



**Kingdom of Morocco  
Parliament  
House of Representatives**

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**Keynote Address of Mr Rachid Talbi Alami  
President of the House of Representatives**

**At the Opening of the 12<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the  
Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean  
(PA-UfM)**

**Tangier – 29 May 2016**

**Honourable Presidents,  
Distinguished Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

When we were to decide where to hold the 12<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM), we had a large number of choices in front of us. In fact, all cities of the Kingdom of Morocco, the larger ones in particular, boast high-end hospitality infrastructure and offer suitable conditions for the success of our conference.

Moreover, they embrace and preserve a Mediterranean legacy and provide the appropriate equipment, facilities and atmosphere to enable a forward-looking discussion that moves into the future, building on a legacy of artistic, open-minded and rational cultural heritage. They are the embodiment of the rich Mediterranean heritage, which Morocco has maintained and which, today, should back our efforts for the Euro-Mediterranean region to regain its radiance, its roles, and above all its stability.

Eventually, the city of Tangier has been chosen; it is the closest metropolis to Europe on the southern shore of the Mediterranean basin, as we are only less than fourteen kilometres away from this continent. Tangier is Morocco's openness emblem and gateway to a key part of the world: Europe. It is also the city that has inspired great thinkers and creators, including artists, poets, and novelists, and has enchanted politicians as well, from around the world.

It is a charming city that epitomizes this diverse Morocco. It is a bridge between the North and the South, between the East and the West; and the intersection connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea, forming the sea-routes junction between the Old World and the New World.

It is, therefore, our great honour to host you and welcome you in this emblematic city of Tangier. And we hope that your stay here in the Kingdom of Morocco will allow you to learn more about this Mediterranean country, which has long been – and will remain– a land of meetings, dialogue and exchanges, and an active contributor to regional and global stability.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The theme we have picked, in consultation with the Assembly's Bureau, to be the main subject matter of this session sums up the ambitions of the Euro-Mediterranean nations. But it also sums up the problems of the Euro-Mediterranean region and the concerns of its peoples and elites. As a matter of fact, development, democracy and peace in our region can only be secured with the engagement of the Euro-Mediterranean community and their collective commitment to a better future.

Such goals will remain out of reach unless they are supported with cultural and human catalysts, as well as with values and most importantly dialogue.

Before I come back to this point, I think it is appropriate, after two decades since the launch of the Barcelona Process, to evoke the chronic as well as emergency challenges currently facing the Euro-Mediterranean area.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Twenty-one years ago, more exactly in November 1995, the Barcelona Process for Euro-Mediterranean Partnership kicked off. The context then was the end of the Cold War and the considerable hopes it raised for building a common area of peace, stability and prosperity “through the reinforcement of political dialogue, security, and economic, financial, social and cultural cooperation.” After two decades have passed since the inception of this Process, we should, as a parliamentary framework for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, look collectively into the outcomes of this Process, and compare the expected targets with the accomplishments on the ground.

It should be recognized, first of all, that the establishment of our parliamentary framework is in itself a great asset to the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and to mobilizing the region’s public opinion to defend their people’s common heritage and the values that we share together. As you know, our Assembly is the fruit of accumulated parliamentary debate and dialogue that basically started towards the end of 1997, between parliamentarians from the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the EU Members and Southern Mediterranean partner countries.

This dialogue resulted in the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum on 27-28 October 1998 in Brussels. Its members, who convened in Bari (Southern Italy) on 17-18 June 2002 as part of the Forum’s fourth session, decided to convert the Forum into a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. The proposed conversion was endorsed by the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference one day after receiving a recommendation in this regard from the participants in the fifth session of the Forum held in Naples on 2 December 2003.

The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) held its inaugural sitting on 22-23 March 2004 in Athens. In 2010, EMPA became the parliamentary body of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

It should not be over-patriotic of me, ladies and gentlemen, if I remind you of the decisive and central role my country played in establishing this parliamentary arm of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Indeed, the Moroccan House of Representatives was one of the main founders of the Forum and its president co-chaired the Forum alongside the successive presidents of the European Parliament since its inception until its transformation into a Parliamentary Assembly. The

Moroccan Parliament served important and crucial roles in the physical and legal preparations for the establishment of the Forum, particularly in providing the political impetus necessary to institutionalize the Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary dimension, and lay down the foundations of our Parliamentary Assembly by devising its legal instruments and structure.

