



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**Sixth meeting of the
EU-MOROCCO Association Council
(Brussels, 23 July 2007)**

Statement by the European Union

1. The European Union greatly welcomes the holding of the **sixth meeting of the Association Council** .
2. The European Union is pleased that Morocco has strategically opted for a greater rapprochement with the European Union. The ever-closer partnership being developed by the European Union and Morocco in many fields is, for the European Union, of fundamental value in a region where sources of instability still remain. Our partnership is built upon our commitment to common values and mutual interests and could serve as an example for the development of a constructive, pragmatic but also ambitious relationship between the European Union and its partner countries.

P R E S S

3. In this general context, and as part of the neighbourhood policy, the European Union wishes to pave the way as of now for an examination of the scope for substantially reinforcing the relationship with a view to an advanced status as requested by Morocco. As envisaged in the EU-Morocco Action Plan, the European Union's first request is that the Association Council should instruct the relevant bodies of the Association Agreement to make an assessment of the implementation of the Action Plan. Alongside the assessment, proposals should also be made for updating and enhancing the Action Plan. The European Union hopes that this joint report can be examined at the next meeting of the Association Council. The European Union also hopes that the Association Council will take the decision to set up a working party to examine – among other things, in the light of progress in implementing the Action Plan and the ideas put forward in various fora – the new objectives of the partnership and the subsequent stages in the development of bilateral relations, including the possibility of new contractual ties as envisaged in the Action Plan. This ad hoc working party should comprise representatives of the Kingdom of Morocco, the Member States of the European Union, the European Commission and the High Representative/Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union and it should submit a report to the next Association Council meeting.
4. The European Union welcomes the forthcoming signing of a **Protocol to the Association Agreement** to take account of the **accession of Bulgaria and Romania** to the European Union. The European Union thanks Morocco for implementing the provisions of the Association Agreement to the benefit of these two new Member States as from 1 January 2007, in anticipation of the finalisation of the Additional Protocol.
5. Since the last meeting on 22 November 2005, relations between the European Union and Morocco have been significantly strengthened in the context of the **Euro-Mediterranean Partnership as reinforced by the European Neighbourhood Policy**. This deepening touches on many areas and is crystallised in the implementation of the EU-Morocco Neighbourhood Action Plan, which represents both a cornerstone for the various sectors of activity and a tool for achieving greater differentiation. The Commission's report on the implementation of the EU-Morocco Action Plan in terms of neighbourhood policy, which was published last December, has shown the progress made by Morocco in many fields. On the multilateral level, the five-year programme agreed at the Euro-Mediterranean Summit in Barcelona in 2005, followed by the Foreign Affairs Ministers' meeting in Tampere in 2006, enabled areas of enhanced dialogue and cooperation to be established at regional level in the political, economic, commercial, social and cultural spheres. In this connection the EU welcomes Morocco's significant contributions within the Partnership, especially with a view to the first Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Migration, which is to be held in Portugal on 19 November.

6. The European Union has recently decided to look at ways of strengthening the neighbourhood policy, especially as regards commercial integration, subject-specific cooperation, conflict resolution and civil-society involvement. On the basis of the initial principles, in particular the principle of differentiation, this strengthening of the neighbourhood policy will offer new prospects for deepening the relationship with Morocco. The Council has recently mandated the Commission to negotiate additional protocols to the Association Agreements so that, gradually and on the basis of the progress made in implementing the action plans, Community agencies and programmes can open up to the neighbourhood countries. The Council has also encouraged the neighbourhood countries to examine the possibilities of deepening their cooperation with third-pillar agencies in the field of justice, liberty and security. The European Union welcomes the fact that Morocco is one of the first countries with which negotiations have started on an additional protocol to the Association Agreement.
7. The European Union welcomes the interest shown by Morocco in the **Common Foreign and Security Policy** and the **European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)**. It appreciates Morocco's desire to strengthen ties in these areas. The reinforced political dialogue – the meetings for which are held at regular intervals, the next being due in December – is an excellent framework for achieving progress in cooperation and mutual understanding. Another important factor in this context is the proposal made to Morocco that it should align itself, case by case, with the EU's declarations, démarches and positions on matters coming under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).
8. A first significant step was Morocco's participation in the EU's Operation **ALTHEA** in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The European Union is grateful to the Moroccan authorities for their valuable contribution to this operation and hopes it will set a precedent for Morocco's involvement in other EU operations.
9. 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. It would be desirable here for the Moroccan authorities to tell us what lessons they have drawn from their participation in the EU operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Joint initiatives such as the one planned by the Moroccan Institute and the ISS for the organisation of an ESDP seminar – due to take place in the near future – should also make it possible to share the experience gained during that operation and, more generally, to engage in free-ranging discussion of ways of strengthening the dialogue between the European Union and Morocco on the subject of crisis management.

