

Rabat – His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God assist Him, addressed a message to the participants in an international symposium on “Transitional Justice,” organized in Rabat in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission, under the theme “Transitional justice processes: for sustainable reforms”.

Here follows the full text of the Royal Message, which was read out by the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Council, Amina Bouayach.

“Praise be to God,

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

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to send this message to the participants in this international symposium to which I have granted my high patronage. Your meeting, which commemorates the twentieth anniversary of the creation of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission, will address the theme “Transitional Justice Pathways for the Implementation of Sustainable Reforms”.

Your commemoration of this important event in Moroccan contemporary history provides a good opportunity to recall the significance of that milestone. Indeed, the creation of the Committee was a turning point in our country’s development and democratic policy. It constituted a crucial building block in the transition to democracy, in the consolidation of the rule of law and of institutions, and in the protection of freedoms.

Your symposium, which is significant from the historical, social, political and rights perspective, is a chance to commend our country’s achievements in the process of transitional justice – a process based on a wise, far-sighted approach, the main features of which were transparency and objectivity. This is also an opportunity to remind current and future generations of the reforms and reconciliations that have taken place in the Kingdom of Morocco, for which a bold policy based on consensus was adopted when we revisited our history, without any inferiority complex.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My decision to establish the Equity and Reconciliation Commission, which is a continuation of the Independent Commission on Compensation for Victims of

Enforced Disappearance and Arbitrary Detention established by my venerable father, His late Majesty King Hassan II – may God bless his soul – was a sovereign decision that was part of a proactive process for managing public affairs. Based on a new concept of authority and on holding public institutions to account, that process aims to make sure all Moroccans enjoy a dignified life.

In addition to achieving national reconciliation and addressing past abuses, the concept used was primarily aimed at making transitional justice a priority in the democratic transition. Both the state and the citizens had, at the time, developed a proactive perception regarding not only the magnitude of the deep changes the world had witnessed in the late 1980s, but also the importance of democratic values and human rights in strategic policies.

Transitional justice in our country was based on rock-solid foundations – both historical ones, relating to the specific features of the Moroccan identity, and regional and geographical ones. The goal was to address the cases of all victims, irrespective of their background or political affiliation. The focus was therefore placed on all human rights violations, from the early years of independence to the creation of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission.

This made it possible to identify and look into all forms and types of abuse our country witnessed in the past, irrespective of their nature or scope. We were also able to conduct the necessary field investigations and inquiries, organize public hearings in cities and villages, and collect testimonies to establish the truth and achieve individual and collective grievance redress, taking into account the gender perspective, thus further enhancing Moroccans' reconciliation with their history.

Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of the Moroccan experience in this regard was the full engagement of civil society – regardless of affiliation or leanings – in shaping the process and making sure it is a success. The decision to achieve transitional justice had the merit of helping to launch a public debate as well as community-based discussions on various reforms and key issues that were of interest to national public opinion.

Through several successive initiatives, transitional justice contributed to enhancing collective awareness about combating human rights violations. Lessons were drawn from the country's experience, and the need to continue consolidating the foundations of the rule of law was emphasized so as to make sure rights and freedoms were respected, and strike a balance between exercising those rights and

freedoms in a responsible, civic manner, and fulfilling one's duties and obligations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The transitional justice process in Morocco led to a unique, ground-breaking experience. It helped achieve a qualitative leap in the country's political experience – a process which led to a smooth, harmonious, consensual democratic transition. Best practices were also built upon to consolidate the foundations of the rule of law and the institution-based state.

Through the recommendations made by the Equity and Reconciliation Commission – which also made proposals on public policy and emphasized the need to further promote the constitutional protection of human rights – it was possible to lay down a regulatory framework for broad-based reforms. They included the implementation of constitutional and legislative reforms, the creation of consultative and institutional mechanisms to break with past violations, the proper management of public affairs based on justice and the rule of law, and the promotion of a fresh dynamic within society.

With that in mind, I was keen to make sure human rights were fully reflected in the constitution, in legislation and in public policies, knowing that they range from the political to the environmental sectors, and from economic to social and cultural considerations. Concurrently with that, I set up the institutions and constitutional mechanisms needed to protect the full range of human rights.

Thus, I have personally seen to it that the concept of regional justice is given concrete substance in development policies, and that the principle of collective grievance redress is reflected in our development plans. I have also sought to make sure – whenever possible – that underserved regions are no longer marginalized when it comes to achieving development and benefitting from the dividends of progress in the Kingdom of Morocco. As one can see, these are major reconciliation measures with history and in terms of regional development planning.

More importantly, this keen interest has enabled a number of regions in Morocco – which were significantly lagging behind in terms of development – to close the gap. Some of them have even become leaders in the regional development process.

Today, there is unanimity – including among objective observers – on the success of the development model currently implemented in our southern provinces. It is a

model based on solidarity, complementarity and equal opportunity between the Kingdom's different provinces. As a result, the face of our recovered provinces has changed for the better. Today, our southern provinces are an attractive destination for investment and are home to countless development programs and large-scale infrastructural projects.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thanks to this internationally acclaimed experience, Morocco was the first to introduce the concept of transitional justice in its Arab and African regions – an experience that has resonated in a number of Middle-Eastern and North African countries.

The Moroccan model has made a significant contribution to developing transitional justice – both as a concept and in practical terms. It has also opened up new vistas for transitional justice, not just in our region, but also at continental and international levels.

However, our accomplishments in the areas of preserving and enforcing human rights, promoting development and building democratic institutions, do not mean all is perfect. Nevertheless, and as recognized by the international community, this model attests to a truly authentic, emerging democracy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope the working sessions programmed to discuss this topic will highlight the best practices of a number of countries, including Morocco, especially the interactions between transitional justice processes and legislative, institutional and constitutional reforms. Just as important is the need to highlight the roles of parliaments, public institutions and civil society in implementing the recommendations made by the bodies in charge of transitional justice.

I am sure this important forum will be an opportunity to identify the impacts of transitional justice processes and their contribution to ending human rights violations on the one hand, and helping with the implementation of the relevant recommendations for the achievement of sustainable reforms, on the other. These two processes are intertwined and inter-related when it comes to protecting individuals and communities, preserving their dignity and ensuring respect for their rights.

I hope the Moroccan experience will get the attention it deserves in your discussions and deliberations as one of the landmarks of the contemporary political landscape in Morocco – a state steeped in history.

I extend a warm welcome to you all and wish you every success.

Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh.”