This is another absolute proof of the Kingdom of Morocco's commitment to the Euromed region and its Mediterranean roots.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This Parliamentary Assembly (PA-UfM) was established with the aim of contributing to the realization of the goals that were behind the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. No doubt that this partnership has achieved much in the field of economic exchanges as well as in the institutional area. Under its framework, we moved from mere partnership agreements to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which reinforced the Barcelona Process through bilateral action plans, then to the Union for the Mediterranean. However, none of this has reflected properly on the conditions of the citizens of the majority of the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries.

Security and stability were among the main concerns behind the launch of the Barcelona Process. In fact, unless security is established, development, democracy, and prosperity and all other common gains will remain at stake. Regrettably, after twenty years, the security challenge in the region is only growing, and ours has become on the top of world regions in terms of the number of existing conflicts, adding up to other conflict-ridden areas surrounding the Mediterranean nations. The Mediterranean has been the scene of more than half of international, regional and internal conflicts on the global level. In addition to the fact that they hinder development, destroy the future of the region's populations, and sow the seeds of despair, such conflicts are the main source and reason for another more serious, ever-spreading challenge, that is, the challenge of terrorism, which continues to expand, threatening everyone and developing its methods and strategies. It controls vast territories as well as important financial capacities and sources of funding, not the least of which is oil and contraband trade. And what is more, it has access to a significant arsenal of weapons, and advanced networks that enable its terrorist groups to commit atrocities in safe areas.

So we are in front of a terrorist challenge of a special nature, which requires a collective response with multiple entries and mechanisms: security mechanism, education, development, drying-up of sources, settlement of conflicts, addressing economic and social vulnerability, and fortifying and strengthening democracy.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The social movements that arose in some countries across the Middle East and North Africa have, in several instances, led to massive, far-reaching self-destruction. Peoples found themselves in chaos coupled with anarchy. Then the deadly tribal and sectarian conflicts emerged, causing enormous economic devastation and disintegration of social structures, and thus providing fertile ground for terrorists and armed groups.

These armed conflicts, violence, and economic and societal collapse have given rise to massive (internal and external) displacements and influx of migrants from the southern and eastern Mediterranean into Europe. Millions of people have fled – and are still fleeing – their homes, seeking safe refuge and means of survival in Europe, with repercussions for the entire European communities. As I have said before, the tragic scenes of children, women and elderly pleading to unlock the doors of hope by opening the steely doors and removing the barbed wire fences, are actually questioning our Mediterranean conscience, before questioning the global conscience. They confront us with a moral responsibility for the sufferings of millions of people and compel us to get to the roots of such human predicaments.

New armed conflicts created further grounds for cross-border illegal immigration, which doubled the number of immigrants and expanded the geographical areas that people, are forced to leave, whether because of war or hunger or unemployment or the absence of democracy. Some countries that used to be transit routes for migrants, including Morocco, have become countries of de facto residence. The Kingdom has adopted a new humanitarian-oriented immigration policy with a solidarity dimension, while also fulfilling its international obligations in the fight against illegal immigration. The new measures cost the country a lot security-wise as well as on the financial and human levels.

Once again, the Euro-Mediterranean community is faced with a drastic challenge that is only getting complicated. Such a challenge requires the implementation of solidarity-based policies that provide reasons for immigrants to settle in their countries of origin. This includes providing security and stability, supporting job-generating investments, promoting governance and democracy, and preserving the environment.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Several causes have combined towards aggravating the living conditions of the citizens of a number of Mediterranean countries, who also face other natural phenomena, namely environmental degradation and the effects of global warming, thereby paying the price for actions they are not necessarily responsible for. The Mediterranean basin is one of the most polluted regions in the world, where soil is depleted, large areas are affected by drought, desertification is expanding, and

forests are under tough pressure from man, destroying hundreds of hectares of them annually. Furthermore, pollution causes diseases that burden the public balance sheets and water is being damaged creating yet another potential source of disputes and conflicts in the future. In this regard, the responsibility rests with the Euro-Mediterranean community – which cherishes the ethics of protecting the right to life and the continuation of the human race – to preserve the environment and cease its degradation and over-exploitation in a sustainable, wise and responsible manner.