10. The European Union also welcomes the cooperation recently launched with Morocco on reinforcing the system concerning the export of **dual-use** goods.
11. The EU congratulates Morocco on its progress in implementing the vast project of political, economic and social modernisation initiated by His Majesty King Mohammed VI and encourages it to continue along this path. This process of modernisation reflects the aspirations of Morocco and its people and has met with success especially in the economic and social spheres. The European Union is convinced that the process must continue and be extended on the basis of the approach which has been followed up to now, that is to say by involving and consulting the parties concerned while fully respecting the need for transparency. The new sectoral strategies under preparation must enable the current rate of progress to be maintained.
12. Morocco and the European Union share the conviction that **respect for democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms** is at the basis of the relationship between the EU and Morocco and is an essential element of the Association Agreement. In that context, the European Union welcomes the establishment of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, Democratisation and Governance, which held its first meeting in November 2006, and the many projects financed both by the MEDA programme and by the European Initiative on Human Rights. The Union is convinced that such cooperation will make it possible to work together to advance the cause of human rights. The European Union is also pleased that, in view of the progress made in carrying out democratic reforms, Morocco has been able to benefit from the finance allocated by the European Union under the Democracy Facility.
13. The European Union appreciates the other efforts made by the Government of Morocco to reinforce its commitments to protect and promote human rights, particularly the declarations deposited with the United Nations Secretariat regarding the withdrawal of a number of reservations on **international Conventions** and accession to a number of optional Protocols, thereby reinforcing the application of several international human rights instruments. In that connection, ratification of the Statute of the International Criminal Court would be another significant measure.
14. The European Union welcomes the initiatives taken by Morocco to consolidate human rights and to extend the scope of freedoms at national level and its determination to proceed with a policy of openness and modernisation. The work done by the **Justice and Reconciliation Commission** ("Instance Équité et Réconciliation") (IER) – the courage of whose late Chairman, Driss Benzekri, the

European Union applauds, the payment of reparation to victims, the adoption of the law prohibiting the use of torture, the withdrawal of the reservation on Article 20 of the United Nations Convention against Torture and the recognition of the competence of the Committee against Torture, the introduction of independent regulatory authorities, the increasing role of the Constitutional Council, the reform of the Family Code and the Nationality Code, the new law on the liberalisation of the audiovisual sector and increasing civil society activity are just some of the more striking examples. Such progress henceforth enables the European Union and Morocco to step up their dialogue and their cooperation on the basis of shared experience.

15. The European Union would encourage Morocco to continue in that direction so that these new legislative rules prove the precursors to the introduction of a new culture of respect for and promotion of human rights directly in line with the major work on memory accomplished by the IER. The European Union applauds the latest decisions taken by Morocco on the application of IER recommendations, for which the European Union has provided financial support. The Union hopes that the Parliament and Government of Morocco emerging from the general elections to be held on 7 September 2007 will devote attention to those IER recommendations which have not yet been implemented. The European Union is keen to see the Consultative Council on Human Rights (CCDH), under its new chairman, play a central role in the consolidation of the culture of human rights. It is ready to provide further support for this process and to back the implementation of Morocco's National Plan for Human Rights. It calls for respect for freedom of expression and protection of sources and for a further reform of the Press Code and the Penal Code in order to decriminalise crimes of opinion. In addition, the European Union invites Morocco to safeguard freedom of association and freedom of assembly. The European Union would also encourage Morocco to continue the national debate on the abolition of the death penalty and welcomes the continuation of the moratorium pending the conclusion of that debate.
16. In the lead-up to the **general election on 7 September 2007**, the European Union takes note of the new legislative framework put in place prior to the elections, involving in particular the revision of the law on political parties and the electoral law. The European Union welcomes the efforts made by the Moroccan Government and by civil society to ensure the success of the elections, particularly through raising public awareness, public financing of political parties, voter registration campaigns and the guarantee of broadcasting time for the various parties in the audiovisual media. It applauds the formation of a national election observer committee bringing together various Moroccan associations. The European Union is convinced that Morocco will demonstrate that democratic practice has taken root. In that connection, the European Union would encourage the Moroccan Government and all the other actors in Moroccan society, particularly the political parties, to continue their efforts to ensure that women are represented both at elections and in political life in general.

