

Towards Fostering the Ties that Bind Morocco and Moroccans of the World together across Generations : Prospects and Challenges



Ahmed Reda Chami
 President
 of the committee



Fouad Ben Seddik
 Rapporteur
 of the subject

Building on the royal directives contained in His Majesty King Mohammed VI's most gracious speech of 20 August 2022, delivered to the nation on the 69th anniversary of the Revolution of the King and the People, the CESE (Economic, Social and Environmental Council) has decided to draw up and issue an own-initiative opinion titled "Towards Fostering the Ties that Bind Morocco and Moroccans of the World together across Generations – Prospects and Challenges". With this, the Council seeks to contribute substantially to the effort to gain a better understanding and appreciation of Moroccans of the World. The overriding goal is to explore ways to best meet their needs, enhance their rights and bring them to positively play their part in delivering solutions to the development and visibility of their country. This own-initiative opinion was adopted unanimously by the Council's members at the General Assembly's extraordinary meeting of 9 November 2022.

The Council employed a participatory approach in all stages of the work. The opinion brings out the different viewpoints of all constituent categories of the Council, and sets out the findings and recommendations of the hearings carried out with representatives of various relevant key stakeholders. Also helpful in

this work were the comments and feedback gathered throughout a consultation based on a questionnaire sent, through the Council's online participatory platform "Ouchariko", to the wider Moroccan community living abroad. Designed in seven (7) languages (Arabic, English, Spanish, French, German, Italian and Dutch), the questionnaire collected instant feedback and suggestions from a total of 4,651 respondents. A total of 91,520 participants have engaged with the questionnaire.

The results from the questionnaire showed that Moroccans of the World account for nearly 15% of the entire Moroccan population and that their share of Morocco's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is as high as 7%.

The extension of both expatriation and professional careers, the migrant's marital and family status, social integration, naturalization, citizenship and participation in local politics all are factors that attract long-term engagement and settlement of Moroccan migrants in their host countries. These do not, however, affect the emotional and family ties as well as reminiscences connecting Moroccans of the World to Morocco. They will rather allow exchanges of home visits (roots tourism), remittances, economic and cultural ties and engagements with Morocco to

continue uninterrupted. In this regard, the results of the said consultation launched by the Council clearly support this assertion, since around 93% of respondents ticked the words “strong” and “to be strengthened” to describe their affiliation with Morocco. Other indicators also attest to the strength and continuity of these bonds: over 83% of migrant Moroccan community transfer part of their personal income to Morocco, and nearly 3 million of them visit Morocco at least once a year.

For example, in answering the question about the factors that contribute most to their continued patriotism and sense of pride in their country, respondents mentioned the institution of the Monarchy, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the national identity, the country’s progress in delivering infrastructure projects and development programmes, and the improvement of women’s rights.

Nevertheless, maintaining and extending the overall strength and longevity of ties between Morocco and Moroccans of the World requires a sustained national effort to fully appreciate and fathom the perceptions and expectations of this community, and to determine the appropriate strategies to address and overcome the constraints and difficulties they face, both in their host and home countries.

The various hearings, debates and consultations that the Council carried out in preparation for this opinion have identified five (5) themes and areas where the expectations of Moroccans of the World need to be fulfilled. These are as follows:

➤ **On the religious side:** The results of the questionnaire have shown that a consensus was obtained as to the need to strengthen the visibility and the intelligibility of the

Moroccan religious model, based on the founding principles of the “Commandership of the Faithful” institution (Emarat El Moomeneen). In the Moroccan religious model, a decided priority is given to the free exercise of reason, the protection of the values of life and human dignity, with due respect to the laws and cultural environment of the host countries. It is a religious model that encourages balanced religious practices, promotes the values of coexistence and dialogue, and opposes all forms of incitement to hatred, violence and bigotry.

➤ **On the cultural level:** Another issue respondents have recognized was the need to give due attention to teaching Arabic to the Moroccan community living abroad in their countries of residence. Equal emphasis is placed on finding unconventional ways to fulfill the legitimate aspiration of Moroccans of the World for material that reflects the rich history and cultural diversity of their country. In this connection, the questionnaire has revealed a predilection among the Moroccan community overseas for unconventional, off-the-wall digital tools to enhance the quality of cultural services, instead of “conventional” dissemination of cultural heritage through static, expensive-to-operate and unattractive cultural spaces.

➤ **From an economic perspective,** respondents raised the need for greater representation of Morocco’s main sectors of activity and for better visibility abroad regarding the opportunities the country’s economic environment offers. Moreover, the questionnaire results have stressed that the

accommodation, support and recourse tools in place for Moroccan overseas nationals with entrepreneurial projects need to be restructured and be given a fresh impetus. Topping the list of expectations of Moroccans of the World – the questionnaire findings point out – is the need to dissolve routine, administrative barriers and fight against corruption and breaches of ethical standards in business practices, economic relations and public services.

- **In relation to consular, administrative and social services**, the questionnaire findings indicate that completing the process of digitization and dematerialization of administrative procedures is a priority concern for Moroccans of the World to ensure efficient and effective services.
- **Political representation:** This issue should be dealt with from a comprehensive perspective combining representative and participatory democracy and promoting a committed, citizen-centered dialogue and public affairs management.