We are proud to meet today in Tangier. From here, His Majesty King Mohammed VI and French President François Hollande launched in September 2015 "The Tangier Call for Strong, Solidarity-based Action on Climate Change." The Call reflects commitment to environmental protection and consolidation of efforts towards mobilizing the international community to find effective, efficient and responsible answers to the issues of climate change.

During the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC (COP 22) to be held in Marrakech this November 2016, we, as Euro-Mediterranean legislators, will have to make sure that the voice of our peoples is heard, with a view to protecting the environment, halting and reversing degradation of natural resources, reducing pollution, and handing on a green planet to our future generations. We should make the preservation of the environment and the fight against global warming a central focus of our multilateral parliamentary meetings and conferences.

On the other hand, we, as legislators in our respective countries, have to be keen on improving the legislation, which makes the preservation of the environment an obligation, and encourages using clean energy and facilitates its production and utilization. It is a great honour that my country has been in the vanguard of nations that have implemented strategic projects in the field of clean energies, thus winning high international recognition. There is no doubt that our European partners value what we are doing and we thank them for supporting us in our strategies in the field of green economy.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Despite the chaos and anarchy witnessed in some southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, and the ongoing chronic conflicts in the region, there are many instances of success and resurgence which bring hope to the peoples of the region. Tunisian brotherly people have been able to overcome the difficulties faced by their country at a critical stage of its history, and they have been able to build institutions that form the cornerstone of stability. Egyptian brotherly people also have succeeded in avoiding instability and have shown great awareness of their interests. In addition, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan maintains its stability and continues the process of development and democratic construction despite the difficulties posed by the troubled neighbours from all sides. Beyond this region, the

Gulf Cooperation Council Countries maintain the process of development and gradual reforms and maintain their stability.

Whilst our Libyan brothers have succeeded in forming a national unity government which we strongly support, the Euro-Mediterranean group is required to provide tangible support for the legitimacy in this brotherly country and to enable them to gain control over the entire Libyan territory and build the state institutions. It goes without saying that my country's role in embracing the Libyan national dialogue and its efforts for the stability of this brotherly country is an extremely essential role.

On this land which is hosting you today, the Kingdom of Morocco gives conclusive evidence that democracy, political and cultural pluralism and the State of institutions are fundamental guarantee not only for stability but also for economic success, social solidarity and modernization. Thanks to the significant and wide-ranging reforms that are led and supported by His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God grant him victory, Morocco has succeeded in building strong institutions and establishing solid democracy in the framework of a modern developed constitution which guarantees the rights and duties of everyone in the society, achieves the separation of powers, links responsibility with accountability, makes the parliament the only source of legislation, and stipulates that the government would be elected through the ballot boxes.

As you know, the Moroccan case is not a result of chance, but it is based upon accumulated reforms, established political traditions, real multi-party system, vibrant civil society powers, free press, and mainly upon institutions of a long history, in which the monarchy of spiritual, historical and democratic legitimacies are deep-rooted.

**Honourable Presidents,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We will not disagree if we consider that a good future for the Euro-Mediterranean region and achieving stability and development can only be attained on the basis of peace, especially in the Middle East, where the Arab-Israeli conflict caused, and will continue to cause, other conflicts and new tensions and will continue to be a source of intolerance, unless the historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people is lifted, by granting them their right to return and to have an independent state and putting an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories as well as the rest of the Arab territories.

When facing the different challenges posed to our region, we are required to find out answers and common strategies from the Euro-Mediterranean community in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean and its institutions, in order to ensure our collective security and ward off the dangers surrounding us. The Mediterranean

should ensure its security by itself. There is no doubt that ensuring stability means to adopt several common entries and consultations and to primarily focus on the origin of the problems and the source of dilemmas that are prone to become a mounting chaos like a fire that devours everything.