17. **In the fields of justice and security** the work carried out by Morocco and the EU has resulted in progress on several subjects such as the fight against terrorism, organised crime and drugs.
18. The EU reiterates its strong and unequivocal condemnation of **terrorism** in all its forms and manifestations, whatever the origin, cause or motives. The terrorist attacks carried out in Morocco in March and April of this year have demonstrated that the threat posed by terrorism is far from over and that the fight against terrorism, in full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, must be given the highest attention.
19. The EU welcomes the current cooperation with Morocco on the fight against terrorism and wishes to explore ways of strengthening such cooperation under the technical assistance action plan. A meeting of experts in that connection is scheduled for November 2007. The EU notes with satisfaction the measures taken by Morocco to combat terrorist financing and to strengthen controls on money laundering, particularly the recently adopted legislation which will provide an overall legal framework for the monitoring, investigation and prosecution of illegal financial activities, including those activities which may fund terrorism.
20. The European Union attaches the highest importance to countering radicalisation that can facilitate terrorist recruitment. In this respect the EU notes with satisfaction the importance attached by Morocco to the political and socio-economic reforms targeting some of the factors which may be exploited for the purpose of recruiting terrorists.
21. The EU stresses the importance of implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy which plays a key role in international mobilisation in the fight against terrorism. The swift adoption of a Comprehensive Convention that includes an unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is also a priority for the EU. The EU calls upon Morocco to contribute actively to these objectives in line with the commitments entered into under the Euro-Mediterranean Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism.
22. The EU reiterates its attachment to respect for human rights and for international humanitarian law in the fight against terrorism. Failure to respect internationally recognised human rights standards is likely to affect the legitimacy of our action. The fight against terrorism and respect for human rights are not contradictory; on the contrary, they complement and reinforce each other.

23. The European Union welcomes the progress of the preparatory work for the second **EU-Africa Summit** in Lisbon in December of this year. The timing is right, especially in view of the important developments that have taken place in Africa and which have helped strengthen relations between Africa and the EU. One of the most positive developments is the emergence of the AU as the natural partner for the EU, particularly in connection with continental issues and the promotion of a common agenda. However, the new partnership with Africa will be more than a partnership with the AU; it will also include Morocco, which is a key partner for the EU in Africa. In this context, the EU welcomes Morocco's participation in the preparation for the summit and in the development of a joint EU-Africa strategy.

24. The European Union welcomes the negotiations which have been launched under the aegis of the United Nations and on the basis of Security Council Resolution 1754 of 30 April 2007 on the future status of the **Western Sahara** on 18 and 19 June in Manhasset, near New York, and which have the full backing of the European Union. It notes with interest that the parties have stated their willingness to enter into the negotiations wholeheartedly and in good faith and welcomes the fact that they have agreed to continue their talks in the second week of August. The European Union hopes that these negotiations will result in a solution that is politically fair, lasting and mutually acceptable and which allows for the self-determination of the people of the Western Sahara, as recommended in the United Nations resolutions. The European Union also appreciates the submission of contributions by both parties. It appreciates the Moroccan proposal which has been in preparation for a long time.

25. The European Union regrets that the Western Sahara issue is still causing unrest and violations of human rights. At the same time it disapproves of all political exploitation of the subject. The Union remains convinced that a solution to this conflict, after more than 30 years, is desired by everyone and would markedly improve the chances of a greater **integration of the Maghreb countries** among themselves and with the European Union.

26. Since the last Association Council, the European Union and Morocco have intensified their **cooperation in the field of migration**. The holding of the Euro-African Ministerial Conference in Rabat in July 2006 on migration and development, followed by the EU-Africa conference in Tripoli in November 2006, signalled a true partnership seeking to tackle all aspects of the migration issue. The European Union's desire is that the measures provided for in the Rabat declaration and action plan and in the Tripoli declaration adopted by these two conferences can be translated swiftly into concrete action on the ground.

Concerning the follow-up to the Rabat conference in particular, with a view to holding a second ministerial conference in 2008, the European Union is counting on Morocco taking an active stance, in particular by mobilising all partners in this initiative. The Union underlines the importance of the steps it has already taken both at political level (in particular by holding the meeting in Madrid on 21 June 2007) and in financial terms (through the Community's financial programmes).