The Moroccan State's dedication to promote the status and the rights of Moroccans of the World is unquestionable. Morocco's strong commitment to reassert the indefectible bonds that tie Moroccans living abroad with their home country finds its true expression in the wide variety of institutions, strategies and programmes the country dedicates to this population.

It should however be noted that national institutions assisting Moroccans living abroad seem to operate more in "silos" than in a coordinated, partnership-based and convergent way to best serve this group of Moroccan

people. Worse even, the questionnaire findings show, there is the instability, both within and across successive governments, of the Moroccan institutional environment put in place for Moroccans living abroad (ministry, delegate ministry, department in charge of Moroccans living abroad, etc.). This results in a redundancy and heterogeneity situation where a multiplicity of stakeholders with sometimes overlapping mandates are involved. This also leads to a lack of visibility on actions towards Moroccan people living abroad, a loss of resources, the risk of projects running out of steam, a lack of guidance, monitoring, evaluation and deployment mechanisms.

- **From this diagnosis, shared by a wide range of stakeholders and actors**, the Council recommends the following main lines of action to best address the needs of Moroccans of the World:

Concerning institutional arrangements: the Council calls for a renewed institutional structure by:

- Entrusting a Minister Delegate for Moroccans of the World (in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Living abroad) to design and ensure the proper implementation of the National Strategy for Moroccans Living Abroad.
- Elevating the Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans Living Abroad to a strategic public position as the operational arm ensuring that the objectives of the National Strategy for Moroccans Living Abroad are fulfilled, in association with other actors and stakeholders. Reporting to the Minister Delegate for Moroccans abroad, who shall

act as chair of the Board of Directors, this institution shall have to be equipped with the skills and resources necessary for fulfilling its missions.

- Elevating the Ministerial Committee for Moroccans Living Abroad and Migrants Affairs to a high-level strategic entity focused on the issue of Moroccans of the World. Placed with the Head of Government, this multi-stakeholder committee, which shall meet at least twice a year, should be given broad monitoring and arbitration powers regarding the implementation of the National Strategy for Moroccans Living Abroad and related programmes.

In terms of the quality of services provided by the administrative parties concerned and other stakeholders for Moroccans living abroad:

- In order to provide effective and appropriate responses to the specific needs of Moroccans of the World, it is recommended to create a single-window digital platform to enhance interoperability among all stakeholders involved with the Moroccan overseas community issues. The goal of this platform is to give Moroccans of the World access to all the procedure services and information they require (consular documents, investment assistance, cultural information, Arabic language teaching courses, etc.).
- The Council recommends building the capacity of Moroccan consulates' human resources in number, in skill and in versatility, while further developing mobile consular units in countries that are little or insufficiently digitized.

In terms of access to cultural services:

- It is recommended that efforts be made to work, in close collaboration with Moroccan embassies and all other stakeholders, on ways to embed the cultural dimension of the National Strategy for Moroccans Living Abroad in the host countries' institutional framework, and set clear goals and deadlines.
- The Council also recommends promoting the introduction of new generation "off-the-wall" digital structures to help improve flexibility and user interaction. The aim is to promote Morocco's cultural production abroad. These off-the-wall operators shall be responsible for the regular organization, both in Morocco and beyond, of events and activities related to the Moroccan overseas community. These will feature dialogue forums, exhibitions, concerts, cultural and citizen-oriented events.

In terms of social protection:

- It is recommended that efforts be made to engage in a dialogue with the host countries to update and/or expand the scope of bilateral social security agreements, with the view to alleviate the conditions that impede access for Moroccans of the World to their retirement pension and healthcare rights, on their return to or stay in Morocco.
- It is also recommended to put in place an ascendant health insurance plan and a voluntary early retirement scheme, both eligible for tax deductions, in partnership with a banking and insurance network.

For a mobilization of the competencies of Moroccans of the World:

- It is recommended to make the necessary legislative and regulatory provisions (draft law no. 63-21 on the organization of higher

education and scientific research) facilitating the mobility of skilled Moroccans living abroad, most notably teachers, experts and academic researchers. This will enable the Moroccan university and other scientific institutions to benefit from the skills and know-how of this group of the Moroccan population, within a flexible contractual framework that will encourage their active participation in teaching, training, scientific research and innovation programmes.

- The Council also recommends establishing a public-private partnership based digital platform for predictive management of jobs and skills, the aim being to attract overseas Moroccan talent, to fill gaps in emerging and high-demand jobs on the national territory.

Concerning remittances from Moroccans of the World:

- It is recommended to actively open the Mohammed VI Investment Fund to personal money transfers from overseas Moroccans and/or establish an investment fund for

Moroccans of the World, the aim being to invest remittances in private equity fund targeting positive social and environmental projects and social and solidarity economy initiatives.

- It is also recommended to encourage Moroccan financial sector actors to develop complementary and attractive savings and retirement products dedicated to the Moroccan community living abroad.

Concerning representation and political participation of Moroccans of the World:

- The recommendation is to promote the participation and representation of Moroccans of the World in Morocco's advisory, regulatory and good governance institutions.
- The Council also recommends to put in place the software and hardware devices required to strengthen the participation of Moroccans living abroad in Moroccan legislative elections.