's recent efforts to finally eliminate drift-nets. The EU invites Morocco to use the funds available for this purpose under the agreement.
38. The EU considers that international cooperation is essential to ensure a lasting management of marine resources and a better governance of the oceans. The EU intends here to intensify its relations with Morocco in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU). The EU invites Morocco to ratify the agreement relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks (New York Agreement).
39. The EU stresses the importance of implementing policies and measures that will ensure Morocco's **sustainable development** from the environmental, social and economic point of view. The implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development approved in 2005 under the Barcelona Convention could help to achieve this objective. The EU urges Morocco to continue the process of ratifying the Protocols to the Barcelona Convention and the implementation of the legal obligations laid down in the Convention and its Protocols.
40. The EU is pleased with the good cooperation established with Morocco on the subject of **energy** following the joint declaration signed in 2007. The EU reaffirms its willingness to cooperate with Morocco in the fields of nuclear safety and security and also in the development of renewable energies (especially solar and wind energy), energy efficiency, reform of the electricity industry, the development of infrastructures (including regional inter-connections), and the strengthening of the sector's regulatory institutions. In particular, the EU welcomes Morocco's active participation in the development of the Mediterranean Solar Plan.
41. The EU emphasises the importance it attaches to reinforcing bilateral cooperation on the **environment**. At the regional level, cooperation can be reinforced in the implementation of activities under the *Horizon 2020* initiative, the Mediterranean component of the *EU Water Initiative* and the preparation of the Mediterranean Water Initiative. The EU invites Morocco to contribute actively to its proposals on the development of a post-2012 climate-change regime. The EU attaches great importance to an in-depth dialogue on the various aspects of climate change, including adaptation, CO₂ reduction and technology transfer.

42. Regarding **financial assistance**, the EU notes Morocco's success in implementing the cooperation programmes. The capacity for absorbing Community aid and the constant progress of the structural reforms have been deemed satisfactory, as testified by the high level of payments. The growing importance of the sectoral budget support as a method of assistance has enabled Morocco to take greater ownership of the process of reforms, and it will therefore continue to be a special instrument of cooperation, on the same basis as twinning.
43. The EU welcomes the excellent cooperation with Morocco in the preparation of the new National Indicative Programme (NIP) 2011-2013, which will shortly be submitted to the appropriate EU authorities for adoption.
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