27. The European Union welcomes the efforts by Morocco to deal with illegal immigration, which have led to a substantial reduction in immigration flows from Morocco. Furthermore, the strengthening of financial cooperation in the field of border management, the implementation of innovative projects, financed by the European Community, with certain Member States, and designed to encourage legal migration and seasonal migration, are clear signals and the concrete expression of a desire to tackle this problem together. The European Union notes that the negotiations on a readmission agreement are continuing to progress and stresses the importance of concluding the agreement in the near future. Finally, in the framework of the implementation of the general approach defined by the European Council in 2005, the European Union recently decided to explore the possibility of setting up a mobility partnership with certain third countries. In that connection, the last European Council invited the Commission to launch an exploratory dialogue with interested third countries following a consultation with the Member States. The Commission will then brief the Council on the outcome of this dialogue so as to allow it to decide, by the end of 2007, whether pilot partnerships can be launched. The Union draws attention to the importance of putting these pilot partnerships in place.
28. The European Union welcomes the decision by the Moroccan authorities to sign a headquarters agreement with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. It calls on Morocco to step up cooperation with all stakeholders in order to ensure compliance with the rights of migrants and to strengthen the legislative and regulatory framework in this area.
29. The European Union remains convinced that the **Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)** can play a key role in strengthening inter-Maghreb cooperation. The losses resulting from a lack of integration are substantial, especially in the economic field, and yet there could be numerous synergies in fields such as transport, energy, agriculture and tourism. Furthermore, the Maghreb countries face common problems stemming from terrorism and migration. Thus the EU strongly encourages all Maghreb countries to intensify their efforts to find a solution to the problems which stand in the way of a full re-launch of the AMU's activities and to develop their cooperation starting with the most technical areas. In this context, it notes the renewal of cooperation, in particular with the decision to create the Maghreb Bank for Investment and Foreign Trade. The EU is willing to support and encourage all concrete measures which could contribute to the development of cooperation and trade in the region.

30. In 2006 the Moroccan **economy** performed remarkably well, with a record growth rate of 8 %, a drop in unemployment to under 10%, a reduction in the budgetary deficit and a record level of foreign investment. The macroeconomic balance was consolidated. This strong performance was reflected in the improvement of Morocco's position in the rankings of international rating agencies and by the sharp drop in the risk premium on its recent international issue.
31. In the economic sphere Morocco undertook a number of important **structural reforms**, in particular in the fields of transport, taxation, customs, the financial system and public administration, which were backed by the European Union. The European Union encourages Morocco to continue this vast undertaking which should allow it to meet the current challenges. Maintaining a good pace of job creation will enable Morocco to cope with the massive influx of young people onto the labour market while reducing unemployment and under-employment. In addition, the acceleration of reforms in the fields of agriculture, energy and the environment will allow urgent priorities to be dealt with, in particular limiting the variability of economic growth according to climate fluctuations, adequate and secure energy supply and the need to ensure sustainable development. It is desirable that the initiatives launched recently to diversify the structure of the economy (Azur Plan, Emergence Plan) should be extended and implemented. Finally, the progress achieved in the last few years in improving the business climate must be consolidated, in particular by strengthening the framework and the application of competition rules and by modernising commercial law.
32. The signing of a **joint declaration on energy** between Morocco and the European Commission in the margins of the Association Council is an important indication of the intensification of cooperation with the ultimate aim of integration into the European single market. This declaration falls fully within the framework of the Action Plan on a "common energy policy" adopted by the European Council on 8 and 9 March 2007.

