



**HIS MAJESTY KING MOHAMMED VI
MAY GOD ASSIST HIM**



HM the king Sends Message to Participants in 2nd 'Women in Africa' Initiative Summit (Full Text)

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HM King Mohammed VI sent a message to participants in the second edition of the annual "Women in Africa" Initiative Summit, the first international platform meant to support African women leaders with high potential, which opened Thursday in Marrakech.

Here follows the full text of the royal message, read out by HM the king's advisor Abdellatif Menouni:

"Praise be to God,

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

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to send this message to the annual Women in Africa Initiative Summit, which is being held in Marrakech. This is the foremost international platform dedicated to economic development and to support for leading and high potential African women.

First of all, I should like to commend the organizers of this initiative, which aims to promote competent and talented women leaders in Africa and to highlight the role played by women in stimulating comprehensive development on the continent.

Thanks to its rich, diverse program, I hope this important event will make it possible to find appropriate answers to the major problems hindering development efforts in Africa and adopt an approach based on innovation and integration. Indeed, I firmly believe that upholding the principle of gender equality is the best way to achieve prosperity that benefits everyone.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Africa - a continent which seeks to join the ranks of emerging powers - there is a great need for innovative, targeted initiatives as well as concerted efforts to make sure those initiatives create long-lasting impacts. Our continent needs to use an approach combining innovation and integration.

As part of its development process, Africa is called upon to leverage all its assets and resources - particularly its intangible capital - and to develop its human resources, especially highly qualified African women.

We should keep in mind, in this regard, that luck plays no part in African women's achievements. They are, in fact, the result of outstanding academic achievement and of an ever-growing participation in the job market – a situation which offers greater options in terms of life choices. All of this has led to a more effective presence of African women in the political, economic and social fields.

Despite the significant improvement in women's conditions in Africa, it must be admitted that there is still a long way to go.

Indeed, further efforts are required to promote women's participation in development and decision-making in order to make the most of their ever-growing role as entrepreneurs and business leaders on the continent.

Needless to say, in this regard, the government, the private sector and civil society all have a crucial part to play in consolidating the leading role of women as key drivers of development.

No country, economy, business or society can tackle today's challenges, nor ensure optimal use of its resources and energies, without the full involvement of women.

Therefore, measures aimed at achieving gender equality should be the cornerstone of any viable sustainable development strategy.

This firmly-held belief is at the heart of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the related 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

This question also tops the concerns of African countries. Within the

African Union, there is a principled, undying commitment to gender equality. This was clearly stated at the AU Summit meeting in January 2018, during which it was indicated that equality between men and women in all walks of life is an objective which should be achieved by 2025.

In the same vein, and given the injustice African women are still suffering from on the ground, we are all duty-bound to work to promote women's roles and make African women a central element in national plans for social and economic development, thereby strengthening their leading role in society.

Efforts should be made to ensure women - especially those from disadvantaged background - can benefit from innovative financing mechanisms and to facilitate their access to safe, sustainable technology. Similarly, platforms for consultation and decision-making should be set up at the local and national levels, using a participatory approach.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Almighty God has honored human beings. Islam emphasizes equality between men and women since it considers women as “shaqaa'qu arrijaal”, meaning the sisters or allies of men in terms of judgments (ahkaam). Similarly, the universal values of humankind and international charters provide for gender equality, without any discrimination.

Given the above, I seek to make sure conditions for a free, dignified life for all Moroccans are met. For several years now, I have been taking measures to ensure gender equality in Morocco. This is not just

a fundamental human right; it is also a requirement as per the law and a necessity for the achievement of socio-economic development.

The 2011 Constitution was a paradigm shift in this regard. It clearly establishes the principle of equality between women and men in terms of rights and freedoms and calls for efforts to achieve parity.

Consistent with that dynamic, I have launched a number of nation-wide programs to promote the entrepreneurial spirit among women and empower them economically. With that in mind, I also introduced a reform of the Family Code and of the Penal Code to tackle violence against women. I have taken measures to enhance women's contribution to parliamentary life and instituted an Award for Excellence to encourage and reward women's outstanding contributions as part of efforts to ensure gender equality and parity are given concrete substance.

A number of initiatives have been launched in this area with a view to mainstreaming gender equality in the formulation, planning and implementation of public policies.

Gender budgeting is a key mechanism to uphold the rights of women and enable them to contribute significantly to all aspects of public life. In this regard, Morocco is ready to share its experience with African sister nations to facilitate the institutionalization of gender budgeting. This would enable African women to effectively help fast-track the profound changes required. Their positive impact on society should be felt by all segments of the population.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Any obstacle to the empowerment of women is in itself a stumbling block impeding the continent's development.

African women should not pay the price for the many structural challenges facing our continent. Quite the contrary, they should be frontline players in building resilient societies that can adapt to change and to new developments.

Africa needs women leaders. It needs the energies, skills and competence of all women, be they managers, business leaders or social actors. African women should be able to help change the situation prevailing in their respective countries and to harness their tremendous potential for the emergence of a strong, united Africa that confidently and resolutely moves forward in its quest for a better future.

Needless to say, this is the essence of the lofty mission championed by the Women in Africa Initiative. I cannot but commend WIA on its constructive efforts to serve African women and pave the way for the next generation of women to hold leading positions.

I am convinced your meeting today will provide a platform for a thorough, constructive exchange as you build on your proven expertise and on best practices and success stories in connection with a range of issues which concern African women.

I hope your proposals and recommendations will contribute to consolidating gains and accomplishments. This should put our continent on track for the achievement of progress and the promotion of solidarity and empowerment as we seek to harness the valuable contributions of all African women.

Welcome to the Kingdom of Morocco. I pray that Almighty God grant you every success.

Thank you.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh."

MAP 27 September 2018