Before searching for ways to respond to the challenges, which we have mentioned, and settle crises, we should establish policies to avoid them by eradicating their very roots and causes as well as containing problems in their early stage.

We have no disagreement that building strong, unified, self-sustaining countries, that hold to democracy and institutions as a system of government and ensure political and cultural pluralism, will always remain the fundamental entry and solution for regional and internal stability.

Surely, in order for such democracy to be self-sustaining, it must have an economic support, development, and investments to provide jobs, which in turn, provide incomes that ensure human dignity. Undoubtedly, in the case of the Euro-Mediterranean region, this needs moving capitals from the northern to the southern and eastern Mediterranean, and transmitting technology to make the peoples of the region benefit from technical and scientific advancement. The peoples of the region need to feel they are part of this world and share its wealth and immense advancement.

Sustainability of democracy needs open-minded elites to carry it and defend it. It also needs political powers to establish on solid grounds, and needs peoples who will protect it and embrace it. All of these, in turn, need investment in education. In this regard, Mediterranean partnership provides various possibilities and programs which need activation. Universities and higher institutes in the southern Mediterranean need continuous support and training to attract minds that migrate toward the north in quest of better incomes and conditions suitable for scientific research. To that end, institutional incubation for scientific research should be provided in southern Mediterranean countries in the frame of scientific partnerships which facilitate the co-benefit of scientific research, and look for the development, transmission of technology, narrowing the digital gap between the North and the South, and framing intelligence and young talents that abound in the southern countries to turn them into powers producing added values. We need to democratize access to technology and its utilization.

Cultural and civilizational dialogue will remain one of the basic entries that would facilitate understanding and recover the spirit of Athens, Granada, Fes, Kairouan, and Alexandria in our Euro-Mediterranean relationship to ward off fanaticism and rigidity. In this regard, we should recall the major role played by Anna Lind Foundation in facilitating civilizational dialogue and negating the notion of “the clash of civilizations”, or as His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God grant him

victory, asserted in 2002: “what is witnessed by today’s world is a clash of ignorance not a clash of civilizations.”

**Honourable Speakers,  
Distinguished Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The peoples of this region, particularly in the southern and eastern Mediterranean, are looking forward to tangible actions to restore security and stability and to ensure their political, economic, and social rights, and to provide jobs that ensure human dignity for them.

Indeed, our region possesses tremendous potential to meet these hopes and aspirations. We have a market of 900 million consumers, located in the middle of the world and marine crossroads. We have tremendous human resources and high skills, but we need the will and determination of politicians, and we also need to benefit from the international changes witnessed by today’s world, and to restructure international relationships.

Stability needs the support of democracy and development. Yet, it also needs regional partnerships in the southern and eastern Mediterranean. That is why the Maghreb is in dire need of activating its union, without which historical opportunities for economic takeoff and rising to major regional powers would be missed. Current regional context and the emergence of terrorist groups have proved that building the future lies in major unions between countries that have historical roots and legitimacy that ensure their continuity and their positive action in the international relationships. Some of our countries have undoubtedly faced the dangers of separation and disruption.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Kingdom of Morocco, that is warmly receiving you today, continues the march of development, establishment of democracy, and achieving well-structured developmental projects. The region, which is receiving you today, is an example of these achievements and reconciliations established by our country under the leadership of His Majesty the King Mohammad VI.

If the Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region is the bridge of Morocco to Europe, in terms of their basic strategic equipment, the region of Laâyoune-Sakia El Hamra, thanks to the strategic development projects launched by His Majesty King Mohammed VI last November, is about to be the base of trade between the North and the South i.e., between Europe and the rest of the African countries to which Morocco gives special attention in its international strategic, economic, social, and spiritual relations, believing in the necessity and importance of South-South cooperation.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In order to build a common future for our region, we primarily need to transform the Union for the Mediterranean into a system which establishes common policies and prevents crises within a turbulent international context in the light of the new challenges. We also need to support stability, confidence-building, non-interference in the States internal affairs, respect for their sovereignty, and to restore the spirit of the Mediterranean as well as the ideas of Aristotle, the rationalism of Averroes, and the approach of Descartes.

**Welcome again and thank you very much for your kind attention.**