33. The development of education, the health system and social protection are major projects in which the European Union is supporting Morocco's efforts. The European Union welcomes the increased attention being paid by the authorities to these sectors and hopes that commensurate budgetary and human resources will be allocated to them. The European Union considers that the acceleration of **social reforms** is one of the main challenges facing Morocco. These reforms, designed to reduce poverty and social disparities, which often give rise to extremism and lead to despair amongst those excluded from growth, will also help to mobilise human resources and stimulate growth. The health indicators are still a problem. The European Union will cooperate with Morocco in building up the health sector. The EU encourages Morocco to proceed resolutely with its slum clearance programme and to continue applying the provisions of the new labour code. In this context the EU welcomes the launch and implementation of the **National Human Development Initiative**, which the European Commission has decided to support financially, and stresses the importance of ensuring that this innovative initiative is consistent with policies in the social sphere so that its permanence will be guaranteed.
34. The rapid growth in **trade** between the European Union and Morocco since the last Association Council testifies to the positive effects of our agreement. The Union notes with satisfaction that Morocco has strengthened its presence in the European market, notably in agricultural and fisheries products. The Union also welcomes Morocco's decision to speed up the schedule of tariff dismantling provided for in the Agreement for a large number of products. Moreover, the dialogue between the two sides has enabled many of the barriers to trade to be removed; however, the Union calls on Morocco to improve the transit of goods at ports and to settle the issues still unresolved, in particular the export restrictions on certain hides and skins.
35. The Union welcomes the continuing negotiations between the two sides on the liberalisation of trade in services and the right of establishment and on a mechanism for settling trade disputes, on the one hand, and of trade in agricultural products, processed agricultural products and fisheries products, on the other. The European Union calls on Morocco to continue to commit fully to this process, in order to achieve the objectives set by the Association Agreement. This extension of trade liberalisation will offer new prospects for the development of our respective economies; it will also entail major challenges for those sectors that will face increased competition. In this connection it is important to establish coherent strategies for the development and modernisation of the sectors concerned. The European Union, for its part, confirms its readiness to provide assistance to flank the proposed reforms, notably in the agricultural sector.

36. The European Union welcomes the entry into force of the **Agadir Agreement** which offers Moroccan businesses new export opportunities.
37. Moreover, with a view to facilitating trade, the European Union notes in this context that preparations for the negotiation of an agreement on conformity evaluation and industrial product acceptance are continuing to progress and would encourage Morocco to speed up the process of aligning its technical regulations on the Community system in the priority sectors identified. More generally, the continuing modernisation of customs, the transport sector and the logistics chain in general is an important factor in facilitating trade with the European Union. In this connection the Union welcomes the imminent inauguration of the Tanger-Med port.
38. Since the last Association Council, Morocco and the European Union have completed their negotiations on the air transport liberalisation agreement. This historic agreement will help to strengthen bilateral relations, to the benefit of our peoples and economies. The European Union hopes that Morocco will commit itself fully to implementing the approximation of rules provided for in the agreement. The European Union also welcomes the signing of the agreement on Morocco's participation in the Galileo system.
39. The EU welcomes the entry into force, at the beginning of 2007, of the **Fisheries Partnership Agreement** between our two parties. The agreement offers significant fishing opportunities for European vessels. It is also the basis for a stronger commitment by the European Union to the modernisation of Morocco's fishing industry through an annual financial contribution earmarked for that purpose. In this connection, it offers the possibility of stepping up our sectoral cooperation in a spirit of partnership. In this context, the EU welcomes the holding of the first meetings of the Joint Committee set up by the Agreement and the decision that the Joint Scientific Committee provided for in the Agreement should meet before the end of the year.

40. The EU welcomes the regular holding of **meetings of the various subcommittees** provided for in the Agreement. We are often faced with an extensive agenda which sometimes makes it difficult to address all the topics in a single day. The EU welcomes the decision taken by some subcommittees – a recent example is the subcommittee on the internal market – to arrange subject-specific meetings, which enable a high standard of dialogue to be attained. The EU encourages other subcommittees, where necessary, to prolong the duration of their meetings and to arrange subject-specific meetings within the terms of reference of their subcommittee of origin. The EU also encourages Morocco to finalise as soon as possible its examination of the proposal for an Association Council Decision in order to re-establish the legal basis for the Customs Cooperation Committee and to adjust the rules of procedure of certain subcommittees to reflect the development of the dialogue between our two parties on new subjects.
41. Morocco is the first beneficiary of EU **financial assistance** among the neighbourhood policy countries. An overall appropriation of EUR 654 million for the period 2007-2010 will be made available under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. As a result of the ambitiousness of the reforms undertaken in recent years and the improvements in management capability, record levels of payments by the Commission were achieved in 2005 and 2006. The European Union welcomes the use that Morocco makes of the twinning arrangements with EU Member States' administrations in a wide variety of spheres. Morocco is a leading country in this field and the degree to which this facility is used reflects a high level of mutual confidence. The European Investment Bank is an important financial partner for Morocco. Since 1995 it has been involved in the funding of investment projects worth a total of about EUR 2 billion. For the period 2007-2013 the European Union has decided to double the indicative ceiling of the overall amount of the EIB's loans to the Mediterranean countries.
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